



CITY OF SAN CARLOS

SAN CARLOS PLANNING COMMISSION

September 5, 2017

7:00 PM

City Hall, Council Chamber, 600 Elm Street

San Carlos, California

www.cityofsancarlos.org

APPROVED MINUTES

ADVISORY

Al Savay, Community Development Director
Lisa Porras, Principal Planner
Lisa Costa Sanders, Principal Planner
Greg Rubens, City Attorney

COMMISSIONERS

David Silberman, Chair - absent
Don Bradley, Vice Chair
Angela Harper-Pedersen
Jesse Gutierrez - excused
Shannon Bergman

I. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:00pm.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

III. ROLL CALL

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a) **Approval of Special Planning Commission meeting minutes of August 21, 2017.**

M/S Bergman/Bradley to approve the minutes of August 21, 2017. The motion passed 4-0 by the following roll call vote:

Ayes: Silberman, Bradley, Harper-Pedersen, Bergman

Noes: none

VI. PUBLIC HEARING

- a) **906 Holly Street (APN: 046-111-280) – Consideration of Grading and Dirt Haul Certificate to Implement the Interim Measures Work Plan.**

Principal Planner Lisa Costa Sanders announced that the applicant has requested that the item be continued to the next meeting of the Planning Commission, scheduled for September 18, 2017.

M/S Harper-Pedersen/Bergman to continue the item to the Planning Commission meeting scheduled for September 18, 2017. The item passed 4-0 by the following roll call vote.

Ayes: Silberman, Bradley, Harper-Pedersen, Bergman

Noes: none

b) 941 Bransten Road (APN: 046-133-019) – Consideration of Grading and Dirt Haul Certificate to Implement the Interim Measures Work Plan.

Principal Planner Lisa Costa Sanders presented the item noting a change to the dirt haul route.

Commissioner Harper-Pedersen clarified with that the all of the staging will be done on site.

Commissioner Harper-Pedersen asked how long the project is expected to take. Lisa Costa Sanders noted that the project applicant will address the duration,

Commissioner Harper-Pedersen asked about the geotechnical report and how adherence to the report is monitored. Lisa Costa Sanders noted that after the item is approved by the Planning Commission, it will move forward to Public Works where the City Engineer will look at the grading plans in more detail and the adherence to the geotechnical report.

Chair Silberman asked about noticing requirements. Lisa Costa Sanders answered that Industrial Road is an arterial street and therefore not subject to dirt haul noticing. She continued that the surrounding properties were notified of the environmental documents and public hearing but the dirt haul route noticing was not required. She added that there are no residential parcels fronting the amended dirt haul route.

Martha Watson representative for GC Lubricants spoke about the project. She noted that they are targeting completion of the grading and back fill in two weeks.

M/S Bradley/Bergman to close the public hearing. The motion passed by the following roll call vote:

Ayes: Silberman, Bradley, Harper-Pedersen, Bergman

Noes: none

M/S Bradley/Harper-Pedersen to grant approval of the Request for Grading and Dirt Haul Certificate to implement the Interim Measures Workplan at 941 Bransten Road (APN: 046-133-019), based on the findings for the reasons incorporated in the Staff Report, and as conditioned in the Draft Grading and Dirt Haul Certificate with the revised dirt haul route. The motion passed 4-0 by the following roll call vote:

Ayes: Silberman, Bradley, Harper-Pedersen, Bergman

Noes: none

c) Consideration of a Mitigated Negative Declaration and an Ordinance Amending San Carlos Zoning Ordinance Section 18.41.020 Removing Founder Tree from the Definition of Heritage Trees.

Principal Planner Lisa Costa Sanders presented the item.

Chair Silberman asked why the designation was added and what the purpose was. He also asked why we would remove the entire Founder tree designation and not just as it applies to eucalyptus trees.

Lisa Costa Sanders noted that in 2009 there was an ordinance change that excluded eucalyptus trees from the tree protection ordinance. Due to concern over the preservation of the trees on San Carlos Avenue, the Founder tree designation was adopted.

Chair Silberman asked if the Founder tree designation added any additional protection above a Heritage tree designation. Lisa Costa Sanders noted that there is not additional protection added by the Founder designation. Discussion ensued regarding the consequences of removing the Founder tree designation on other trees.

