



CITY OF ASHLAND



TREE COMMISSION MINUTES February 7, 2019

Tree Commissioners:	Parks Liaison
Christopher John	Peter Baughman
Asa Cates	
Cat Gould	Staff Present:
Eric Simpson – Absent (E)	Derek Severson
Russell Neff - Absent (E)	
Council Liaison	
Steven Jensen - Absent	

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Christopher John called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. in the Siskiyou Room of the Community Development and Engineering Services Building located at 51 Winburn Way.

Severson introduced newly appointed Tree Commissioner Cat Gould and members introduced themselves.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Severson spoke briefly about the January 14th site visit to the Japanese Garden.... He noted that he had understood this to be more than anything an informational site visit and had not been aware beforehand that the Commission would be asked to make a recommendation on site. He further explained that while notice had been provided to the newspaper as required by code when a quorum of a city commissioners will be present, this was not announced on the City website as a “special meeting” of the Commission as suggested by the minutes that were prepared by Parks. He suggested that the Commission make the following amendments to the draft minutes:

- 1) Instead of calling this a “Special Meeting” it would be better titled something like, "**Japanese Garden Site Visit & Presentation**", and
- 2) He further explained that the Tree Commission making a recommendation had some present confused about whether this was a quasi-judicial land use decision that could be appealed. The Parks department is exempted from Tree Removal permits by city code, and the recommendation was actually requested under the Tree Commission’s advisory role to city departments. So... instead of saying that the Tree Commission voted to "formally recommend" it might be better to say that "**When asked to provide an advisory recommendation pursuant to AMC 2.25.040.3, by a 3-0 vote, the Commission recommended that...**"

Gould noted that she had asked whether keeping the Firs would be a deal breaker to the project, and the response had been that keeping the Firs would not prevent the project from moving ahead. She indicated that she thought it was important that this be captured in the minutes.

John/Cates m/s to adopt the minutes summarizing the January 14th Japanese Garden site visit and presentation with the amendments suggested by staff and Commissioner Gould. Voice vote: All AYES.

III. ANNOUNCEMENTS & LIAISON REPORTS

Council Liaison Jensen was absent so no report was given.

Parks & Recreation Liaison Baughman gave his report.

Community Development Liaison Severson reported:

- A new Assistant Planner had been hired and that the department should be fully staffed by the end of the month.

- Severson also reported that there was another applicant for the commission vacancy and he hoped that he, John and Jensen would be able to meet with her and make a recommendation to the Mayor on the appointment before the March meeting.

IV. PUBLIC FORUM

- Julie Newman, residing at 596 Helman, thanked the Tree Commission for their recommendation to save the two trees that were to be slated for removal. **(See letter as exhibit A)**
- Brian Holley, former Tree Commission Chair, suggested a meeting to resolve the questions of how to handle donations to the Parks Foundation. Mr. Holley also raised issue about considering design for ephemeral streams. **(See exhibit B)**
- Jim Falkenstein submitted drone photos and spoke about Wildfire management and described the Tree Commission as the “thin green line” that is protecting the City’s trees. **(See photos as exhibit C)**

V. TYPE I REVIEWS

PLANNING ACTION: TREE-2018-00046
SUBJECT PROPERTY: 495 Chestnut Street
OWNERS/APPLICANTS: Tudor Heights Homeowners Association/Canopy LLC
DESCRIPTION: A request for a Tree Removal Permit to remove three trees from the Tudor Heights property located at 495 Chestnut Street. Tree #1 is an approximately 11-inch diameter multi-trunked Almond due the tree’s marked decline, large dead branches in its crown and stress cracks which an arborist indicates poses the potential for damage due to branch failure. Tree #2 is an approximately eight-inch diameter Sweetgum which the arborist notes is near a larger Sweetgum. Removal of the smaller tree is noted as benefitting the larger tree. Tree #3 is a 14 ½-inch diameter Scots Pine which the arborist indicates is in severe decline.
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN DESIGNATION: Low Density Multi-Family Residential; **ZONING:** R-2;
ASSESSOR’S MAP: 39 1E 05DB; **TAX LOT:** 60000

John recused himself as his firm had prepared the application.

