

## Conservation Committee Minutes August 27, 2019

Present: Chiariello, DeStaebler, Heiple, Magill, Murphy, Stromeyer, Walz

Also Present: John Richards, Council representative; Randy True, Caroline Vertongen

Absent: Eckstrom, Plunder

1. Call to Order at 7:33
2. Oral Communications
  - a. Resident Verlongen came to express her approval of the work we do and her support of committee requests for increased funding to improve our Parks and Open Spaces. This was much appreciated.
  - b. Murphy reports Stanford Wedge housing proposal is now in the pre-application phase. It would be nice to have input urging preservation of the trails before the plans are formally drawn and things are harder to change.
  - c. Current newsletter of San Mateo County Parks Foundation has an article on Heiple's work removing Star Thistle. ( <http://supportparks.org/> but link to current newsletter is missing.)
  - d. October 19 is CA Native Plant Society's annual plant sale at Hidden Villa. Local chapter is sponsoring an all day symposium "Gardening for Biodiversity in a Climate Crisis" featuring Douglas Tallamy, author of Bringing Nature Home.
  - e. Town Picnic is planned for September 14. We have not been contacted about having a table at this event. Because it occurs before our next meeting we unfortunately cannot plan to do this. Hopefully they will have more Town support in organizing next year so it is possible for us to participate.
  - f. Stromeyer relays Zussman's from PVR have suggested a joint effort between the Ranch and CC to open the views across the Frog Pond property. They and others there are evidently unaware that this is already happening and is one of our expressed goals in the program we created for Frog Pond Open Space. The PVR landscape committee will put an article in their newsletter about our joint efforts. They would like to include a link to our Vision Statement and Plan for Frog Pond Open Space.
3. Minutes approved.
4. Current Site Visits
  - a. Subcommittee on Guidelines revision -nothing new
5. Tree Permits - none
6. Old Business
  - a. Oversight of Significant Town Owned Open Space properties –Major staffing problems for medical reasons in Public works has greatly curtailed progress on our scheduled improvements.
    - i. Springdown Preserve - Chiariello, Plunder, Murphy
      1. Management Plan – details for fall discussed with Young. Outside contractor was hired to do final mowing after Town mower broke down. The thistles along the edges still need weed whacking. It is impossible for our 3 year plan to be successful if we don't more ruthlessly eradicate invasives on the entire property before they seed.
      2. Pond will have dead fallen tree removed soon. Cattails are crowding the pond. Heiple will check with Grassroots Ecology to see if they have an expert in control of cattails.
    - ii. Frog Pond – Eckstrom, Heiple, Murphy
      1. Scout project will probably happen this fall.
      2. 5 year plan; work soon plan discussed
      3. Adjacent parcel "road remnant"/park report progress. Draft outline of rationale for encouraging Town Council to make this a park was reviewed. See appendix A. This information will be shared with the next meeting of AdHoc Committee on Housing on Town Open Spaces. Hopefully their final report will not recommend housing be built here.
      4. Harding Grass Heroes.
        - a. Work party of Helen Quinn, Denise Gilbert and Murphy spent several hours with weed wrenches, loppers and

hand saws working in NE corner of property where school removed pines and put huge pile of cuttings out for Chipper program. Murphy requested of Dennis that a way be found for us to use chain saws; we could accomplish so much more. Hopefully a combination of using only experienced users, signed waivers and supervision will suffice. We might need a certification process. Richards suggests using only electric chain saws. True offers to help. Dennis will check with Town attorney.

- b. Heiple reports a local example of someone with persistent effort beating back Harding Grass - yearly mowings before seeding and gradual digging up from outer edge gradually shrinks area of invasion. Obviously anywhere we find it we should attack early while still limited in size.
- iii. Ford Field – deStaebler, Magill, Walz. deStaebler reports most *Dittrichia* mowed at appropriate time – obvious large rows along road to new bridge are flourishing and need to be removed. Not clear why they were not included in mowing. The Harding Grass that evaded the summer mowing has been allowed to go to seed, unfortunately creating more next year. A well timed second mowing could control this. The Tree of Heaven has returned, much reduced. A new site has been noticed nearer to the Swim Club by the trail sign – it should be aggressively removed soon to prevent another large difficult to eradicate patch.
- iv. Town Center – Chiariello, Magill, Murphy
  1. Plan for screening tennis courts approved by ASCC. Planting list will be prepared for Young.
  2. Subcommittee met and made a list of prioritized tasks. A detailed planting plan for fall has been drafted – last year’s that did not get done and *Zauchneria* for the circle by Town Hall/library.
- v. Rossotti’s Field and ROW - deStaebler, Magill, Walz. deStaebler reports new metal fencing attached to the wood fence. The trail along Alpine Road now has very few invasives and only a few young broom plants and the poison oak is much reduced after a day of aggressive clearing by Town staff. Two privet trees and 2 pines remain, growing larger and harder to remove. Invasive Himalayan blackberry is thick along the trail below the field.
- vi. Triangle Park – Eckstrom, Heiple, Murphy
  1. Scott is our liaison for this. He has been out on medical leave and none of our suggested improvements have been made. The plan is to do items slowly as Scott finds time on days he has been there to mow.
  2. Legally a road remnant – request officially a park? See appendix A
- b. Label trees Town Center and SpringDown – Plunder, Walz. Walz has labels, this will be done in November.
- c. Intermediate Properties analysis and recommendations.
  - i. Shady Trail. A group consisting of Chiariello, Don Bullard and one other from the Fire Department, and neighbor Lipman who was instrumental in establishing this park made a site visit and discovered many more dead and downed trees. They should be removed for fire safety. Fire department will chip the branches. All along the trail there has been aggressive eradication of underbrush, leaving much open space for invasives. *A subcommittee of Chiariello, Heiple, and Walz will make a list of appropriate fire safe ground cover natives for these newly opened clearings. We agree that an outreach of community education about this is important. Provisionally we will do an evening program in spring or fall of 2020. A working group of this subcommittee plus Lipman and another Shady Trail neighbor will be formed to explore how to get this work done*

