

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING
LARKSPUR PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION
FEBRUARY 19, 2015

COMMISSION: PRESENT: Chair Friedel, Cimino, Matteo, McNally

COMMISSION: ABSENT: Blauvelt

STAFF: PRESENT: Recreation Director Dick Whitley
Public Works Director Mary Grace Houlihan

Chair Friedel called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

APPROVAL OF CONSENT CALENDAR

Approval of Minutes of January 15, 2015

M/s Matteo/Friedel to approve the minutes of January 15, 2015 as submitted.

Ayes: Cimino, Matteo, McNally, Chair Friedel

Absent: Blauvelt

OPEN TIME

There were no comments.

PUBLIC HEARING

1. Hearing of Heritage Tree Permit Application Protest at 33 Via La Brisa, Larkspur

Recreation Director Whitley presented the staff report.

Chair Friedel opened the Public Hearing

Ms. Daphne Markham, property owner, stated this was a difficult decision that was not made lightly. During a recent storm numerous palm fronds were falling from the tree onto her neighbor's property. It was terrifying. Her neighbors asked her to consider removing the trees. Some of the neighbors are afraid to walk by the house during a storm. She stated the trees pose a hazard to the neighbors and there is the potential for injury and property damage. There is a financial liability in three different areas: 1) She would be financially liable if the fronds or trees caused damage; 2) The trees should be maintained every year at a cost of \$1,180; 3) The trees would need to be disclosed as a liability when she sold the property. The Mexican Fan Palm tree is not recommended by experts for residential areas with limited space. She referred to Municipal Code Section

12.16.070, Subsection F and stated the findings could be made. Her front yard has additional trees and removal of the Palms would not result in a bare landscape.

Commissioner Matteo asked if the annual maintenance cost of \$1,180 was for each Palm tree. Ms. Markham stated “no” it was for the group of Palm trees.

Mr. Steve Katz, Via La Brisa, stated he lives directly adjacent to the subject property. The palm fronds are very sharp and they are blown 60’ to 70’ across his roof and beyond. He is concerned about personal and property damage particularly to his solar panels. This street is a wind tunnel and the wind is quite powerful. He supports the application to remove these trees.

Ms. Mary Katz stated she invests a lot of time and energy into her landscaping and garden and the fronds can cause damage. They are very heavy when they are wet and are difficult to move.

Commissioner McNally asked Mr. Katz if the fronds have done damage to the garden or solar panels. Ms. Katz stated they have damaged the garden but not the solar panels. Commissioner McNally stated there did not seem to be a lot of fronds. Mr. Katz stated there were “dozens and dozens”. Ms. Markham stated she filled up a two-ton pick up truck with fronds a year and a half ago.

Commissioner McNally stated the palms tend to sway back and forth and he asked if they had any information about a Palm tree trunk breaking in half. Ms. Markham stated she has information about what causes Palm trees to fall. They are tall trees with shallow roots.

Ms. Susan Faidi, Via La Brisa, stated she ends up with a lot of fronds in her yard. She was very frightened that the trees would come down on her house during the last heavy storm. There is no aesthetic value to these trees- they are just tree trunks. She supported the request to remove the trees in light of the liability.

Ms. Terri Peterson, Via La Brisa, stated she lives directly across the street from the subject property. The fronds fly down to the ground during a storm “like missiles”- they are dangerous. The trees add nothing to the landscaping.

Ms. Tricia Christopher, landscape architect, stated Ms. Markham was very conscientious and cares about the safety of her neighbors. The Palm trees are not aesthetically pleasing. She did some research on the Mexican Fan Palm and found out that this species is no longer recommended for planting and is considered moderately invasive. The trees should be removed due to the amount of maintenance required and the liability. She would recommend replacing the trees with something more sensitive and visually appropriate.

Commissioner McNally asked Ms. Markham if she received any negative feedback from any neighbors. Ms. Markham stated “yes” but she was told by the neighbor that he was

thinking about withdrawing his letter of protest. Commissioner Matteo asked where this neighbor lived. Ms. Markham stated about a block away.

Commissioner McNally asked if there were other Mexican Fan Palms in the Larkspur Marina area. Ms. Markham stated there were other Palm trees but she was not sure if they were the same species.

Chair Friedel closed the Public Hearing.

Commissioner Matteo stated these decisions were always difficult. It was rare that so many neighbors come to a meeting in support of the removal of a tree and he was willing to defer to the neighbors that have to live with this every day. He is inclined to approve the request for removal.

