



**City of Davis  
Tree Commission Minutes  
Remote Meeting  
Thursday, April 21, 2022  
5:30 P.M.**

Commissioners Present: Colin Walsh-Chair, Jim Cramer, Tracy DeWit, Tony Gill,  
W. Allen Lowry, John Reuter

Commissioners Absent: Larry Guenther

Council Liaison(s) Present: Will Arnold

Staff Present: Stan Gryczko, Director, Public Works Utilities and Operations  
Adrienne Heinig, Assistant to the Director  
Chelsea Becker, Administrative Aide

Also in Attendance:  
(names voluntarily provided)

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

Chairperson Walsh called meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

**2. Approval of Agenda**

J Reuter moved to approve the agenda, seconded by J Cramer. Approved by the following votes:

Ayes: Walsh, Cramer, DeWit, Gill, Lowry, Reuter

Noes:

Absent: Guenther

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

- J Cramer told the Commission he would need to leave the meeting before 9:00 p.m.

**4. Public Comment**

There were no public comments.

**5. Consent Calendar**

**A. Tree Commission Meeting Minutes – March 17, 2022**

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

Prior to the approval of the Consent Calendar, an error was identified in the minutes prepared for the March 17, 2022 Commission meeting. The error was noted for correction (D Robinson had been included in the list of attendees).

A Lowry moved to approve the consent calendar as amended, seconded by J Reuter. Approved by the following votes:

Ayes: Walsh, Cramer, DeWit, Gill, Lowry, Reuter

Noes:

Absent: Guenther

**6. Regular Items**

**A. 440 A Street Reconsideration of Previous Commission Action and Report from Subcommittee.**

The item was introduced by the Chair. A brief presentation was provided by subcommittee member T Gill. He provided background on the previous discussion of the Commission on the removals, beginning in October 2021. C Walsh added that when originally brought forward, there was some discussion of the approval for the removal, which was not unanimous. Subsequent information was brought to the Commission on the Reimagine Russell Blvd. project, and additional information on ADA requirements for the public right-of-way was discussed.

Commission discussion included the following:

- Clarification that the trees has been planted in 1970.
- In response to a question to staff regarding complaints about the narrow sidewalk at that location, staff responded that while not informed of complaints specific to that location, the City does receive complaints about sidewalk impediments.
- That the Reimagine Russell Blvd. project is still in the beginning stages of planning, and no assumptions could yet be made on the plans for the stretch of roadway and sidewalk being considered.
- Clarification that the property owner to the south of the sidewalk declined an easement for the other side of the tree.
- Summary of CalTrans rules for compliance, and the challenges with having an impediment for even a short stretch of the sidewalk.
- Appreciation for the work of the subcommittee, and expressions of regret for seeing large healthy trees removed.
- It was remarked that several individuals connected with the Commissioners experienced issues with mobility, including blindness and the need for

mobility aids (such as a wheelchair) and support from the Commissioners for ADA requirements was expressed.

- The issue faced by some cities in suits being brought for violations of the ADA requirements.
- The importance of the Tree Commission to stay informed of the Reimagine Russell Blvd. project to ensure the design includes adequate trees.
- The importance of trying as hard as possible to accommodate healthy trees. Out-of-the-box thinking was encouraged to retain mature trees whenever possible.
- With some discussion of paving closer to the base of the tree to allow for a wider paved path, the Commission was reminded that the path is sloping slightly due to the roots of the tree, and the tree will continue to grow, rendering the space in the sidewalk smaller than necessary for the health of the tree.
- Appreciation for the concerns of commissioners at the loss of mature trees, and further discussion around sharing reminders about the importance of trees.

**MOTION:** Accept the subcommittee's report, and approve removal and replacement of the trees as requested at 440 A Street.

Moved by J Cramer, seconded by A Lowry. The motion passed by the following votes:

Ayes: Cramer, Gill, Lowry, Reuter, Walsh

Noes: DeWit

Absent: Guenther

*No public comment was received on the item.*

## **B. Lessons to Inform Urban Forestry Planning Efforts and Consideration of the Establishment of a Subcommittee.**

The item was introduced by the Chair, who linked the next two items on the Commission agenda, with Item 6B informing the discussion of Item 6C as well. He discussed projects that had been approved recently and the concerns of the Commission with the process of those projects, as well as asking the Commission to consider the establishment of a subcommittee to investigate further into the topic and provide additional framework for discussion.