Lisa Porras noted that Planning Staff will be addressing the tree ordinance in a comprehensive way in the next year, at the direction of City Council, as one of its strategic objectives.

Commissioner Bergman asked if keeping the Founder tree designation would still allow homeowners to apply to remove a hazardous tree. Lisa Costa Sanders answered that the tree removal permitting process will remain in place regardless of changes made to the Founder tree designation in the ordinance.

Commissioner Harper-Pedersen clarified that if the designation is removed, eucalyptus trees could be removed by right, without a permit. Lisa Costa Sanders noted that that is correct.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Darren Batara, resident, spoke in favor of the removal of the Eucalyptus trees on San Carlos Avenue. He noted that part of the discussion that needs to include safety.

Cara Vonk, resident, noted that the ordinance amendment targets eucalyptus trees and they will be allowed to remove the trees regardless of size or age. She outlined the criteria for historic and cultural resource and noted three criteria of the Secretary of the Interior. She spoke in opposition to the changes and urged the Commission to recommend that the trees be preserved to protect our city's heritage.

Josh Wallace, resident, asked that if the City removes a tree that it replace the tree with like characteristics. He asked if San Carlos has an Urban Forest Master Plan. Mr. Wallace suggested that the removal of all of the trees is a matter of convenience. He expressed that he would like to see trees replaced and feels that many times replacement trees are promised but never planted.

Sandee Althouse, resident, spoke in opposition to the changes, requesting that the Commission rethink and give careful consideration to the ordinance amendment. She would like to see a plan and funding in place for replacing the trees before any cutting starts.

Tom Haxton, resident, alleged that eucalyptus trees are not dangerous and suggested that with proper inspections and maintenance the trees could remain safely. He suggested that the arborist's assessments are driven by economics and not the health of the trees. He would like to see an arborist using newer technology to inspect trees and urged the Commission to not remove the designation until more accurate inspection procedures are adopted.

Tom Hausken, resident, addressed changing the Founder tree designation and urged the Commission to not make a sweeping decision about all of the trees and to look at the bigger picture

Sandra Mentan, resident, spoke in opposition to changing the designation of the Founder trees. She recommended assembling a committee to put together a plan to keep the eucalyptus trees that are still there and put in new trees, flowers and plants in the area. She would also like to see a replacement plan in place before trees are removed.

Bob Young, resident, noted that no one knows when a eucalyptus tree will fail and the one that fell last year near Arundel School looked healthier than some of the trees further west. He noted that the timing of the failure was lucky and we are fortunate that no one lost their life. He added that he is in favor of removing the Founder tree designation from the ordinance.

Jacque Villard, resident, spoke in favor of removing the trees but would like to see the trees replaced. She noted that the eucalyptus trees are not native to California and a native species would be more

appropriate. She is concerned about the fire hazard, limbs falling, birds living in the tree make messes on the sidewalks and yards. She added that real estate agents don't disclose that homeowners are responsible for tree maintenance.

Jaqueline Knapp, resident, noted that she is a low-income senior and explained how expensive it is for homeowners to prune and trim trees. She commented that someone lit a branch on fire from the street and the branches are extremely flammable. She would like to remove the trees herself but the cost to do so is prohibitive.

Chair Silberman called a five minute recess while it was determined if he should recuse himself from the item since his house is within five hundred feet of one of the groups of Founder trees.

Chair Silberman recused himself from the item in an abundance of caution.

M/S to Harper-Pedersen/Bergman to close the public comment. The motion passed 3-0 by the following roll call vote:

Ayes: Bradley, Harper-Pedersen, Bergman

Noes: none

Commissioner Bergman noted that she will vote to not change the designation. She thinks the trees are part of the shape and character of the city. She also noted that the trees are tied to a founder of the city. Commissioner Bergman also has concerns about the validity of the arborist report.

Commissioner Harper-Pedersen asked staff to comment on how Burlingame and Belmont are maintaining their trees and if those cities are paying to maintain them. Lisa Costa Sanders gave an overview of the maintenance done in Burlingame. She also noted that in the case of the Burlingame trees, the city pays to maintain them. Greg Rubens interjected that the trees in Burlingame that line El Camino Real are maintained by the State since El Camino Real (Highway 82) is maintained by the State.

