

Parks and Community Services Department

23 Russell Boulevard – Davis, California 95616
530/757-5656 - FAX: 530/297-5410 – TDD: 530/757-5666



Tree Commission Minutes
April 16, 2020
5:30 p.m.

Commissioners Present: Zarah Wyly-Vice-Chair, David Robinson, Larry Guenther-Chair, Tracy DeWit, Lauren Hwang-Finkelman, Colin Walsh-Alternate

Commissioners Absent: Stacey Parker, Julia Pollex

Council Liaison Present: Gloria Partida

Assigned Staff: Rob Cain, Urban Forest Manager

Opening Statement

Welcome to the monthly meeting of the City of Davis' Tree Commission.

Members of the Tree Commission are all volunteers and appointed by the Davis City Council.

The Tree Commission provides leadership and guidance to the Urban Forest Manager and to the City Council regarding tree removal and replacement requests.

The Tree Commission provides for the protection, preservation, and enhancement of Davis' urban forest. The Tree Commission is charged to recommend the removal of a City tree on a case-by-case basis for the following reasons:

- Poor health, identifiable diseases, exceedingly slow growth, large scale limb failure and decay;
- Potential for hazardous conditions that are caused by the street tree and cannot be mitigated without the removal of the tree.

The Tree Commission does not have the authority to recommend the removal of a City Tree for its debris, such as leaves, fruit, nuts, pollen, pine cones, needles, etc., nor does it have the authority to recommend the removal of a tree for its potential as an allergen or for solar collector installation per Municipal Code Section 40.38.00. The Tree Commission does not have the authority to remove a tree if it is healthy.

All Tree Commission decisions can be appealed to the City Council for their consideration.

Approval of Agenda:

Motion to approve the agenda was made by Guenther, seconded by Wyly.

Approved: 6-0

Approval of Minutes for February 20, 2020:

Motion to approve the minutes was made by Wyly, seconded by Robinson.

Approved: 6-0

Commissioner and Staff Comments:

Wyly informed the commission that the May commission meeting will be her last meeting as she is resigning from the Tree Commission.

Walsh stated he is excited to be a new Commissioner and appreciates the work of the commission. He has fond memories of the trees in Davis.

Hwang-Finkelman also stated she was excited to be on the Commission.

Public Comments:

Alan Hirsch made the following comments:

- Zarah Wyly will be missed off the Commission.
- The Downtown Plan has a the tree size hole in the project.
- The incorrect plantings on Covell Blvd. have not been corrected.
- AM/PM on Mace has no trees.
- Prioritize the work plan of City on agenda.

Erin Donley Marineau, Executive Director of Tree Davis, commented that Tree Davis is a proponent of the Aggie Research Center project.

Regular Items:

A. Receive Presentation and Solicit Input related to Parks, Greenways, and Recreational Amenities Proposed for the Aggie Research Campus Project

Due to a conflict of interest, Commissioners Guenther and Robinson recused themselves from this item.

The project development team gave an overview presentation of the Aggie Research Campus project, highlighting the different aspects of the proposed project and the park, greenbelt, and open space areas designed into the project campus. The presentation also highlighted the tree commitments recommended for the proposed project's base-line features.

Public Comments:

Alan Hirsch commented that the project can be a good urban forest check for enforcement of features that are being put into the project. The City needs to hire an Arborist to review features and put in real penalties for problems. Real verification of planting with penalties. Thank you.

Pam Grunnell commented that the phasing and long build out need to be considered for early tree planting as shade trees take a long time to get large. The project has dense development with large building units that may have yards with no greening. Residents will want shade for aesthetics and livability. Phase 1 should have early tree planting and not to wait for tree growth 10-15 years in the future.

Alan Pryor commented that the tree density and 1,000 trees total 25% of the area dedicated for parks, greenbelts, and greenways which is only 40 acres of the project. 25 trees per acre seems woefully under planted. The project needs to have a higher number of trees. Note two owl locations at Ikedas and Mace Blvd. mitigation needs to be completed and habitat needs to be prairie-like. I am opposed to using city land and what is the developer paying the city for those 7 acres to be in the project? I estimate the land would be worth about 1.7 million dollars.

