

**MINUTES OF THE MONTHLY MEETING OF THE**  
**TRINIDAD PLANNING COMMISSION**  
**WEDNESDAY JULY 16th, 2014**

**I. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL (6:01pm)**

Commissioners Present: Becker, Johnson, Pinske, Vanderpool, Stockness (6:04pm)  
Commissioners Absent: none  
Staff: City Planner Parker, Caldwell

**II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

June 18, 2014

***Motion (Johnson/Vanderpool) to approve the minutes.  
Passed unanimously (5-0).***

**III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

***Motion (Vanderpool/Johnson) to approve the agenda.  
Passed unanimously (5-0).***

Commissioner Johnson and Planner Parker briefly review bike racks and TAS signs.

**III. ITEMS FROM THE FLOOR**

None.

**V. AGENDA ITEMS**

- 1. CDPR 2014-01:** Coastal Development Permit and Conditional Use Permit to remove vegetation (mostly exotic species) within the southern portion of Trinidad State Beach in order to restore coastal scrub and grassland habitat, improve viewsheds and reduce fire hazards; the project also includes ongoing, future vegetation maintenance. Located within 4 acres of Trinidad State Beach extending from the paved parking lot off Stagecoach Road, adjacent to Trinidad Elementary School, to the southern boundary of the Park, near the HSU Marine Lab; APNs 042-21-01 and 042-031-01.

Commissioner Pinske recuses himself as a property owner in close proximity to the project. Michelle Forsys, CA State Parks Environmental Scientist (ES), is at the meeting as a representative of State Parks and the project.

*Commissioner Comments*

Commissioner Stockness is excited for this project and is a proponent of vegetation maintenance. She is concerned about whether annual maintenance will occur. She noted that the archeological report looked thorough, and doesn't think the project will harm the bluffs. She also agrees with using native plants for the project.

Commissioner Johnson receives clarification that work in Area 3 will just occur on the top of the bluff—no work will occur on the horizontal (bluff face) areas. State Parks representative

M. Forys adds that they would be willing to adhere to a bluff setback if the Commission is still concerned. She explains that they'll be removing mainly Spanish heather and cotoneaster in that area to allow the native grass and some coyote brush to grow back. She continues, stating that this project also reduces the thick vegetation overgrowth, which should improve public safety (she mentions a rape incident and transient camps).

Commissioner Johnson also gets clarification on the number of trees getting removed, and M. Forys states that, of the 160 trees removed from 4 acres, most will be in the 3-5' height range. A few natives will be removed, but most are Monterey Pine and Cypress.

Project details are further discussed:

- This project is exempt from CEQA.
- The portion of the report that states that brush will be piled out of public view is incorrect. It was mistakenly left in the report from an older template. All material will be removed from the project area.
- No mature trees will be removed, and larger vegetation will be removed at ground level, without disturbing the soil.
- In response to Commissioner Stockness' inquiry about wild daffodils, M. Forys clarifies that this project will be targeting invasive species. While daffodils are not native, they are not considered invasive.
- M. Forys noted that there has been a lack of maintenance the past few years due to an unpermitted vegetation clearing incident a few years ago, so she is ensuring that the Park is going through all the proper channels and obtaining the necessary permits.
- In response to Commissioner Vanderpool's concern about the propensity of the area to revegetate, M. Forys maintains that the Park has a commitment from the Roads and Trails and Maintenance crews to help with annual maintenance.
- There will be a break between the Park and the residential areas and school for a fire break.

#### *Public Comments*

Dick Bruce (780 Underwood Dr) is strongly in favor of this project. He presents pictures to show that the area is severely overgrown and was almost all grasslands in the 1970s. He also notes that periodic fires kept the landscape as a grassland.

Anne Pinske (895 Underwood Dr) has lived here since 1959 when she was a child and the bluffs were grassland. She was also witness to the bluff fire in the 1980s that killed several trees. She believes that this project will also help with public safety. She is in favor of the project and disagrees with statements in Kim Tays' and Uri Driscoll's letters.

Jim Baker (311 Trinity St) has lived here since the 1940s and states that the Native Americans managed the project area with prescribed burns. He questions if the project will conform to CALFire protocol and states that there are some large dead trees along the south side of the parking lot separating the road and the school that should be removed. He notes that the proposed break is not the recommended 100' fire buffer. He also mentions that the overgrown brush is a haven for transients and he has felt uncomfortable walking the trails at times.

M. Forys responds, stating that they are not planning on completely clearing down to the fence line, but mostly removing brush; dead or hazardous trees would likely be removed even if they are over 12" DBH. They are not trying to completely comply with the CALFire 100' vegetation buffer, would extend well past the trail, but to improve the situation. One spruce on the trail will be retained and anything dead will be removed. It will look wild but cleaned up.

Planner Parker reads two emails that were submitted by the public. One from Kim Tays (487 View Ave.) objected to the project due to its size and scope. She objected to native plants being removed to protect views and brush piles that would be left behind. She was also concerned about the project cost and the ability of the Park to maintain it. The second email from Uri Driscoll (1578 Fickle Hill Rd., Arcata) was mostly concerned with erosion and bluff stability citing a lack of analysis, soil disturbance from the removal of the roots of large trees, and brushpiles. M. Forys does not respond directly to the letters as she believes that she already addressed their issues (such as not destabilizing the bluff or removing mature trees).