Commission questions and feedback focused on:

- In response to a question on the focus of the topic, C Walsh indicated the item was the outgrowth of members of the commission wishing to talk about specific projects that resulted in tree removals recently.
- Concern was expressed about the Planning Commission acting without considering trees.
- In response to a question about inter-commission liaisons, staff responded that the City Council removed dedicated inter-commission liaisons some years ago.
- The need to be more involved with planning when developments are taking place. With the impacts of the climate crisis, and the need to preserve and grow the urban forest, more involvement in the planning process could have better success in the long run.
- Challenges with getting information in advance on projects underway in the community.
- Updates to the tree ordinance, and that monitoring should be a key component of the ordinance or technical manuals.
- The possible structure of the subcommittee and the focus on the process rather than specific projects. Consideration that the subcommittee might look at different topics, and could go to Planning Commission meetings on behalf of the Commission.
- Consensus to bring the topic back to the Commission for discussion in May.

*No public comment was received on the item, and no formal action was taken.*

### **C. Tree Commission Enabling Resolution (Charter) Updates.**

The item was introduced by the Chair, who provided brief background on the process so far to update the Commission's enabling resolution (also called Charter). A Heinig provided a presentation on the components and boundaries of an enabling resolution, as well as staff feedback on changes recommended by the Chair. The redline version of the document was also reviewed.

Commission questions and feedback focused on:

- No resolution on change of the name of the Commission from Tree Commission to Urban *Forest* or *Forestry* Commission.

Each section of discussion is broken out below by section of the enabling resolution, with changes highlighted in the language:

For the Whereas section, discussion included the following:

- The focus should be clear to include the trees and the environment around the trees, as the forest includes the full nature of trees (rather than just the care). The forest also includes the soil and ecosystem.
- Could include the definition of urban forest and what it means for people.
- It was requested that a whereas be added to address climate change.

For the Purpose section, discussion included the following:

- Signaling the purpose of the commission as the review and approval of tree removal requests seems against the idea of changing the purpose, suggest removing that.
- Suggest adding the reference to Chapter 37 of the Municipal Code to the purpose to highlight quasi-judicial authority provided by Council.

For the Functions section, discussion included the following:

- Updates to item b were agreed to by consensus.
- For item c - There was significant discussion on the type of authority granted to the Commission by City Council, and by the incorporation of reference to the City's municipal code.
- For item c - It was suggested that the examples of roles could be removed.
- For item d - there was consensus on the edits, however "and tree" was added after management as suggested in the discussion.
- For item e - it was stated that "review of possible enforcement actions" was vague, and that the original language as suggested by the Chair would speak to the advisory role more clearly.
- Items f & g had no comments made at the meeting.
- For item h - it was requested that the language be adjusted to read "provide advice on any development project proposals as deemed appropriate in Chapter 37 of the City's Municipal Code" There was significant discussion on this item, staff indicated that more than Chapter 37 of the City's Municipal Code would need to be updated in order for the Commission to participate in the review process for development projects.
- For item h - it was stated that it was not intent in the revision of the language by the Chair to add a new authority to the commission, rather it would be spelling out the advisory role and spelling out perimeters for those projects that would qualify.

*J Cramer left the meeting at 8:30 p.m.*

In response to the question of if there were items that were not included that should be, in the functions, topics included the following:

- Input into how trees are arranged on sites, trees in parking lots don't do that well, can recommend planting standards.
- Some input on all matters related to trees, given that the language is

limited to Chapter 37, the Commission should be looking at the urban forest as a larger concept.

- It was noted that the Recreation and Parks Commission receives the annual budgets for the Parks programs, and that the Chair would check on the possibility of doing the same with the Tree Commission and the Urban Forestry Program.
- There was a request that the Tree Commission review the workplan for Urban Forestry as well.

*No public comment was received on the item, and no formal action was taken.*

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

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

- a. J Reuter provided a brief update on the work of the Urban Wood Reuse Subcommittee. He indicated that the subcommittee met with an employee of West Coast Arborist (WCA), a contract tree care firm that works with the City, and was told that WCA has a wood reuse plant in Stockton. He was not clear on what pieces were taken and how much.

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

The item was introduced by A Heinig, who reviewed the items on the Long Range for the Commission. C Walsh indicated that he would recuse himself from the discussion of the dissolution of the subcommittee established to review the DiSC project. It was agreed by consensus that the item would not be discussed until after the election in June.

*No public comment was received and no formal action was taken.*

## **8. Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned by consensus at 9:00 p.m.