



Public Works Department

MINUTES

REGULAR MEETING OF THE TREE COMMITTEE

Monday March 13, 2017 7:00 p.m.
El Cerrito City Hall
Hillside Conference Room
10890 San Pablo Avenue

1. Roll Call :

Present: Chair Ralph Boniello, Vice Chair Steve Price; Members Cathy Bleier, Robert Hrubes, Yan Linhart, Mike Srago, Mary Torrusio.
Also present: City Council Liaison Paul Fadelli, Staff Liaison Stephen Prée.

Absent: Mary Torrusio

2. **Committee Member Announcements:** Vice Chair Price reported on a book, “The Hidden Life of Trees” by Peter Wohlleben which characterizes trees as being social and underground communicators. Robert Hrubes requested a change to the order of the agenda to accommodate his early departure from the meeting; moving-up item 8. Tree Committee Activities, Calendar and Work Plan Update; the committee agreed.
3. **Comments from the Public on non-agenda items:** El Cerrito resident Tom Gehling described a private tree removal incident involving multiple trees to the committee and read the following statement from the El Cerrito Trail Trekkers: “Trail Trekkers urges the city to ensure that the damage to creeks, trees and other habitat at Fairview Open Space on March 9 will not be allowed to happen again. We also urge the City to seek the maximum penalties from the perpetrator, while working with other federal, state and regional regulatory agencies. Furthermore, we believe that those responsible should be required to restore the damage that has been done.” The Committee discussed the size of the trees, the location of the property and access to the affected area. Chair Boniello observed that “this incident speaks to the need for a stronger (tree) ordinance.”
4. **Report from the City Council Liaison:** Mr. Fadelli reported that City Council will be reviewing City budget items in upcoming Council meetings, and he said that he is willing to speak publicly on budget issues on behalf of the Tree Committee. Vice Chair Price recommended funding for a “grid pruning program” for City trees; Cathy Bleier recommended budgetary support for revisions to the City Tree Ordinance and said that she is hopeful that the council will support the renaming of the Tree Committee. Mr. Fadelli reported that Council had recently been interviewing many applicants to City Boards, Committees and Commissions. Other upcoming Council agenda items include establishing the City’s new Cannabis policy related to the passage of Proposition 64; Sanctuary City designation discussions; City staff collective bargaining and retirement issues.

5. Tree Committee Activities, Calendar and Work Plan Update :

A. *Centennial Activities*: The ad-hoc subcommittee (Vice Chair Price, Hrubes, and Srago) provided the following discussion- Establish what the nature of a Centennial Tree Planting should be; base this on a tree or trees that will endure for at least 100 more years; select an appropriate civic location(s). Ranked options:

- 1) Single long lived species tree, planted in a significant Civic location (with plaque)
- 2) Plant a grove or groves of trees (Motor Cycle Hill, a park)
- 3) Plant trees at multiple street locations throughout the City

The Committee discussed various sites and species, Cathy Bleier raised the question of available resources and funding devoted to these activities. Prée said will schedule a future meeting with the ad-hoc sub-committee to further develop the recommendations.

B. *Educational Outreach*: The ad-hoc subcommittee (Bleier, Linhart, Torrusio) made nine recommendations and inquiries including the below:

- Establishing the Approved City Tree list as an interactive searchable web-based list that is readily accessible.
- Presentations: establish audience and demand and tailor to fit; inquire with other committees (e.g. E.Q.C.) to survey demand
- Create and answer a list of Frequently Asked Questions (with Prée)
- Tree care workshops
- Liaison with other Committees
- Review City tree inventory.
- Internet presence: You Tube videos on tree care, links to other websites. Prée will inquire with new City I.T. manager on limitations.

6. **Action Items**: A motion to adopt the minutes from the February 13, 2017 meeting was made by Robert Hrubes with a typographic correction ; 2nd Mike Srago, adopted unanimously.

7. Report from the City Arborist:

Prée updated the Committee with the following a.) The City tree mitigation fund account deposit of \$18,000. b.) Reported on an unauthorized City Street tree removal by a private property owner on San Pablo Avenue and the pending City enforcement actions. c.) Inquired with the Committee regarding interest in performing a Sudden Oak Death survey.

- The Committee inquired with Prée regarding individual contributions to the tree mitigation fund (Linhart); availability of these funds for Ordinance revision (Bleier, Price), Centennial tree planting and maintenance (Bleier), a tree planting project such as Richmond Street (Price). Regarding the unauthorized City tree removal, Bleier observed that this incident is yet another example of the need for outreach and education regarding City trees and for revisions to the City tree ordinance.

8. **Old/New Business** – Chair Boniello announced that he would be leading a tree walk during the Hillside Festival on May 21.

9. Future agenda items:

- Outreach & Education
- Designated City Tree Species
- Vote on Committee name change
- Tree Budget

Adjournment- 9:10