

Dr. Kent Julin, arborist, looked at the tree and noted it has an acute angle crotch that has been that way for a very long time. This creates a severe defect that will eventually cause the tree to split and fall to the ground. This genetic predisposition repeats itself further up the tree. He is recommending removal of the tree to mitigate the hazard to the power lines and the driveway. He added that Redwoods are fire prone and burn very hot.

Commissioner Blauvelt stated the tree appears to be healthy and asked why the arborist made no mention of this in his oral or written report. Dr. Julin agreed it is healthy. The structure of the tree can be separated from its relative health. Very healthy trees do fail.

Commissioner Sunshine asked Dr. Julin if he saw any signs of decay, failure, or infestations. Dr. Julin stated "no". It has a basic structural defect and one of those large spars could fall.

Commissioner Koepfel stated the Urban Community Forestry Fact Sheet discusses codominant stems and the three Risk Stages to determine the seriousness of the problem. He asked Dr. Julin what stage this tree is in. Dr. Julin stated he was not familiar with that publication. This type of defect is very common but it is uncommon for people to get hurt by it- it is hit or miss. He would regard this situation as a high failure risk.

Commissioner Koepfel asked Dr. Julin if he examined the union of the two spars with a drone or if he did it at a street level. Dr. Julin stated he walked completely around the tree.

Commissioner Koepfel asked Dr. Julin about bark inclusion. Dr. Julin stated the bark is included given the acute angle of these two stems. This prevents the two trunks from joining up and creating a strong union.

Commissioner Koepfel asked if there were any indications that the tree is subject to failure. Dr. Julin discussed how to examine codominant trees and noted this tree does not have the bark ridge that is indicative of a strong union.

Ms. McKnight asked if they would be liable if the tree remains and something bad happens. Her priority is safety.

Ms. Janelle Hobart, landscape designer, stated the applicants have planted nine new trees and an English Laurel hedge on the property. This hedge will grow up to 20 feet tall. They have every intention of "greening up" the property. A green barrier from the street will exist if the Redwood tree is removed.

Mr. Jeremy Knoblen, Walnut Avenue, stated he lives across the street and in line with this tree. He supports removal of this tree- it is a safety issue.

Mr. Heather Ross, Walnut Avenue, stated she agrees with the safety concerns. She would rather be "safe than sorry".

Mr. Arthur Lutz, Walnut Avenue, is opposed to the removal of the tree. It is a gateway tree to the Walnut/Palm Loop and has survived storms and earthquakes for over 50 years. It remains intact and healthy without endangering people or utility services. It is a habitat

to birds and increases property values. There are dozens of Redwood trees in Larkspur with codominant stems. Redwoods are the arboreal heritage of Larkspur. He urged the Commission to honor the letter and intent of the Heritage Tree Ordinance.

Town Clerk Foulis read a comment from Mr. Adam Correia agreeing with the comments made by Mr. Lutz.

Mr. Neal Frye, Walnut Avenue, stated the proximity of the trees concerns the majority of the neighbors. He supports the removal of the tree.

Chair Harrison closed the Public Hearing.

Commissioner Friedel stated the request is due to the proximity of the tree and not the codominant nature of the tree. There are power lines on either side of the tree. This is an incredibly wooded area and she is concerned about the upcoming fire season. Commissioner Friedel referred to Code Section 12.16.070, Findings, and stated she could make Findings (1)(a) and (b) and (2)(a). The placement and growth of the tree, in its proximity, poses a liability and safety issues.

Commissioner Blauvelt stated there is nothing physically wrong with the tree in terms of its viability. It is in good shape. There are many codominant trees in the Madrone Canyon. She understood the concerns of the neighbors. Redwoods are the most important Heritage Tree.

Commissioner Sunshine stated she is cognizant of the liability and safety issues expressed by the applicants and neighbors. The issue of trees around power lines is a fact of life and she asked if any of the utility companies have assessed the situation. Recreation Director Whitley stated he has no information from any of the utility companies. Commissioner Sunshine stated she was struck by Dr. Julia's proclamation that there was no insect infestation or decay and that it seems like a healthy tree.