Commissioner Cimino stated he was taken aback at the height of the trees and was surprised they did not come down during the last big storm. These are very tall trees on a very small lot. He thought the trees posed a hazard to the subject and surrounding properties. He is impressed with the support of the neighbors. He could make the findings.

Commissioner McNally stated he agreed with the comments made by the other Commissioners. There is no benefit to these trees from the neighbor's point of view. He could approve the removal of the trees.

Chair Friedel agreed with the comments made by the other Commissioners. The applicant has met the burden of most of the ordinance. She was impressed with the support of the neighbors.

Recreation Director Whitley asked the Commission to vote on each tree separately.

M/s Matteo/Friedel to approve the removal of tree #1 based on the ability to make the required findings.

Ayes: Cimino, Matteo, McNally, Chair Friedel

Absent: Blauvelt

M/s Matteo/McNally to approve the removal of tree #2 based on the ability to make the required findings.

Ayes: Cimino, Matteo, McNally, Chair Friedel

Absent: Blauvelt

M/s Matteo/McNally to approve the removal of tree #3 based on the ability to make the required findings.

Ayes: Cimino, Matteo, McNally, Chair Friedel

Absent: Blauvelt

Recreation Director Whitley stated there was a 15-day appeal period to the City Council

The Commission took a 5-minute break at 8:10 p.m.

BUSINESS ITEMS

1. Larkspur Community Facility Update

Public Works Director Houlihan presented the staff report and gave a Powerpoint presentation. Several public outreach meetings were held along with Technical Advisory Committee and Community Facility Advisory Committee meetings. The survey monkey posted on the City Website resulted in some great feedback. They are moving along with the design. She discussed the schedule and stated the next community meeting would be held on March 4th before the City Council meeting. This would include a “site walk” at 5:30 p.m. and then a presentation in the Council Chambers. They will then be moving into preliminary planning design and Design Review hearings before the Planning Commission. Public participation in this process is critical. She noted they started the process with the concepts, ideas and decisions made and during the Master Plan process- they are not “reinventing the wheel”. This will be an integrated facility that will be warm, inviting, and a place where people could gather. The goal is to have rooms that are activated and used- not “dead space”. There is a huge desire for space to accommodate teens and “tweens”. There was a lot of discussion about outdoor space and how this might be programmed. At the first public meeting there were three tables that asked for input about “library”, “community rooms”, and “outdoor spaces”. She displayed a summary of all the comments and noted they were posted on the City Website. There was a lot of emphasis on flexibility in the community rooms and the outdoor space and an integration of the indoor and outdoor space.

Public Works Director Houlihan briefly discussed the building program. They are looking at a 20,000 square foot building. It will be single story since it makes the most sense and will be cost effective. Commissioner Matteo referred to the plan and asked about the term “non-assignable”. Public Works Director Houlihan stated it covered spaces such as hallways, electrical rooms, etc. She showed a slide that depicted “adjacencies and how things will work”. She discussed various room sizes including 1,500 square feet and 720 square feet. She briefly discussed the site analysis and how it impacts the surrounding buildings, ingress and egress, sight lines, noise generation, etc.

Commissioner McNally referred to Options A and B and asked if they were similar in square footage. Public Works Director Houlihan stated they were the same square footage.

Commissioner Matteo asked if these drawings depicted a location at the corner of Doherty Drive and Rose Lane. Public Works Director Houlihan stated “yes”.

Public Works Director Houlihan stated the next steps included the consultants reviewing the public comments and coming up with what would probably be a hybrid design.

Commissioner McNally asked where most of the technology (computers, etc.) would be located. Public Works Director Houlihan stated one of the goals would be to modernize the library's processing and operations. There was a lot of discussion about a "computer room" and there would be computers in the Library for accessing information, etc. The successful modern library does not have desktops but rather a laptop "vending machine". Rooms dedicated to computers end up being wasted space. Recreation Director Whitley stated all of these rooms would be flexible space. Commissioner Cimino asked if this "vending machine" of laptops would be owned by the Library or a third party. Public Works Director Houlihan stated that was a good question and has yet to be decided.

Commissioner McNally asked if there had been discussions about the exterior of the facility. Public Works Director Houlihan stated that would occur during the Design Review process.

Commissioner Cimino asked if this was a 5-year process. Public Works Director Houlihan stated the floor plan, exterior elevations, and site layout would be processed and completed by June. Having a vision of the facility was critical in the fundraising effort. Commissioner Cimino asked about the cost. Public Works Director Houlihan stated the Master Plan identified a \$15 million to \$20 million cost. Chair Friedel stated a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organization has recently been created. Public Works Director Houlihan stated she anticipates multiple funding sources including private donations.

