



**City of Davis  
Tree Commission Minutes  
Remote Meeting  
Thursday, March 17, 2022  
5:30 P.M.**

Commissioners Present: Colin Walsh-Chair, Larry Guenther-Vice-Chair, Jim Cramer, John Reuter, Allen Lowry

Commissioners Absent: Tony Gill, Tracy DeWit

Council Liaison(s) Present: None

Staff Present: Stan Gryczko, Director, Public Works Utilities and Operations  
Anna Safford, Interim Urban Forestry Supervisor  
Adrienne Heinig, Assistant to the Director  
Chelsea Becker, Administrative Aide

Also in Attendance: Alan Hirsch  
(names voluntarily provided) Dan & Karen DiBiasio

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**1. Call to Order and Roll Call**

Chairperson Walsh called meeting to order at 5:32 p.m.

**2. Approval of Agenda**

L Guenther moved to approve the agenda, seconded by A Lowry. Approved by the following votes:

Ayes: Walsh, Reuter, Guenther, Cramer, Lowry

Noes:

Absent: Gill, DeWit

**3. Brief Announcements from Staff, Commission Members, and City Council Members**

- S Gryczko informed the Commission that Commissioner Robinson resigned from the Tree Commission. He indicated that staff was working with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Commission and others on recognition. C Walsh stated that D Robinson had been the longest serving commissioner in the City.

- S Gryczko provided an update on the Urban Forest Management Plan effort, and stated that the Plan discussion at the Tree Commission would take place over a number of meetings.

#### 4. Public Comment

One member of the public provided comments:

- Alan Hirsch - He provided a brief briefing about the Planning Commission discussion on the car wash project in South Davis, sharing that three commissioners had called in. He stated that he met with the developer, and wants to ensure that there is a continuing commitment to trees as the land is currently leased. He indicated that he looked at the proposed standards of the Parking Lot Shade 2x2 and the DiSC project, and the developer had agreed to those standards, including signing a memo. He indicated that the Planning Commission agreed that there are issues with enforcement, had asked why the project had not been reviewed by the Tree Commission, and had indicated that the wording of the memo needed work. He concluded that the project proposed on Olive Drive had weak tree conditions, and that he would look to address problems.

#### 5. Consent Calendar

**A. Tree Commission Special Meeting Minutes - January 20, 2022**

**B. Tree Removals List** (*Informational*)

**C. Principles of Civility for City Council, City Commissions, and Other Legislative Bodies Authorized and Governed by the City Council**  
(*Informational*)

Prior to the approval of the Consent Calendar, Item 5C was pulled for discussion by C Walsh and L Guenther, and placed at the end of the Regular Items.

L Guenther moved to approve the consent calendar absent Item 5C, seconded by J Cramer. Approved by the following votes:

Ayes: Walsh, Reuter, Guenther, Cramer, Lowry

Noes:

Absent: Gill, DeWit

#### 6. Regular Items

**A. Street Tree Removal Requests.**

The item was introduced by Anna Safford, who provided brief presentations on the requests for a street tree removal.

**Location**

**Tree Species**

**1. 302 Mills Drive**

**Honey Locust**

**Motion:** Follow staff recommendation to remove and replace the tree.

Moved by L Guenther, seconded by A Lowry. Approved by the following votes:  
Ayes: Walsh, Reuter, Guenther, Cramer, Lowry  
Noes:  
Absent: Gill, DeWit

No public comment was received on this item.

**2. 814 Radcliffe Drive                      Honey Locust**

Prior to the discussion of this item, C Walsh recused himself and left the meeting, stating he had a conflict due to parental ownership of property in the vicinity.

**Motion:** Follow staff recommendation to retain the tree and prune deadwood >2" in diameter and branch end weight reduction over the street, as well as the 820 Radcliffe side of the tree to reduce likelihood of future branch failure.

Moved by J Cramer, seconded by A Lowry. Approved by the following votes:  
Ayes: Reuter, Guenther, Cramer, Lowry  
Noes:  
Absent: Walsh, Gill, DeWit

No public comment was received on this item.

**3. 1109 Villanova Drive                      South African Sumac**

**Motion:** Follow staff recommendation to remove and replace the tree.

Moved by L Guenther, seconded by A Lowry. Approved by the following votes:  
Ayes: Walsh, Reuter, Guenther, Cramer, Lowry  
Noes:  
Absent: Gill, DeWit

The item was opened for public comment, and one comment was received:

- Alan Hirsch – Stated his agreement with staff, and suggested that sharing additional information on epicormic sprouts (he indicated that they are a sign of stress from over pruning that can lead to limb failure, and can be a species characteristic) would be beneficial to new commissioners.

