



CITY OF FORT BRAGG

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COUNCIL COMMITTEE ITEM SUMMARY REPORT

MEETING DATE: August 18, 2016
TO: Public Works & Facilities Committee
FROM: Tom Z. Varga, Public Works Director
AGENDA ITEM TITLE: RECEIVE REPORT AND DISCUSS REPLANTING VEGETATION
IN CITY RIGHT OF WAY AT NORTH END OF NORTH
HARRISON STREET

ISSUE:

Large, blue gum, eucalyptus trees were planted at the north end of North Harrison Street in the vicinity of the Skunk Train railroad tracks as much as a century ago. These trees had been a source of controversy for some time. Some residents living closest to the trees felt they posed a hazard as a source of dropping limbs, (up to several feet in diameter), from substantial heights. The lowest branches were normally found 20 to 30 feet above the ground. Other residents living, farther away, placed a high value in them as a local windbreak. The trees also grew over a City sewer main and were an on-going maintenance issue due to root intrusion. With the tops of some of these trees exceeding 100 feet, it was increasingly difficult for the City to properly maintain them.

In 2012, an arborist was hired to evaluate these trees and recommend further actions, (Attachment 1). Based on a visual analysis from the ground, conclusions were drawn that the trees appeared to generally be in good health and that the removal of certain lower limbs would be appropriate. One tree was recommended for removal. Some of the neighbors continued to be very concerned about the risk of large limbs. The trees were too tall to trim and reliably maintain without special high reach lifts. A decision was made in 2015 to remove the trees. Almost a year was spent in securing the services of a tree service that could actually do the work. The trees were cut down during the first part of February 2016.

Consequently, the neighbors valuing the trees as a windbreak expressed concerns over the loss of these trees. The City agreed to plant new vegetation to restore the windbreak.

SUMMARY/DISCUSSION:

During the removal of the old trees, substantial rot and decay were seen within the trees that were not apparent from exterior of the trees.



Regardless of previous investigations, at least some of the trees were ready to come down whether through natural or man-made processes.

To avoid future maintenance issues, vegetation should be chosen that will not grow much taller than 30 feet. It should also be noted that new vegetation planted at the north end of Harrison Street will actually be supplemental to a row of tall pines and cedars located on the other side of the railroad tracks about 100 feet away. Given the previous trees' and existing nearby trees have canopies starting in the 20 to 30 foot range, new vegetation of approximately this height should be a good compliment to the existing trees and vegetation.

Neighbors suggested planting "clumping bamboo". City staff worked with a local bamboo grower, Ryan Deshields, who had been recommended by the neighbors. After reviewing the site, it was noted that the soil under the old trees had been heavily affected by acidic, eucalyptus oil. Without extensive soli amending or even removal, non-eucalyptus plants would have difficulty growing there. In addition to soil problems, Mr. Deshields noted that clumping bamboo tends to be sensitive to wind and sun. Finally, even clumping bamboo is sufficiently invasive that root barriers were recommended, (Attachment 2).

Alternate vegetation is being investigated. Preliminarily, eucalyptus species that are either large shrubs or moderate-sized trees appear to be good candidates. Staff is developing more specific ideas at this time.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Committee review this matter, obtain public input, and provide direction to staff regarding revisions or refinements.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Arborist's Report
2. Clumping Bamboo Report
3. Ann Meadlin Email