Commissioner Koeppel brought up the issue of "timing" and wondered if this was an imminent threat or potential hazard. The tree is in proximity to the power lines but that is not enough of a reason to cut it down. This is a seemingly health tree with no rot or cracks. He asked why the tree could not be cabled or pruned. Dr. Julin stated the downside to structural cabling is that they need to be inspected annually and replaced every seven to ten years. Cables and bolts that become imbedded in trees can be a hazard to tree workers. He does not recommend cabling of trees. The problem cannot be repaired by pruning one of the spars off- it is past the point of being corrected.

Commissioner Blauvelt asked Dr. Julin if the codominant nature of this tree is different from the other trees on Madrone Avenue. Dr. Julin stated he sees these defects a lot and it worries him. He would have to look at each tree to make a determination.

Commissioner Friedel stated the surrounding neighbors seemed to be in favor of removing this tree due to the liability and safety issues. This is quite unusual- the majority of Tree Removal Applications do not get neighborhood support.

Commissioner Blauvelt stated staff did receive letters of protest aside from the one from Mr. Lutz.

M/s Blauvelt/Sunshine, to deny the Heritage Tree Permit Application for 55 Walnut Avenue due to the inability to make the necessary findings.

Ayes: Blauvelt, Koepfel, Sunshine, Chair Harrison

Noes: Friedel

This was done through a roll call vote.

Recreation Director Whitley stated there was a 15-day appeal period.

5. Director's Oral Report

Recreation Director Whitley reported staff decided to cancel the Super Cool Summer School due to COVID-19. Recreation Supervisor Stone has been working diligently on mini-summer camps including tennis, drama, woodworking, and a nature camp. Enrollment will be limited to twelve students and run for one week from 9:00 a.m. to noon. Staff is waiting for more information from the County Health Department. The Piper Park parking lot is still closed along with the picnic area, Dog Park, playground, and play fields. The tennis courts have opened up to tennis and Pickleball with certain restrictions. He reported on the creation of the new Community Services Department which will be a combination of the Recreation and Library Departments. He noted he will be retiring as of July 1st. Current Library Director Franklin Escobedo will become the Director of the Community Services Department. He thanked Town Clerk Foulis for her assistance in the administration of tonight's meeting.

6. Commissioner's Reports

Commissioner Friedel reported on the weird "rock/pine cone structures" in Piper Park. She stated there were a lot of people in the park with unleashed dogs and not wearing masks (the people, not the dogs). She wondered if citations could be issued. Recreation Director Whitley stated he would speak to the City Manager about this.

Commissioner Friedel stated there seemed to be some confusion with respect to the Tree Removal Application process. Recreation Director Whitley explained the procedure.

Commissioner Koepfel stated he was concerned about the impact of not having a Recreation Director. He would like a full report on how this will impact operations at the next meeting. Commissioner Friedel stated this was discussed at last night's Council meeting.

Chair Harrison reported the process to improve Niven Park has started including an on-line survey

Commissioner Blauvelt reported the Larkspur Community Foundation was looking seriously at funding some of the improvements (permanent stage, etc.) at Piper Park.

Commissioner Friedel gave an update on the LLCC and the possibility of City funding for the new Library on the Rose Lane property. The Council has decided not to contribute any funds at this time given the impacts from COVID-19 on the City Budget.

The Zimmer Account (marked for Library use) contains about \$600,000 and the Council has decided to keep this money in trust. The LLCC continues its fundraising efforts and is staying positive and moving ahead!

Commissioner Friedel suggested holding a Park/Facilities Tour with the most recently elected Councilmembers and the new Community Services Director. Recreation Director Whitley stated he can get this done.

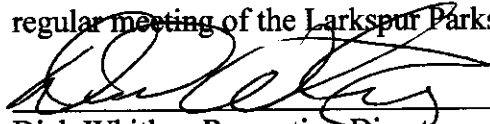
Commissioner Blauvelt stated the Commission needs to come up with some kind of "retribution" for Recreation Director Whitley's abandoning them. Recreation Director Whitley stated "bring it on!"

7. Adjourn Meeting

The meeting was adjourned at 7:43 p.m.
Respectfully submitted,

Toni DeFrancis
Recording Secretary

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the foregoing minutes were duly and regularly adopted at a regular meeting of the Larkspur Parks and Recreation Commission.



Dick Whitley, Recreation Director