

**Minutes Approved Conservation Committee
February 26, 2019**

Present: Bourne, Chiariello, DeStaebler, Eckstrom, Heiple, Magill, Murphy, Plunder, Walz

Also Present: John Richards, Council representative

1. Call to Order at 8pm
2. Oral Communications –
 - a. SOD blitz 5/18 10am PV New OakStep diagnosis from oaks; previously only tested bays. New EU1 SOD strain has been found in OR, not here yet.
 - b. Eckstrom questions whether poppy seeds were any good because none he spread have sprouted. Walz reports he had very good luck with his.
3. Minutes unanimously approved with 3 abstentions for absence.
4. Current Site Visits – none.
 - a. Sill of ASCC sends appreciation for our getting out site reports in to Town well ahead of ASCC meeting, because conscientious owners and landscape planners will often make revisions to accommodate our suggestions before ASCC site visit. This simplifies their process. Murphy will ask Planning to get these to us as soon as possible.
 - b. Several issues have arisen that we have not accounted for in our usual reviews: heritage shrubs are not protected and are being removed, line of sight issues. We think a review and restatement of our General Guidelines is overdue. Subcommittee of Heiple, Magill and Plunder will begin the process.
 - c. Expedited staff only review of ADU is allowing heritage trees to be removed without sufficient review. It is unclear if there is a remedy for this. Murphy will speak with Planning Director.
5. Tree Permits - none
6. Old Business
 - a. Oversight of Significant Town Owned Open Space properties – updates.
 - i. Springdown Preserve
 1. Comprehensive care calendar
 - a. Photo documentation Plunder
 2. Management Plan
 - a. What needs doing this month. First early mowing deferred until soil is firm enough to not compact.
 3. Monarch butterfly habitat – nothing new
 4. Pond – fallen tree has ducks nesting in it. Suggest tree to be removed well after nesting season in the summer.
 5. Fruit trees still bear pears. We discussed whether they should be pruned to maintain/improve production. Because this is an open space not a farm, we will let nature take its course.
 - ii. Frog Pond –
 1. Mutilation of Open Space Valley Oak by Zussmans to enhance their view. Conservation Committee denied permission to remove this tree and preferred it be left untouched. Open Space said they would not object to having it carefully limbed up. As a gesture of neighborly goodwill to the Zussmans we agreed that the Town could issue them an encroachment permit with 2 provisions: they would pay for the work and it would be done under the direct supervision of a CC member. The plan was to limb it up to open their view so subsequent growth would take the tree higher and not obscure the ridge line they wished to see. This also would preserve the natural graceful shape of the tree for the rest of the community to enjoy. In direct violation of this agreement, the Zussmans hired an arborist and without the required supervision bluntly topped this tree to the maximum amount not guaranteed to kill it. They cut back every single limb

that would have allowed the tree to assume the graceful Valley Oak shape – it will remain disfigured for decades. CC *unanimously strongly condemns this action. It is unacceptable that clear Town instructions are willfully disregarded, especially grievous because this is Open Space property. We strongly recommend that the Town take punitive action as a deterrent to such violations in the future. We additionally request that this tree remain entirely unmolested in the future.*

2. No one contacted has an interest in performing a Survey for species of interest.
- iii. Ford Field –revised
 1. Open Space has no comments
- iv. Town Center – last report April '18
 1. It is now too late to plant. The bidding process now underway should continue and decisions made so we are ready to implement in the fall when the rains start.
 2. Protecting Heritage oak. Draft of suggestions (appendix 1) discussed. It will be finalized at next meeting and then given to Public Works to estimate costs. If planting cannot be done, perhaps some of Town Center funds can be used for this in this fiscal year.
 3. ASCC for screening tennis courts Murphy will draft request.
 4. Bids have been received for tree work and will be done in the next few months.
- v. Rossotti's Field and ROW revised
 1. Open space has no comments
- vi. Triangle Park. Draft report reviewed and discussed. (Appendix #2) It will be finalized at next meeting and then given to Public Works to estimate costs. This will be incorporated into our budget request for next year.
- b. Intermediate Properties analysis and recommendations.
 - i. #26 Blue Oaks/Los Trancos Neighborhood pond.
Murphy Walz no report
 - ii. #32 Dengler. Heiple Magill no report
 - iii. #33 Shady Trail parklet. Bourne, Chiariello Plunder. (See Appendix #3) Fence needs repairing and replacing if needed. We suggest replacing if needed with rope fence as further along trail. Question of whether this fence is in equestrian easement will be resolved at next Trails meeting.
 - iv. Roadside strips Chiariello Eckstrom no report
- c. Tip of Month – Magill -thistles
- d. What's blooming now – Magill - Ribes
- e. Kudos of the Month – Plunder – broom eradicators
- f. BYH deStaebler – no new applicants
- g. Vegetation management
 - i. MROSD Plunder in contact
 - ii. The need to balance a barren defensible space with maintaining our rural landscaping and habitat is a currently important topic. Fire Fire Marshall is sensitive to this issue.
 - iii. Evening lecture we planned on this has become only a part of a multi committee effort. Subcommittee of Chiariello, Magill, Plunder and Walz will work with Sustainability (DiGiovanni and Lussier), Emergency Preparedness, and Enea to examine the problem and make recommendations for resident's education.
 - iv. List of high risk and lower risk plants, especially aimed at what to plant in defensible space is being created by Magill.
- h. Committee/Town cooperation
 - i. Public Works - Murphy
 - ii. Sustainability and Environmental Resources Committee – Murphy at 2/11 meeting

1. No Earth Fair this year; Woodside's turn and they bailed.
Subcommittee to review
2. Subcommittee on reviewing and strengthening WELO and Green Building ordinances to make suggestions to town formed.
Murphy a member.
 - iii. Trails – Bourne.
 - iv. Open space – Chiariello
- i. Broom Pull March 3
7. New Business
 - a. Hedges vs fences
 - b. Additions to Discouraged Plant list
8. Adjournment 9:30
9. Next Meeting **3/26/2019**, 7:30 pm Old Schoolhouse.