Staff presented a brief staff report:

Tree #1 is an approximately 11-inch diameter multi-trunked Almond due the tree’s marked decline, large dead branches in its crown and stress cracks which an arborist indicates poses the potential for damage due to branch failure. Photos provided highlight the significant cracks in larger branches. HOA voted to request removal.

Tree #2 is an approximately eight-inch diameter Sweetgum which the arborist notes is near a larger Sweetgum. Removal of the smaller tree is noted as benefitting the larger tree’s structure over the long term. The photo provided illustrates the proximity of these two trees and the crowding of canopy branches...

Tree #3 is a 14 ½-inch diameter Scots Pine which the arborist indicates is in severe decline and is not expected to survive another summer. As viewed in the photo provided, the tree is very near already to meeting the definition of a “dead tree” – ***“a tree that is lifeless... evidence of lifelessness may include unseasonable lack of foliage, brittle dry branches, or lack of any growth during the growing season.”***

After a brief discussion regarding the trees to be removed the Commission rendered their decision.

Cates/Gould m/s to approve TREE-2018-00046 with the “friendly suggestion” that the applicant consider pruning the almond or replacing with another almond tree as mitigation. Voice vote: All AYES with John recusing himself.

PLANNING ACTION: TREE-2018-00049
SUBJECT PROPERTY: 210 E. Hersey St.
OWNERS/APPLICANTS: Matthew Bernard
DESCRIPTION: A request for a Tree Removal Permit to remove two birch trees which

are noted as dying and posing a potential hazard from the Darex Corporation property at 210 East Hersey Street.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN DESIGNATION: Employment; **ZONING:** E-1; **ASSESSOR'S MAP:** 39 1E 04CD; **TAX LOT:** 2000

There was no conflict of interest or ex-parte contact indicated by the Commission.

The application is prepared by Rick Ehlers and he noted that the birches are dying and pose a hazard.

Severson reported that these trees were outside the limits of disturbance for the Site Review that was done here in 2015 and as such were not assessed by an arborist at that time and were not addressed in the Tree Protection Plan.

After a brief discussion regarding further damage to the tree and what to plant, the Commission rendered their decision.

Cates/John m/s to approve TREE-2018-00049 as proposed, with mitigation plantings as described by the applicant during the meeting. Voice vote: All AYES. Motion passed.

VI. STREET TREE REMOVAL PERMITS

PLANNING ACTION: TREE-2018-00047
SUBJECT PROPERTY: 281 Fourth Street
OWNERS/APPLICANTS: Garfas/Quality Tree Service
DESCRIPTION: A request for a Street Tree Removal Permit to remove one 14-inch Zelkova street tree that is lifting the sidewalk at 281 Fourth Street.

There was no conflict of interest or ex-parte contact indicated by the Commission.

Severson presented the staff report, noting that the application was prepared by arborist Jeff Ford of Quality Tree Service, and that the tree is a shallow-rooted zelkova that is lifting the sidewalk. Mr. Ford noted that the tree is a mature specimen and given circumstances, pruning or cutting roots is not an option. The application proposes to remove and replace the tree with a Red Bud (*Eastern Redbud/cercis Canadensis "Alba"* is an approved street tree noted for its smaller stature as being more suited for placement under power lines...)

The Commission discussed concern with loss of trees on the corridor and questioned if the sidewalk could be grinded or the installation of rubber sidewalks could help. They discussed working with the Public Works Department to explore other options.

Cates/Gould m/s to recommend that the tree not be removed and that Public Works and Planning staff instead pursue other options with the applicant including but not limited to grinding the sidewalk where lifted, installing pavers or rubber sidewalks, looking at options similar to those recommended by James Urban when he visiting this block with commissioners in 2016. Discussion: Commissioners recognized that if other options were not feasible and other considerations such as ADA came into play, staff could be placed in a position to approve the removal permit. Voice vote: All AYES.