Eileen Samitz commented that she has served on the City's General Plan update committee and the Planning Commission helping with policy. Planting on the new development should be planted with trees as much as possible and 1,000 trees seems low even with minimal pavement. I can see where owls are to not have trees at the burrows. The base-line features are only good if they are in the documents and not really as good when in the development agreement. The project may have numerous owners and needs oversight. The project also needs a fiscal analysis to prove economic benefits to the city.

Josh Jones I am a long-time Davis resident and the valley gets hot. Project should plant shade trees prior to the build out so they will be large when construction begins. The project needs a plan to plant trees in the park areas prior to building phases.

Erin Donley-Marineau, Executive Director of Tree Davis commented thanking the development team and that Tree Davis is in talks with the Aggie Research Campus developers to help with the tree plantings for the project. The trees planted will be climate ready species. Tree Davis is helping with getting carbon credits to help fund tree maintenance and for Tree Davis to perform some of the maintenance. Possible tenants could also purchase off-sets.

Peter Bell commented that he is excited for the project to come forward and with tons of trees to be planted. Likes that the trees will be sequestering carbon and how that carbon will

be stored into the soil over time. Also excited the trees will help buffer the northwest and westerly winds.

Commission Clarifying Questions

Wyly-How was the 1,000 trees number for the project developed?

ARC team answer- Yes and a Cunningham Engineering Landscape Architect looked at the site and felt this was a good number and they are working with the project design.

Wyly- Is the 80% shade coverage number for the rest of the walkways in the project?

ARC team answer-Range for the project walkways is 30-80% coverage depending on the use designation. High end is the 80% coverage number.

DeWit- I have concerns about burrowing owls and the number of trees in the Ag buffer for the project. Is there a conflict with the owls and trees?

ARC team answer-We do not think so, as burrowing owls like open grassy habitat for foraging which is being provided between the tree plantings and we will be constructing 3 artificial burrows for the owls.
Also the trees along the Ag buffer will provide protection from the farm operations surrounding the project.

Hwang-Finkelman- Questioned about trees not being mentioned in the sustainability section for the project and may be left out of the project if not mentioned more explicitly.

ARC team answer-Supplemental information is being submitted and will build upon the tree foundation for the project.

Walsh- 1) Can the Tree Commission make the comment period for the project's supplemental environmental impact review (SEIR) moving forward at this time? There may be new aspects related to trees that are different than the EIR for the Mace Ranch Innovation Center (MIRC)?

ARC team answer-Not sure as the same tree resources remain on-site.

2) In the MIRC no burrowing owls were mentioned, but with the new SEIR has the impact of planting new trees been looked at?

ARC team answer-Not sure, but we could send that comment on to the EIR review team.

3) A bio-survey was done in 2014 for bats on the project. The Hoary Bat has been known to nest in the fall and spring in the area. Will bio-surveys be done with the new project for the bats?

ARC team answer- Bio-surveys are being completed in 2020 and will be reported in the SEIR.

4) Will tree structural soil be used for each baseline feature?

ARC team answer- Yes.

5) Parking lots are on a 20-25 year build out with phased lots then they may be turned into a parking garage. Can trees be planted before the garage?

ARC team answer-Yes, but may depend on the building code at the time of the project's garage build.

6) What phases will trees be planted?

ARC team answer-Trees are being planted in all four phases.

7) Will the tree commitments be in the baseline features for all phases?

ARC team answer-Dependent on the baseline features for the project, but yes.

8) Is the 1,000 tree planting number a rough number?

ARC team answer-Best answer is the number is what the consulting Landscape Architect gave for the project given the streets and size of the project.

9) 50 acres of green space is required by state law, where and how much area will there be for the project?

ARC team answer-Green space amount will be what law requires and in the proposed areas.

10) How extensive will the Ag buffer tree plantings be?