Submitted by Judith Murphy

APPENDIX 1

HERITAGE OAK AT TOWN CENTER draft 2/2019

This is probably the oldest oak on the Town Center property. Estimated age is xx?? It stands in an important place along Portola Road.

A recent arborist report suggests it needs more protection that it currently receives.

Their suggestions:

1. Prune for weight reduction.
2. Remove the compaction under the canopy.
 - a. Prevent the foot traffic. It is very difficult to change informal usage patterns, but in this case is worth considerable effort.
 - i. A rustic fence along the edge of the parking lot.
 - ii. Move the bench to elsewhere on Town Center, perhaps to the west end of this path of use where it will both act as a barrier to continued foot traffic and provide a resting spot to enjoy the view of the western hills..
 - b. Remove the constricting metal banding at the foot of the tree.

In addition, we suggest:

1. a naming contest for this important, symbolic oak
2. A placard with the new name on the fence

APPENDIX 2

Triangle Park: Suggestions for Improvements – draft 2/25/19

Triangle Park is used primarily as:

-a pick up spot for families with students at Corte Madera School. The parents congregate and visit while waiting for their kids. The kids play together on the lawn, through the paths among the shrubs, and up in the trees.

-a gathering and picnic spot for cyclists, especially on the weekends.

-a lunch spot for local workers – gardeners, construction crews, etc. who buy lunch at Roberts and then eat here if weather is good.

Points of Interest:

-deer sculpture, created by local artist Wallace Davis and donated by his family.

-Town Rock – a piece of Sierra Azul with a fascinating geological history.

-protected lawn with picnic tables which is well used.

-Several heritage oak trees and surrounding healthy native shrubs

Concern:

-Lawn area quite muddy often for a long time after rains. Is there an irrigation leak?

Goals:

- Preserve the secluded nature of the park. Users appreciate the separation from traffic.
- Preserve and protect the valuable native vegetation.
- Remove invasive species.
- Highlight and put informational sign about the "Town Rock" - a 2 foot chunk of Sierra Azul

Suggestions:

- Remove old sprawling juniper and replace with low growing native shrub. (Salvia, ceanothus)
- prune back streetside limbs of the oak "hedge" by the radar sign for visibility.
- Throughout - remove the cotoneaster, privet, pyracantha, olive, poison oak, blackberries and ivy.
- Throughout there are many clumps of volunteer small competing oaks that should come out
- Coppice all the coyote brush
- At corner of Alpine and Portola, remove the valley oak that has been for many years pruned into an unsightly 4 foot ball, liberating the Toyon that grows up through it.
- By deer statue remove the encroaching shrub.
- By small oak across from realty office remove the smaller oak and clump of blackberry
- At north end of Alpine frontage:
 - small oaks out from under large oak and mulch under large oak
 - remove several small bay trees
 - one large old senescent Hawthorne by the path should be removed. Adjacent are 2 old willows that should be removed and stump ground to prevent resprouting.
- Encourage more growth of native grass Stipa
- Improve drainage of lawn/?fix irrigation leak

APPENDIX #3

Conservation Committee Monitoring Report on Shady Trail Open Space

Date: February 22, 2019

Members Present: Jane Bourne, Nona Chiariello, Marianne Plunder

The Space is defined as Parcel 2 on the attached map.

The monitoring was started at the Golden Hills Drive entrance to the Open Space. We noted the marker that shows where the Parcel opens to the South. We did not see any other markers that show the extent of the Space. Overall the property retains the appearance noted in the 2015 baseline report (Photo 1); it consists of a riparian community along a deeply incised stretch of Westridge Creek, an oak woodland, and a trail that runs the length of the parcel. Since the 2015 report, additional mature oaks have died, especially at the base of a hillside where a seep surfaces and then collects in a ditch. Some of the dead trees are still standing and have nest cavities; some have fallen.

We were able to enter the lower portion of the wider space and noted that the understory had many weeds and some natives. The upper portion was too steep for close observation. Some of the natives noted were Hound's Tongue (*Cynoglossum grande*), Giant trillium (*Trillium chloropetalum*) with purple flower spikes showing, and ferns.

Non natives noted were Periwinkle and Euphorbia. All apparent Euphorbia plants growing along the fence line were pulled with complete roots owing to the favorable conditions, but over time, new individuals may germinate from a seed bank.

Concerns noted

1. At the Golden Hills boundary which is not part of the trail easement, there should be a log to prevent wheeled vehicles entering the Space. The log that was there in the past has been removed.
2. The fence is falling apart in a number of places (Photo 2).
3. Bank erosion has occurred along the creek, in some cases where trees were undercut or fell. One particular concern is a failing bank adjacent to the trail, where the fence has collapsed down a steep bank into the creek (Photo 3).

4. Several trees have fallen. Several snags show evidence of use by wildlife, but could present a hazard.