**4. 1113 Cornell Drive                      Japanese Zelkova**

**Motion:** Follow staff recommendation to retain the tree and conduct a full prune to remove any dead branches 2” in diameter for safety.

Moved by A Lowry, seconded by L Guenther. Approved by the following votes:

Ayes: Walsh, Reuter, Guenther, Cramer, Lowry

Noes:

Absent: Gill, DeWit

The item was opened for public comment, and three comments were received:

- Alan Hirsch – Requested that staff number the slides in the presentation. He also pointed out that the tree was planted next to wires, would may indicate the wrong tree being planted in the wrong place, and stated that the pruning wasn’t right. He indicated that the pruning of the crown is an important feature of the Zelkova. He added that if you raise the soil around the trunk and not the roots, it can cause decay around the trunk of the tree.
- Dan DiBiasio - Stated he was the property owner, and thanked the Commission for the hearing. He indicated that the tree is large and has been cut back before, including root pruning twice due to the raising of the sidewalk. He indicated that limbs have been removed, and the driveway is lifting a substantial amount, with sewer also impacted. He said the issue has been ongoing for two years, and that the tree (at 60 years old) has run its course. He stated his willingness to remove the planter box around the tree for root abatement, however the box was installed to create a more aesthetically pleasing frontage for the property. He concluded by stating that the tree was starting to damage infrastructure and he was worried about the potable water line.
- Karen DiBiasio - Shared with the commission that when they moved to the property, there were rocks in the front yard around the tree since the roots were so shallow. She asked at what point does it become more beneficial for the City to do something about the tree itself when the roots are impacting sewer lines, necessitating regular visits from the City to deal with the roots, or replace the sidewalk.

**5. 1210 Colgate Drive                      Golden Rain Tree**

**Motion:** Follow staff recommendation to remove and replace the tree, and that City staff explore a fine for this property owner.

Moved by L Guenther, seconded by J Reuter. A friendly amendment was offered by C Walsh (underlined) and accepted. Approved by the following votes:

Ayes: Walsh, Reuter, Guenther, Cramer, Lowry

Noes:

Absent: Gill, DeWit

The item was opened for public comment, and one comment was received:

- Alan Hirsch – indicated his support for charging the property owner for loss of the tree using the calculation of diameter at breast height (DBH).

**6. 1305 Chestnut Lane                      Modesto Ash**

**Motion:** Follow staff recommendation to remove and replace the tree.

Moved by L Guenther, seconded by J Cramer. Approved by the following votes:

Ayes: Walsh, Reuter, Guenther, Cramer, Lowry

Noes:

Absent: Gill, DeWit

The item was opened for public comment, and one comment was received:

- Alan Hirsch – indicated that removals are wonderful opportunities for education, and suggested that City staff provide an additional review of the epicormic sprouts on the tree.

**7. 1639 Joshua Tree Street              Aristocrat Pear**

**Motion:** Follow staff recommendation to remove and replace the tree.

Moved by L Guenther, seconded by A Lowry. Approved by the following votes:

Ayes: Walsh, Reuter, Guenther, Cramer, Lowry

Noes:

Absent: Gill, DeWit

No public comment was received for this item.

**8. 3130 Lillard Drive                      Shamel Ash**

**Motion:** Follow staff recommendation to remove and replace the tree.

Moved by L Guenther, seconded by A Lowry. Approved by the following votes:

Ayes: Walsh, Reuter, Guenther, Cramer, Lowry

Noes:

Absent: Gill, DeWit

The item was opened for public comment, and one comment was received:

- Alan Hirsch – noted that the tree is in a state of deep decline, with growths low and close to the bottom of the tree.

#### **9. 3209 Grosbeak Court                      London Plane**

**Motion:** Follow staff recommendation to retain the tree and perform root pruning if requested by property owner.

Moved by L Guenther, seconded by J Reuter. Approved by the following votes:

Ayes: Walsh, Reuter, Guenther, Cramer, Lowry

Noes:

Absent: Gill, DeWit

The item was opened for public comment, and one comment was received:

- Alan Hirsch – stated his observation that asymmetrical pruning is unusual, which suggested “rogue pruning” and pointed out that when there is surface rooting there is likely impacted soil. He indicated that it was a wonderful tree, likely a victim of vandalism.