*in a timely way.*

- d. Tip of Month – Magill Dittrichia
- e. What's blooming now – Magill Milkweed
- f. Kudos of the Month – Plunder none this month
- g. BYH deStaebler – no new applicants
- h. Vegetation management
  - i. Ad Hoc committee on Fire Safety – Plunder. *Draft letter to Council to send to MROSD (at AdHoc committee's request) discussed and approved. Final wording will be circulated.*
  - ii. What to plant in new open areas after tree death? See 6.c.
- i. Committee/Town cooperation
  - i. Public Works – Murphy met with Young. Two staff out with medical issues, some work done by outside contractors; much work deferred. Paseo del Arroyo planted and irrigation system in. Being watered 2/week now. Young requests we keep our eye on plantings and let him know if problems. *Walz will do this.*
  - ii. Sustainability and Environmental Resources Committee – Murphy nothing new
  - iii. Trails – Stromeyer. Council approved the PVR plans to create Coal Mine Ridge open space and preserve and the signage to accompany it. Lower Bay Laurel Trail in that area badly needs work – they are hoping to recruit volunteers. They discussed the Alpine Canyon Trail – there needs to be more clarity about the legal status of these trails.
  - iv. Open space – Chiariello reports committee working on Vision Statement for Open Spaces. They have created a new more informative map of Town Open Spaces and distribute it to us for comments before final approval. They will agendaize the Frog Pond Park/road remnant discussion.
- 7. Changes: Criteria and web site. Magill is reviewing the various lists and hoping to combine them into a more practical and useful guide.
  - a. Protect "Heritage" shrubs – Magill *Committee recommends that Heritage shrubs be treated in the same way as Heritage Trees to be more protected. Exact criteria to be created – take to ASCC and then Council.*
  - b. Change Heritage Tree criteria for Bay trees – Walz in process.
  - c. Golden Oaks – Magill, Walz
- 8. Rodenticide turn in event – Plunder, Chiariello. *We will have a table at the Puma lecture discussing rodenticides and publicizing the next several opportunities for turning them in.*
- 9. Fall Evening lecture Pumas - Plunder, Chiariello. Tuesday 10/15/19 at 7pm in Community Hall. Chiariello distributed a black and white flyer with a striking night photo of two pumas drinking from a Jasper Ridge pond. *Flyer approved.*
- 10. Grassroots Ecology proposal. See Appendix B. Murphy assisted Young in deciding how \$5000 allotted by Council to Grassroots Ecology should be spent. *We recommend all should go to maintenance of Sausal Creek with no expenditure for new seeds or plants.* Part 3 of their proposal could come out of the Springdown funds allocated for CC program: 6 work days divided into 3 days between mowing #1 and #2 and 3 days between mowing #2 and #3. Young decided that we should wait on committing to Part 3 and see how much work is required next spring and who could do it more efficiently. Heiple suggests if we use Grassroots for this we request that they make those days corporate group or Stanford student group workdays, because they have more reliable turnout of hard workers.
- 11. New Business - none
- 12. Adjournment at 9:40
- 13. Next Meeting **8/27/2019, 7:30pm**

**Appendix A**

1. Should 2 important Road Remnants be reclassified?

Both these properties share the odd distinction of being officially road remnants on some maps and lists, yet being used for decades as parks.

1. Historical use
2. Located in neighborhood of small lots
3. Scenic corridor
4. If Town density is to go up, important to have more park space
5. Sacramento may put moratorium on creating parks and open space in town/cities to prevent blocking housing

**FROG POND PARK/ROAD REMNANT**

1. Contiguous with Frog Pond
2. Natural experience for trails
3. Adjacent to school

**TRIANGLE PARK/ROAD REMNANT**

1. Heavily used as park.
2. Central location
3. Green open space in busy part of town.

**Appendix B**

**FY19-20 Proposed Budget Grassroots Ecology**

<b>TASK</b>	<b>Sub Task Cost</b>	<b>Total Task Cost</b>
<b><i>Task 1: Administration, Coordination and Monitoring</i></b>		
Annual Sausal Creek Surveying	\$500	\$500
<b><i>Task 2: Restoration and Volunteer Involvement at Sausal Creek</i></b>		
6 habitat restoration workdays	\$6,000	\$7,250
Supplies, tools, volunteer snacks and mileage	\$250	
Native plants and wildflower seeds	\$1,000	
<b><i>Task 3: Restoration and Volunteer Involvement at Spring Down</i></b>		
6 habitat restoration workdays	\$6,000	\$7,250
Supplies, tools, volunteer snacks and mileage	\$250	
Native plants and wildflower seeds	\$1,000	
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$15,000</b>