

**PLANNING COMMISSION  
APPROVED MINUTES**

**TOWN OF ATHERTON  
September 29, 2016  
6:00pm  
COUNCIL CHAMBERS  
94 ASHFIELD ROAD**

**1. ROLL CALL**

**PRESENT:** Eric Lane  
Joann Byrd-Sockolov  
Nancy Lerner  
Paul Tonelli

**EXCUSED:** Randy Lamb

Senior Planner Stephanie Bertollo-Davis, Assistant Planner Dori Ganetsos, Assistant City Attorney Jennifer Larson and Town Arborist Sally Bentz were present.

**2. PUBLIC COMMENTS – none**

**3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**MOTION to approve the minutes of the July 27, 2016 meeting as submitted**

**M/S Byrd-Sockolov/ Lerner Ayes: 3 Noes: 0 Excused: 1 (Lamb) Abstain:  
Tonelli**

**4. PUBLIC HEARINGS**

**A. Heritage Tree Removal Permit – 56 Holbrook Lane (APN 060-172-130) – Request for a Heritage Tree Removal Permit to allow the removal of one tree. Atherton Municipal Code Section 8.10.**

Senior Planner Stephanie Bertollo-Davis stated that the applicant's requested this item be continued in order to further develop their potential development intentions and additional research on the requested tree for removal.

OPEN PUBLIC HEARING

CLOSE PUBLIC HEARING

**MOTION to continue the public hearing on the item to the October 26, 2016 Planning Commission meeting.**

**M/S Lerner/Sockolov Ayes: 4 Noes: 0 Excused: 1 (Lamb)**

**B. Heritage Tree Removal Permit – 1 Knoll Vista (APN 073-213-100) – Request for a Heritage Tree Removal Permit to allow the removal of one tree. Atherton Municipal Code Section 8.10.**

Senior Planner Stephanie Bertollo-Davis presented a general overview regarding items B – E, as they were all submitted by the same applicant (PG&E). She stated that these items were part of PG&E’s Community Pipeline Safety Initiative. She noted that all trees were neither dead nor dangerous.

Assistant City Attorney Jennifer Larson presented on the legality of these hearings. She noted that PG&E has the right to remove the trees, but that they are voluntarily going through the Town’s tree removal process. She stated that the Commission cannot deny the removal, but can help mitigate any potential damage and guide the process.

Bill Chang, the Town’s Public Affairs Representative from PG&E, gave an overview of PG&E’s history in the Town, and future plans. He stated how PG&E’s total work will affect 46 properties located within the Town. Of those properties, 10 are completed, 24 are manageable (i.e. no trees will have to be removed on those sites), 6 are still in negotiations, 4 are being presented later on in this meeting, and 2 will be brought to future Planning Commission meeting(s). He noted PG&E hopes to work with the Town and mitigate detrimental impacts as much as possible.

Commissioner Tonelli asked how many total trees – both heritage and non-heritage – were removed on Walsh Road, for context.

Darin Cline, a PG&E representative, said that PG&E keeps running totals of *all* trees removed, and can provide the Commission with those numbers at a later date.

Both Darin Cline and Bill Chang stressed the importance of “Call Before You Dig”, i.e. calling 811 prior to digging on the property. They noted PG&E’s monitoring measures.

Senior Planner Stephanie Bertollo-Davis stated that staff followed the standard procedure in terms of sending public notices to all property owners within 500’ of a subject site.

Senior Planner Stephanie Bertollo-Davis presented the staff report for item B. She noted that the location of the replacement trees is up to an agreement between PG&E and the property owners.

OPEN PUBLIC HEARING

CLOSE PUBLIC HEARING

Commissioner Tonelli noted that the tree is close enough to the road to be hazardous.

Commissioner Lane concurred.

**MOTION to Approve the Heritage Tree Removal permit for the removal and replacement of one heritage trees.**

**M/S Tonelli/ Sockolov                      Ayes: 4                      Noes: 0                      Excused: 1 (Lamb)**

**C. Heritage Tree Removal Permit – 9 Valley Road (APN 073-261-210) – Request for a Heritage Tree Removal Permit to allow the removal of one tree. Atherton Municipal Code Sections 8.10.**

Senior Planner Stephanie Bertollo-Davis presented the staff report and the arborist’s recommendation of replacement.

Commissioner Lane asked about the removal of the non-heritage trees in terms of replacement and mitigation.

Senior Planner Stephanie Bertollo-Davis noted that the Commission cannot recommend replacement or mitigation for non-heritage trees, as they are not regulated by the Town. PG&E has not shared any detail for proposed replacement of the non-heritage trees.

OPEN PUBLIC HEARING

CLOSE PUBLIC HEARING

Commissioner Lane asked PG&E representatives what the replacement plan for all trees on the property is.

Darin Cline stated that no overall site plan has been made in terms of the replacement of non-heritage trees. He stated that if the owner does not plan to plant additional trees, PG&E would work with the Town arborist to put some trees in.