Commissioner Cimino asked if the building would be LEED certified. Public Works Director Houlihan stated the Master Plan designated a LEED silver facility but they might be able to achieve gold certification on this site.

2. Various Facility Updates from DPW Director Houlihan

Public Works Director Houlihan presented a staff report and gave a Powerpoint presentation. She displayed the swing set structure that was chosen by the Heatherwood neighbors for Heatherwood Park. The park has been surveyed and they are updating the plan in terms of accessibility, etc. She will be asking the City Council for authorization to purchase the structure at the next Council meeting. Commissioner Matteo had questions about the structure. Public Works Director Houlihan stated there would be two kid's swings and two toddler's swings.

Public Works Director Houlihan displayed the play structure that was chosen by the community for Dolliver Park. This site has also been fully surveyed and she would be asking the Council for authorization to purchase the structure at the next Council meeting. She displayed the concept plans for the restroom remodel at Dolliver Park. There would be two unisex stalls that would be ADA accessible. The building is structurally sound but needs to be refreshed and updated. The architect's concept plan includes re-siding the outside lower half with Hardi plank. One option includes shingles at the top and a screen wall in front. The current front wall has to be removed because it would not allow wheelchair access. She displayed several screen wall designs. She displayed some concept colors including an earthy palette, a refinished concrete floor,

and tiled walls. Commissioner McNally asked if this project was funded. Public Works Director Houlihan stated “yes”. Construction should begin by May. Commissioner Matteo asked if the park would be closed. Public Works Director Houlihan stated they would be able to leave parts of Dolliver Park open. Heatherwood would need to be closed for a week at the most.

Chair Friedel asked if they could schedule a “Grand Opening” for these play structures. Recreation Director Whitley stated “yes”.

Public Works Director Houlihan stated the Commission decided on the design for the new park furniture at its last meeting and she would be taking this to the Council at its next meeting. Staff has developed a Park Furniture Donation Program that identifies prices, piece of furniture, a particular park, etc.

Public Works Director Houlihan reported staff has a community project scheduled for March 14th. The Redwood High School Baseball team will be removing weeds near the tennis courts, installing weed barriers, and planting some new groundcover. They will also be installing new bark.

Commissioner McNally asked about the status of the dog park. Public Works Director Houlihan stated she has cleared all of the environmental issues and would be doing consultant selection soon.

Commissioner Matteo asked about the Bon Air Bridge Project. Public Works Director Houlihan stated construction should begin in the summer. Commissioner Cimino asked if a pedestrian/bicycle path would be on both sides of the bridge. Public Works Director Houlihan stated “yes”. Commissioner Cimino asked if the roadway would remain the same width. Public Works Director Houlihan stated it would still have two lanes, one in each direction but they would be a bit wider. There will be a crash barrier between the roadway and the multi-use path similar to what is on Doherty Drive. The profile of the bridge would be very different. Commissioner McNally asked how long the construction would take. Public Works Director Houlihan stated “about four years”.

Public Works Director Houlihan reported the Safe Routes to Schools Multi-use Path Project from Riviera Circle through the Lucky/Doherty Drive intersection has been recommended for approval by the Transportation of Marin (TAM) staff. This is a \$375,000 project. This will go to the TAM Board for approval on March 3rd.

RECREATION DIRECTOR’S ORAL REPORT

Recreation Director Whitley reported the Super School Summer School registration process has started and staff has already received quite a few Kinder Kamp registration forms. The brochure should be out in the next couple of weeks. The 4th of July Fun Run would be held in conjunction with the Corte Madera Recreation Department and would include a 1.7 mile “fun run” from Piper Park, along the parade route, to Town Park. The run starts at 10:00 a.m. and the parade starts at 10:30 a.m. He thanked Commissioner

Matteo for his year of service as Chair of the Commission and presented him with a plaque. He reported that Recreation Supervisor Clegg has accepted the Recreation Manager position for the City of Calistoga. The Commissioner wished Recreation Supervisor Clegg luck in her new position.

COMMISSIONER REPORTS

Commissioner Cimino asked if the department does anything for Earth Day (April 25th). Recreation Director Whitley stated “no” but he was working with the local schools to try to make something happen. Public Works Director Houlihan stated staff was planning on a Beautification Day sometime in May and she recommended outreach to local non-profits.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:19 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Toni DeFrancis
Recording Secretary