

Mr. Tim Bennett, applicant, distributed some photographs to the Commission and stated he purchased the property several years ago. The landscape plan that was prepared in conjunction with the remodel considered those trees to be a focal point of the project. The project was designed around those trees. The January 4th storm caused the Oak to fall resulting in damage to the roots of the Acacia and possibly creating voids in the soil. The arborist stated the Oak could not be saved and he was concerned about the Acacia as well. The arborist recommended aggressive pruning of the Acacia. He stated water runs down that fence line causing the ground to be saturated. Any voids that may have been created are filled with water. The tree leans heavily to the north towards the neighbor's property and house. The neighbor pointed out that the cable that was placed about 30 feet up the tree between the two main trunks was broken during the storm. His landscape architect told him that Black Acacias live a short period of time (25 to 30 years) and this tree could be at the end of its life. He discussed a replanting plan with his landscape architect that includes replanting three, 36" box trees along the property line. The removal of the Black Acacia would allow the five existing Redwoods to thrive. He stated he was responsible, as the property owner, to make sure that this tree does not pose a hazard. He reiterated his reasons for wanting to remove the tree: 1) potential damage from the Oak tree falling; 2) potential for future root rot from the voids in the soil; 3) tree leans heavily to one side; 4) the main cable broke; 5) they only live 30 years and it is at the end of its life; 6) removal would allow the Redwoods to thrive; 7) they are planting new trees to make up for the loss of the Oak and Acacia; 8) to ensure the safety of his family and the neighbors.

Ms. Pam Bittner, Alexander Avenue, protested the hasty removal of the tree and asked that it be saved. The tree is lovely and adds dramatically to the skyline, breaking up the line of roofs of houses in the area. The Oak tree was damaged during the storm but it did not fall. Losing the Oak was a great loss, as it radically changed the backyard views for many homeowners. The applicant's over-grading of the yard could have contributed to the demise of the tree. The applicant has received an opinion from one arborist and she would like another opinion. If it is necessary to remove the tree then the Commission should mandate a mature replacement tree that is already of substantial size as well as a replacement for the Oak tree. The replacement trees proposed by the applicant are moderate grower and would reach about 20 to 30 feet in height. She stated the applicant should help to screen the large house he is building.

Ms. Marliss Riddle, Pepper Avenue, stated the applicant had to remove the Oak tree due to over-grading of the property. The Black Acacia looks healthy and should be saved. She had complaints about construction related events that occurred on the applicant's property.

Mr. Chris Wakeman, Alexander Avenue, stated the large construction project at the applicant's property took away his view of Mt. Tamalpais. The Oak served to screen his view of the applicant's large home. He plans to plant a wall of scrubs along his property line to screen his view of this very large house. He also had complaints about construction that occurred on the applicant's property. The proposed 36" box trees were

not large enough and he asked that the applicant be required to install substantially larger trees. He asked for a second opinion about the Acacia.

Mr. Rob Lundgren, Bay View Avenue, stated he bought his house so his four children would have a safe backyard in which to play. He is very concerned about the Acacia since it is about 40 feet from his house and leans towards his property.

Ms. Sara Lundgren, Bay View Avenue, stated the applicant's new home has gone through the approval process and should not be a part of tonight's discussion. The Oak tree fell during the storm while she was out in the yard. She is concerned about the Acacia since it leans towards her property. She would like to see a happy resolution to this situation.

Mr. Mike Bittner, Alexander Avenue, stated if the tree is a hazard then it should be removed and replaced with a tree of substantial size. The Oak tree came out too soon and the applicant's attitude was "it is better to ask for forgiveness than permission".

Mr. Lane Christman, Pepper Avenue, stated he lives next door to the applicant. He would like the City to look carefully at the health of this tree. He would not object to the removal of the tree if it were unhealthy. He would like a second arborist's opinion.

Mr. Rick Adler, William Avenue, stated this is another example of why the Heritage Tree Ordinance needs to be revised. There are too many loopholes. If the tree needs to be removed it should be replaced with Redwoods. He discussed the proper maintenance of trees.

Ms. Mary Christman, Pepper Avenue, agreed that a second arborist's report should be obtained.

Chair McNally closed the Public Hearing.

Commissioner Wall stated the agenda item had nothing to do with the size of the applicant's house, the view corridor, or the Oak tree. The Commission's job was to deliberate on the Acacia tree. Construction issues are not in their purview.

Commissioner Matteo stated he did not know whether or not the tree was healthy but noted that all the growth was on one side and it leaned towards the neighbor's property. The applicant's arborist is of the opinion that the tree poses a risk. If the tree did fall it would be a catastrophic event. The removal of the Acacia might result in the Redwoods flourishing and a better view for the neighbors. He could support the application.