#### **B. Oxford Circle Park Tree Removals and Replanting.**

The item was introduced by A Heinig, who provided a brief background on the concerns for the trees in Oxford Circle Park, the evaluation and subsequent request for removal of 21 trees, and the plan to inform the surrounding neighborhood of the removal and replanting efforts. A Safford provided additional details on the evaluations of the trees.

Commission questions and feedback focused on:

- In response to a question on the number of trees being removed and why removals were necessary, staff responded that there were a number of issues related to intolerance to drought, wood-boring insects and mistletoe. The Ash and Redwood trees were mostly impacted by drought, with the Pear trees experiencing their own species issues, and the Hackberry likely succumbing to drought and disease issues. Staff added that the park was crowded with trees in sections, and that it was likely some trees didn't get the same amount of resources.

- Staff indicated that the park needed a lot of pruning and maintenance.
- It was noted that staff had not provided photos (as with the La Playa Park tree removal discussion) and staff indicated challenges with timing and resources. There was discussion about the postings on the trees, as it appeared that the postings had been removed prior to the commission meeting.
- The La Playa Park replanting event was discussed as a good model for the replanting effort at Oxford Circle Park. The commissioner in attendance at the event indicated that most neighbors who observed the replanting thanked the volunteers as the dead and diseased trees were a concern.
- There was consensus that it was not ideal to see trees cut, but it was good to see planning and improvements in the urban forest.
- The park, called “big people’s park” by the community, is a valued amenity in the neighborhood, and a band formed in Davis was called Oxford Circle after the park. Members of that band formed Blue Cheer, one of the first heavy metal bands. Appreciation for the maintenance of the park was voiced.
- Staff clarified that notices had not yet been mailed to residents, but would be out shortly.

The item was opened for public comment, and one comment was received:

- Alan Hirsch – indicated that the parking lot at the park is illegal, stating there are not enough trees. He stated that the park itself, however, is over-treed, and that culling trees would be appropriate, especially if the trees are an imminent hazard. He stated that during storms, he had observed unhoused persons camping in the area, and was concerned about limb drop.

**Motion:** To request staff send notices to the neighborhoods surrounding the park to inform them of the tree removals; and when a replanting plan is finalized, request staff send a second notice to the neighborhoods surrounding the park to inform them of the proposed replanting plan, how to provide public comment on the plan, and how to participate in the replanting.

Moved by L Guenther, seconded by C Walsh. The motion passed by the following votes:

Ayes: Walsh, Reuter, Guenther, Cramer, Lowry

Noes:

Absent: Gill, DeWit

### **C. Greener Davis Arbor Day Newsletter.**

The item was introduced by A Heinig, who provided a brief presentation on the plan for an annual tree-focused newsletter to be published in April, coinciding with the national celebration of Arbor Day (generally the last Friday of the month).

Commission questions and feedback focused on:

- The benefit of leading the newsletter with the discussion on watering, and that now or a month from now would be a good time to include how to water trees into the summer months.
- The suggestion that a late-summer or early fall topic focus on planting trees and species selection.
- Sactree.org was called out as a good resource on tree selection and planting.
- Appreciation for the messaging, with the concern that the text included in a little long, and that it could be edited down a bit to make it a little quicker to read.
- The suggestion that enforcement would be a good topic to start discussing.
- The recommendation to explain the relationship between people and street trees, and outline how the City is counting on the community to help maintain the trees. It should be explicit about the ways the City can help and provide advice around tree care.
- The suggestion to have action items, and include how to participate in tree planting efforts.
- The suggestion to publicize efforts further by looking at additional media outlets, including radio.

The item was opened for public comment, and one comment was received:

- Alan Hirsch – stated that the newsletter draft was gorgeous, and wonderful outreach. He suggested the messaging focus on “news you can use” and why taking care of trees would be worth valuable time. He stated that information should include how to water trees in drought, and that the messaging should consider tree planting in the fall.

No formal action was taken on the item.

### **D. Principles of Civility for City Council, City Commissions, and Other Legislative Bodies Authorized and Governed by the City Council** *(pulled from Consent)*

The item was introduced by A Heinig, who provided a brief summary of the process to develop the principles of civility before the Commission for review.