#### *Commissioner Comments*

Commissioner Stockness does not agree with either letter and thinks State Parks has presented a good plan.

Commissioner Johnson believes this is fundamentally a good project and thanks M. Forys for representing and helping the community understand the proposed activities (as opposed to the 2009 incident). He also would like to make sure that the record and the project description reflect the fact that brush piles will be removed.

M. Forys reassures the room, stating that she will be personally overseeing the project. All native plants to remain within the work areas will be flagged. She and Pete Monahan, State Parks Maintenance Supervisor, will be in charge of the crews and one of them will be onsite during all work. She has been with State Parks since 1996 so she will not be going anywhere.

#### ***Motion (Johnson/Stockness)***

*Based on the application materials, information and findings included in the Staff Report, and based on public testimony, I find that the proposed project is consistent with the City's certified LCP and the provisions and regulations of the Coastal Act and I move to make the required Use Permit findings and approve the project as clarified that all removed material will be removed from the project site, and described herein for a term of 5 years, after which the permit can be renewed from time-to-time by the Planning Commission with the condition that the report.*

- 2. General Plan Update:** Community Design Element continued discussion on draft, figures, background information.

Planner Parker notes that there are not a lot of edits because there were not many specific changes made at the last meeting.

Commissioner Pinske included Commissioner Becker's area in his "homework" and will give it to Planner Parker. He inquires about the proposed trails, bike racks and benches on the map, and Planner Parker notes that some of it came from the City's Bench Plan. The City also got a grant to install bike racks but ended up installing only two.

Commissioner Pinske did not agree with the proposed public trail through the Trinidad Elementary School from Trinity Street to Underwood, and the Commission discusses the merit of this trail. Planner Parker explains that this trail came from a suggestion in a walkability study done of Trinidad. The intent was to make it easier for people to access the central, commercial part of town from residential areas without a vehicle. Commissioner Johnson does not see the benefit of the trail; it is not that long of a walk around public streets.

Steve Saunders, who owns property that the trail crosses, is surprised that it was proposed. He is not in favor of it and was considering putting up a fence. He states that the gate between the school and his vacant lot is a safety issue for the school kids.

In response to the question of the public using the school grounds, Planner Parker notes that State law says that state school grounds have to be open to the public outside school hours. She gives additional background, stating also that the idea of the proposed trails in the General Plan is to plan for future trails. If there is significant public need for a proposed trail, this makes the process easier or the access to grant funding easier. The Coastal Act requires public access and trails are gained through requiring easements for as conditions for development.

Commissioners Pinske and Johnson are not in favor of the trail through the school. Planner Parker will consider other nearby access. The walkability study focused on seniors and the path through the school was more direct than a route around.

Figure 10 should be referenced as part of the Open Space and Conservation as related to lighting and undergrounding, and referenced in the Circulation Element.

Commissioner Johnson anticipated trail markers having numbers for easier navigation. He thinks it would be useful to number trail markers and benches and this would be nice on the City's map, too. The sign at the base of the Trinidad Head access needs maintenance; it is out-of-date and tattered.

Vista points also need to be identified and labeled. The Commission should identify public view points that need protection and potential view points. Commissioner Johnson would to pursue a viewpoints policy. Planner Parker suggests including vegetation maintenance in this policy along with development restrictions, benches, platforms, etc.

Picnic areas should be noted on the map at State Parks, the Head and Janice Park.

Planner Parker reviews the City's bench installation policy.

Revisions for Figure 10 include making it larger (11x17), street names, reference in OS and Conservation.

Commissioner Vanderpool is missing some information from his assignment and will email the results to Planner Parker (who gives the options: email, dropping it off with Gabe, office delivery)

The Commission contemplates view corridors, thinks they are difficult to define and should be left as a general.

Signs are discussed along with the City Manager's recent letter to businesses in town. More thought needs to be put into signs, including policy and zoning. Murals should be subject to design review. Planner Parker reminds Commissioners that nonconforming signs are amortized in the existing zoning ordinance, and that practice can continue. The Building Inspector will be working on a sign inventory; Planner Parker will check if the signs have been inventoried by the next meeting.

Native drought-tolerant plants should be "preferred or highly recommended to be used to the extent possible and invasive species avoided."

## **VI. COUNCIL & STAFF REPORT**

The City is going to submit the LCP grant and use it to finish the Cultural Element, overhaul the Zoning Ordinance and address climate change and sea level rise.

Planner Parker is still waiting for input from the Coastal Commission regarding the VDU water use standards. She is still working on Clean Beaches and OWTS operating permits.

There was no City Council meeting in July.

## **VI. ADJOURNMENT**

**Submitted by:**

**Sarah Caldwell**

Secretary to Planning Commission

**Approved by:**

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**Mike Pinske**

Planning Commission Chair