PLANNING ACTION: TREE-2018-00048
SUBJECT PROPERTY: 44 North Second Street
OWNERS/APPLICANTS: Trinity Episcopal Church/One Fine Day Garden Care
DESCRIPTION: A request for a Street Tree Removal Permit to remove one approximately 9-inch diameter Ash street tree which is noted as having been severely topped, dying and missing many limbs.

There was no conflict of interest or ex-parte contact indicated by the Commission.

Severson gave a brief staff report, noting that the applicant has hired certified arborist Matt Ison of Hooper Springs Tree Service working with them, he has indicated that the church is wanting to upgrade the landscaping in the park row here, and that given the tree has a large scar where a branch was torn away

and has been severely topped, he felt it would be preferable to remove it and replace it with a better tree at this time. Severson noted that standards would call for 30-foot street tree spacing, 25 feet from curb at intersection and 20 feet from a light pole, etc.

It was noted that tree was actually a Box Elder or potentially a Red Maple.

John/Cates m/s to approve the request as submitted, with mitigation as proposed by the project arborist. Voice vote: All AYES. Motion passed.

VII. DISCUSSION

Severson noted that the 2018 2nd Quarter Attendance Report was included in the packets. He explained that the Ashland Municipal Code calls for this report to be prepared and presented to the Commission twice a year. He noted that this was mainly an informational item, and that if no one saw any errors or issues he would forward on to the Recorder and Council with the monthly minutes as required in the code.

Severson apologized for not having dealt with the Tree of the Year voting in a timely fashion, and noted that he was working with the GIS department to get the map and voting on-line this week, with the idea that the voting could be complete and a winner announced during whatever Arbor Day or Arbor Week activities are conducted in the spring.

Severson noted that former Tree Commissioner Mike Oxendine, who now works as Parks Superintendent, had graciously offered to complete this year's "Tree City USA" renewal application in December, and that he was waiting for an update from Oxendine on the status of the renewal.

Severson explained that the Tree Commission's annual update to the City Council on commission activities for the past year was scheduled for the March 19th City Council meeting, and inquired who might be available to attend/present at this meeting (the third Tuesday in March at 7:00 p.m. at the City Council Chambers). Severson also explained that as much as anything, this was an opportunity to publicize on RVTV any planned events for Arbor Day/Arbor Week. Chair John indicated that he was available to present to Council on March 19th, and other Commissioners were encouraged to attend as well.

Severson explained that the annual **RV Earth Day** event this year would be on Saturday, April 20th from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Science Works. He explained that the Commission typically tables at this event, and asked if Commissioners were available and interested in tabling at the event this year. Gould suggested that this would be a perfect opportunity for the Commission to team with the Fire Department and Firewise Commission to provide public education on the recently adopted Wildfire Management Ordinance (WMO) and the Firewise Community program. She indicated that she would be interested in tabling. Severson noted that there were new WMO brochures that could be distributed. Cates indicated that he could be available to table for the latter part of the day, as he was working to set-up and take down the event, and suggested that he might be able to help insure that the Tree Commission was near the Fire Department table or other related groups. John noted that he would also be available and willing to table for part of the event.

Severson noted that the Commission typically does a tree planting, tree walk or similar activity in cooperation with Parks and/or SOU for the annual observance of Arbor Day or Arbor Week. This year, the national Arbor Day observance is April 26th. He asked if Commissioners or Parks Staff had thought about potential events this year and whether there was interest in doing something this year.

Severson explained that he had reached out to Mike Oxendine to see if there was a recommended contact at Southern Oregon University (Oxendine's former employer) who would be best to contact about potential opportunities to coordinate Arbor Day/Arbor Week activities this year and in the future given past cooperative efforts AND SOU's recently receiving designation as a "Tree Campus USA."

Severson noted that the July meeting this year falls on July 4th which is a city holiday. He indicated that he could e-mail a "Doodle Poll" to select an alternate meeting date, or the meeting could be canceled. He questioned whether Commissioners wanted to stick to the same time slot for an alternate meeting or if there was interest in meeting during the work day?

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:55pm. Severson noted that the next scheduled meeting would be on Thursday, March 7th at 6:00 p.m. in the Siskiyou Room.