Commission discussion focused on:

- Concern that the item was provided as an opportunity for input, rather than for engagement. Placing the item on the consent calendar was appeared not welcoming or inclusive, providing it as a regular item would have been more of an indication that Council wanted feedback.
- No issues were expressed with the principles themselves, rather the process by which they were distributed for review and comment.
- The importance of understanding that conflict can be useful and provide growth.
- Some detail of experiences with commissions (referencing the Tree Commission in particular) and staff (with a few exceptions) that have been civil, and other descriptions of issues with incivility on the part of staff, commissioners and councilmembers.
- The consensus that civility is important, appreciation for the principles that staff have come up with, and the suggestion that the principles would be good to consider at every level for council, staff, commissions, and public.

The item was opened for public comment, and one comment was received:

- Alan Hirsch – indicated that the principles were performative and not real, as what defines civility can differ by individual. He stated that civility is the guardrails of conflict, and voiced his concern that civility could be used as a mechanism to shut people out. He stated that placing the principles on the consent calendar implies that the principles are being imposed. He outlined areas to improve around civility, including not waiving advanced email notice of meetings, relabeling meetings as “special,” only posting meetings three days in advance, and offered suggestions that the Commission might look to recommend to Council.

No formal action was taken on the item.

## **7. Commission and Staff Communication**

### **A. Subcommittee Updates.**

- a. L Guenther provided a brief PowerPoint presentation which included pictures of a visit to a wood reclamation project site in Sacramento (Urban Wood Rescue). He indicated there were a lot of opportunities in the reclamation of City trees, and the staff of Urban Wood Rescue would be happy to provide a presentation if desired. He indicated that the goal is to get usable wood out for reuse.

## **B. Workplan and Long Range Calendar**

The item was introduced by S Gryczko, who reviewed the items on the Long Range for the Commission, and stated (in response to a Commissioner question) that staff plans to get into Urban Forest Management Plan discussions with the Commission and develop goals and objectives for the long term planning efforts for Urban Forestry (including the ordinance update) within the next 4 to 5 months.

Commission discussion focused on:

- Clarification that the update to the technical manuals and the ordinance related to the urban forest are related, but are not the same. Concern was also expressed that the technical updates might be best informed by a consultant with expertise in the area.
- The importance of including the Tree Commission in the holistic view of planning efforts (management plan/ordinance/technical manual), as the success of each depends on weaving them together.
- The suggestion to complete the work on technical manuals prior to the ordinance, with the technical updates presented via seminar format with subject-matter experts to facilitate discussions.
- Concern about direction from the City on the planning efforts and inconsistency with that direction in the past leading to confusion with the Commission. The importance of having a clear vision of how the planning efforts should be conducted, that is shared with the Commission, was emphasized. Staff indicated that the May meeting of the Commission could include a formal timeline presenting the framework of the planning items for discussion, and the pieces necessary for completion.
- Clarification that the Planning Commission approval of the Car Wash to be located in South Davis was completed, and that the Tree Commission would not have a formal action to take on the proposal as the project has been approved. It was suggested that discussion of the project could be a broader focus as an example that could be provided in the planning efforts to make improvements.
- Challenges with 4 to 5 hour meetings that are not sustainable, and the importance of the Commission being cognizant of time management. The development of agendas with the Chair and Vice Chair as an opportunity to ensure meetings can be accomplished within a reasonable timeframe.
- The request to discuss the Car Wash with a goal to review what was in the conditions of approval, while it is fresh in the minds, what lessons learned that could inform planning efforts and technical documents.
- The consideration of limiting Commissioner comments, as has been demonstrated by other commissions when they establish a “hard stop” time for substantive discussions.

The item was opened for public comment, and one comment was received:

- Alan Hirsch – indicated the need to have a different look at what is going on, as it appears things are going in circles. He stated the Commission is taking on too many things, and outlined 23 meetings in 2021 with nothing to show for it. He indicated something isn't working, and that the planning efforts haven't started to focus on the things being used today. He provided a history of the timeline for the ordinance update, and stated that things will not change until a different approach is used. He suggested the Commission focus on the administrative updates first, and underscored the importance of breaking up the efforts into bite-sized pieces. He offered ways to divide up the topics to learn and grow. He concluded by stating that the old process is not working.

No formal action was taken on the item.

## **8. Adjourn**

Motion: To adjourn the Tree Commission meeting at 9:11 p.m., in recognition of Anna Safford and the great work she has done with the City of Davis.

Moved by L Guenther, seconded by A Lowry. The motion passed by the following votes:

Ayes: Walsh, Reuter, Guenther, Cramer, Lowry

Noes:

Absent: Gill, DeWit