Commissioner Lane cautioned that the Commission keep a running tally of all trees removed throughout the course of this Community Pipeline Safety Initiative in order to guide future mitigation efforts.

Darin Cline reiterated that PG&E keeps a running count of every single tree flagged for removal.

Commissioner Lane noted both the public and good neighbor aspects of ensuring that replacement trees are planted.

Darin Cline said that PG&E wants to both replace the trees, and maintain the Tree Canopy within the Town.

Commissioner Tonelli stated the importance of maintaining the Tree Canopy.

Darin Cline said PG&E wants to take responsibility for the fact that PG&E should have removed, or prohibited the planting, of these trees earlier in the process, and that PG&E wants to take full responsibility for this by engaging in public outreach and working with the Town.

**MOTION to Approve the Heritage Tree Removal permit for the removal and replacement of one heritage tree.**

**M/S Lerner/ Sockolov                      Ayes: 4                      Noes: 0                      Excused: 1 (Lamb)**

**D. Heritage Tree Removal Permit – 479 Walsh Road (APN 074-371-070) – Request for a Heritage Tree Removal Permit to allow the removal of one tree. Atherton Municipal Code Sections 8.10.**

Senior Planner Stephanie Bertollo-Davis presented the staff report and the arborist's recommendation of replacement.

Commissioner Sockolov asked if there was any difference between "Vegetation Removal" and "Tree Removal".

Town Arborist Sally Bentz said there is not.

OPEN PUBLIC HEARING

Commissioner Tonelli asked why this application didn't specify what type of tree needs to be replanted, whereas the other applications specified "Native Oak"

Town Arborist Sally Bentz said our code only specifies the 1:1 replacement of Oak for Oak, but doesn't go in to specifics for other types of heritage tree removals.

Commissioner Lane said the Tree Committee should look in to modifying the code to allow the arborist to specify what type of trees the heritage tree is replaced with.

Commissioner Tonelli asked what conversations PG&E had with the property owners, since the trees in question are significant.

Emily Sloan, PG&E Customer Outreach Specialist, said she met with the customer multiple times. They did not pressure them to sign the agreement, noted that it was a collaborative effort, and the owner voluntarily signed the agreement.

CLOSE PUBLIC HEARING

Commissioner Lane noted his hesitations about approving this tree removal since the trees are so large now and that they must have been there when the pipeline was installed.

Town Arborist Sally Bentz said redwoods are fast growing, so they might have been tiny at the time of installation and that they have shallow roots

Commissioner Tonelli seconded the aforementioned concerns and asked how long the pipelines have been there.

REOPEN PUBLIC HEARING

Darin Cline said nobody is happy about this tree removal. However, the tree creates a lightning risk, and if the pipeline leaked, PG&E would have to dig through the roots to get to the pipeline. He said that PG&E does try to save the trees when possible, but the location of this tree would cause issues with first response time. He presented an example, in San Mateo City where it took 4 hours to dig through redwood roots to get to the pipeline.

CLOSE PUBLIC HEARING

Commissioner Tonelli asked if redwoods could have been planted after pipeline was installed in the 1930's.

Town Arborist Sally Bentz said yes.

Commissioner Tonelli asked if the motion could specify that the replantings were redwood, and state the size.

**MOTION to Approve the Heritage Tree Removal permit for the removal of 2 redwood trees, with the condition that the replacement trees are also redwood trees.**

M/S Tonelli/ Sockolov                      Ayes: 4                      Noes: 0                      Excused: 1 (Lamb)

**E. Heritage Tree Removal Permit – 484 Walsh Road (APN 073-261-220) – Request for a Heritage Tree Removal Permit to allow the removal of one tree. Atherton Municipal Code Sections 8.10.**

Senior Planner Stephanie Bertollo-Davis presented the staff report.

OPEN PUBLIC HEARING

CLOSE PUBLIC HEARING

**MOTION to Approve the Heritage Tree Removal permit for the removal of 1 redwood tree, with the condition that the replacement tree is also a redwood tree.**

**M/S Sockolov/ Lerner                      Ayes: 4                      Noes: 0                      Excused: 1 (Lamb)**

**5. COMMISSIONERS' REPORT - None**

**6. STAFF REPORTS**

Senior Planner Stephanie Bertollo-Davis asked if Planning Staff could begin to distribute planning commission packets electronically in order to reduce paper usage.

The Commission decided that it would be best to continue distributing paper packets, but could provide a smaller plan set and to consider shorter staff reports

Senior Planner Stephanie Bertollo-Davis noted that Planning Staff is working to update the Town's Climate Action Plan, and that the Draft CAP will be presented to City Council at the October 19, 2016 meeting.

**7. ADJOURN – The meeting adjourned at 7:12 pm.**

Respectfully Submitted:

*Lisa Costa Sanders, Town Planner*