Commissioner Blauvelt agreed with the comments made by Commissioner Wall. She stated she was a bit ambivalent. She stated the applicant's arborist report noted the fallen Oak had "possibly" caused some damage to the roots of the Acacia. She went to the site and could not see any physical evidence of any damage to the Acacia. She was inclined to ask for a second arborists report. She acknowledged that the Acacia did seem

compromised and was missing some upper branches. If the tree were removed she would want to see two to three Redwood trees planted in its place.

Commissioner Wall stated he looked at the stump of the Oak and it did not appear to be uprooted. Mr. Bennett disagreed and stated it fell over when they removed the tree. Commissioner Wall stated he did not see any uprooting of the Acacia but its growth was one-sided. He would hate to see the removal of a mature tree but could support its removal if there were a substantial replanting plan. This would include the planting of multiple trees of a substantial size. He also felt the Redwoods would flourish without the shade of the Oak.

Chair McNally asked staff if the Commission could require another arborists report and a replanting plan. Recreation Director Wilkinson stated "yes". Chair McNally asked who would pay for the additional arborist report. Recreation Director Wilkinson stated that staff would need to check with the City Manager.

Chair McNally stated he did not see any physical evidence of the Acacia roots being affected by the fallen Oak. He noted the growth of the Acacia was one-sided. He would hate to see the tree removed but noted it seemed to be about 25 years old. He stated there were few large trees in the area. He noted the applicant's arborist's report was one half page and did not provide a lot of information. He is inclined to ask for another report. Commissioner Wall stated the report was very skimpy.

M/s, Blauvelt/Wall, to recommend that within a short period of time a second opinion be obtained regarding the health, longevity, and risk of falling of the Acacia tree.
Ayes: Blauvelt, Wall, Chair McNally Noes: Matteo Absent: Hauser

Mr. Lundgren stated he was very concerned about the safety of his family and property.

Recreation Director Wilkinson stated this item would be on the next agenda.

The Commission took a 10-minute break at 8:30 p.m.

The meeting reconvened at 8:40 p.m.

BUSINESS ITEMS

2. Discussion of Proposal to Re-Name Magnolia Avenue Park or Doherty Park

Recreation Director Wilkinson presented a brief staff report. He noted Magnolia Avenue Park property belonged to the Larkspur School District and staff would need to discuss this idea with the district representatives.

Mr. Don Graff, Chair of the Library Board and member of the Centennial Committee, stated the committee has planned a variety of events during the year. He stated he would like to have something of a more lasting nature. Renaming Doherty Park would work

well since it is centrally located and ties into the CLASP Subareas 1, 2, and 3. He stated it would be nice to add some ground lights to the grove of Redwoods near the park. He discussed the plans to renovate Magnolia Avenue Park and stated this site would also work well. Either site would work.

Commissioner Wall stated he was opposed to naming parks or fields after individuals or changing the name of a park. He liked the idea of a plaque and lighting the trees instead of renaming the park. He stated this would be appropriate acknowledgment of the Centennial Celebration.

Commissioner Matteo agreed with Commissioner Wall but stated he was not opposed to renaming one of the parks. People do not think of the Doherty Park as a “park” and renaming it would be a nice tribute to the celebration. He would not be opposed to renaming Magnolia Avenue Park but it would be more appropriate in the downtown park.

Commissioner Blauvelt stated she could support renaming either park and felt the Centennial Celebration was a big deal for the City. Renaming the downtown park would be appropriate but she felt it would “get lost” in that location. Magnolia Avenue Park was a real park, was being renovate, and it was the entrance to Larkspur

Chair McNally stated he could approve renaming either park.

Commissioner Blauvelt made a motion to change the name of Magnolia Avenue Park to the “Larkspur Centennial Park”, if approved by the Larkspur School District. If the district does not approve the renaming of the park then they should rename Doherty Park.

The motion died for lack of a second.

Commissioner Matteo asked about the process for dealing with the school district. Recreation Director Wilkinson stated he would discuss the issue with the District staff and the District Board of Trustees.

M/s, Matteo/Blauvelt, to change the name of one of the two parks to the Larkspur Centennial Park with a priority of renaming Magnolia Avenue Park if approved by the Larkspur School District.

Ayes: All Absent: Hauser

RECREATION DIRECTOR’S ORAL REPORT

Recreation Director Wilkinson reported the Centennial Birthday Party would be held Saturday, March 1st at the Hall Middle School Gymnasium. The parade will start at 1:00 at City Hall and makes its way down Magnolia Avenue to the gym. Each City department will have a table with information and the City Council will hold a mock Council meeting.

COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS

Commissioner Blauvelt reported the City Council reviewed the revisions to the Heritage Tree Ordinance and the renovations to Magnolia Avenue Park at its last meeting. The Council supported the revisions to the ordinance that were recommended by the Commission and sent them to the City Attorney for review. The Council approved the renovation of Magnolia Avenue Park and they are anxious for the work to begin. Recreation Director Wilkinson stated the Public Works Director is gathering information so he can put the project out to bid.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Toni DeFrancis
Recording Secretary