ARC team answer-Tree plantings will be determined by the project.

11) The Bike Commission exhibit shows long class I bike paths on the inside of the Mace Blvd. curve near the project. Will trees be planted along the bike paths and will they be counted as part of the 1,000 trees on-site?

ARC team answer-Developer will not be planting trees on Mace Curve bike paths, as the Mace Blvd. and Covell Blvd. curve bike paths will be a City of Davis planning project, but it can be looked at for tree plantings for the project.

Commission Discussion

Wyly- Suggests getting a better understanding of the 1,000 tree number and look for a higher tree per acre number in the range of 40-45 instead of the 20-25 which the 1,000 trees estimates.

Tree planting may be challenging with the taller buildings of the project. Take a look at the tree planting species as not all trees are equal in their benefits.

Have concerns with the solar panels and trees in the shading of parking lots and other areas. They are not equal in providing benefits and the project needs green infrastructure. Consider the evapotranspiration provided by trees. Project needs to have thoughtful green infrastructure for baseline features.

Development team should look for a good Landscape Architect to design a balance of solar and green infrastructure.

Project should plant good nursery stock, not just large specimen trees.

Strict management plans for tree maintenance need to be in place for good long-term growth of the trees.

DeWit-Thank you for the presentation and it looks like the project will have an emphasis on tech and big companies.

Trees can be increased if the number of trees planted is being placed on a trees per foot planting basis. Although a hard number may not be what we are looking for with tree plantings.

Plantings should be done right and the project needs good verification process for tree planting to make a good development project.

Shade trees need to be started in the early phase as long as they are not damaged in the building process.

Project should determine tree maintenance costs for the long build out phase and should not plant trees near the burrowing owls. Seems respectful to the owls.

Hwang-Finkelman-Maintenance of the trees is private and therefore needs to be specified for the project.

Plant the trees as early as possible.

Walsh- Project seems to be trying to get it right for a large project. Asked about paving type on slide 15 of the presentation and whether it was permeable paving, and is this added in the baseline features?

Walsh- Land use plan shows trees around the edge in the Ag buffer and would like to see more trees in the project. Likes the idea of a trees per acre range, but more research may be needed to determine right number.

Land use should be tied to tree planting.

Bike paths need to meet the proposed 80% shading for all bike paths.

Suggest Commission make comments for the SEIR for the project.

Walsh moved that the Commission appoint a subcommittee to create tree recommendations for the project's baseline features tree commitments.

Motion moved by: Walsh

Seconded by: DeWit

Motion: Create a subcommittee of the Tree Commission to create recommendations for the baseline feature tree commitments and the project's development agreement.

Motion passed: 4-0; Wyly, DeWit, Hwanf-Finkelman, and Walsh- Ay

Commission decided to hold a special meeting in May to have recommendations ready for approval and moved forward to the Planning Commission for consideration of incorporation into the project.

Commission and Staff Communications:

A. Proposition 68 Grant Update

Staff informed the Commission that the grant planting was winding down for the first year. It looks like the planting goal of 333 trees will fall a little short due to the current COVID-19 circumstances, but the estimate will be for 300 trees having been planted this first year of the grant.

B. Topics for Next Meeting

- 1) Tree Ordinance
- 2) Recording future Commission meetings
- 3) Staff presentation on the Urban Forest Management Plan for the Proposition 68 grant
- 4) Urban Forest Division overview for new Tree Commissioners

Public Comment:

Hirsch commented that the urban forest priorities and budget should be placed on the agenda.

Josh Jones commented that trees are important in hot areas and interest is to get a good amount of trees and shade.

Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.; moved by Guenther and seconded by Walsh.

Next Meeting: May 7, 2020 Special Meeting

Meeting facilities are accessible to persons with disabilities. Requests for alternative agenda document formats, meeting assisted listening devices or other considerations should be made through Rob Cain by calling (530) 757-5656 extension 7326 (voice) or 757-5666 (TDD). Davis, CA 95616 as soon as possible, and preferably at least 24 hours prior to the meeting.