Commissioner Harper-Pedersen asked the project arborist, Kevin Kielty, if the public comment regarding the safety of eucalyptus species is accurate. Kevin Kielty noted that while all trees and species of trees are different, eucalyptus trees are more dangerous given their rapid growth and the fact that the trunks can weigh up to 1,000 pounds a foot. Kevin Kielty spoke about the eucalyptus trees in Burlingame that failed and he noted that they had almost no roots or restricted root growth and the ones that failed were not the worst trees on the row.

Commissioner Harper Pedersen asked why the trees had such a restricted root area. Kevin Kielty answered that the trees do not appear to have good root development under the asphalt road bed and he gave another example from the Burlingame trees.

Commissioner Harper-Pedersen asked what trees Kevin Kielty would recommend for replacements. He noted that he would suggest coast live oaks or valley oaks to enhance the riparian.

Commissioner Harper-Pedersen asked if oaks will perform better with the asphalt road bed. Kevin Kielty answered that most tree species do not do well next to sidewalk and asphalt but oaks are slow growing and if maintained from a young age they could do well. Kevin Kielty added that he is an independent consultant and has no interest in removing the eucalyptus trees.

Commissioner Bergman commented that since there is a mechanism already in place for removing dead or diseased trees, she sees no reason to remove the Founder tree designation.

Commissioner Harper-Pedersen asked what the timeline might be for removal and replanting if the Council approves the removal of the designation.

Jay Walter, Public Works Director, noted that based on the removal of the four eucalyptus trees recently, staff knows that the project is complex and requires a robust traffic plan and there will be a lot of details to

work out to get the trees removed. He added that replacement planting will likely take place as part of the pedestrian improvements being studied along San Carlos Avenue.

Commissioner Harper-Pedersen commented that she understands the historical value but wonders if history is the only thing keeping us from removing them. She thinks in this case that the safety issues and the fact that the trees are not native to San Carlos outweighs the fact that the trees were planted by a historical citizen 129 years ago. Commissioner Harper-Pedersen thinks the original planting of the trees was a mistake and can be rectified in a measured and meaningful way.

Vice Chair Bradley commented that he agrees with much of what Commissioner Harper Pedersen said and thinks that steps need to be taken.

M/S Harper-Pedersen/Bradley to adopt a Resolution recommending the City Council approve the Mitigated Negative Declaration. The motion passed 2-1 by the following roll call vote:

Ayes: Bradley, Harper-Pedersen

Noes: Bergman

M/S Harper-Pedersen/Bradley to adopt a Resolution recommending the City Council adopt an ordinance to amend the San Carlos Zoning Ordinance, Title 18 of the San Carlos Municipal Code, Section 18.41.020 removing reference to “Founder Trees” and protected status of eucalyptus trees. The motion passed 2-1 by the following roll call vote:

Ayes: Bradley, Harper-Pedersen

Noes: Bergman

VII. REPORTS, CORRESPONDENCE AND GENERAL INFORMATION

a) Report on recent City Council actions

Lisa Porras announced that the City Council adopted the 2017 Parking Study and directed staff to move forward with four priority parking management initiatives. They are: updating the parking in-lieu fee, reconfiguring existing parking plazas, considering expanding existing TDM program, and look at expanding parking technologies like Street line. Additionally, she noted that the parking study is available on the City’s website.

b) Planning Commission comments or reports

c) Correspondence

None.

d) Planning Staff comments, reports and updates of current projects

Lisa Porras announced that the meeting on September 18 will hear the item from this evening that was continued. She will have more information on the agenda for that meeting by the end of the week. The October 2 hearing will have the proposal to amend the zoning ordinance for consideration of cannabis oriented businesses.

Lisa Porras gave information about the progress from the Wayfinding sub-committee and provided the Commission with a handout with a map and description of the mockup signs that are up temporarily around the City.

Lastly, Lisa Porras noted that Joaquin Pedrin stepped down from the Residential Design Review Committee. Lisa noted what a valuable asset he was to the Committee and let the Commission know about the process to fill the position.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:40 p.m.