

Public Comments
Agenda Item 7 –
Tree Removal Permit Fee
Written Comments Received By 12pm on 09/11/2023



September 11, 2023
City Council Meeting

From: Gail Benton Shoemaker [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, September 8, 2023 10:16 AM
To: Public Comment; Bigstyk, Tygarjas; Vaterlaus, Sue; Beckmeyer, Sue; Bier, Mary; Boles, Christine
Cc: Petersen, Lisa; Woodhouse, Kevin; Murdock, Christian
Subject: Agenda Item 7, City Council Meeting 9/11/23

[CAUTION: External Email]

Dear City Council,

Thank you for putting the tree permit fee on the agenda for the 9/11 meeting. Unfortunately I will be away on a trip planned before the pandemic, so I will not be able to attend. Below are my comments for agenda item #7.

My name is Gail Benton Shoemaker and I am writing as a member of Tree City Pacifica.

Tree City Pacifica strongly opposes a \$1000 fee for tree permits. This is an undue burden on citizens and will encourage illegal tree removals. Illegal tree removals can be dangerous, causing situations such as flooding. When people do not get tree permits there is no opportunity for neighbors to appeal the removal of a tree. Also, illegal tree removals mean that replacement trees will not be planted, thus reducing the city's canopy.

Recently Tree City Pacifica has been contacted about illegal tree removals occurring in Pacifica neighborhoods. Citizens are concerned, but uncomfortable reporting on their neighbors, so there are no consequences. In the past code enforcement has not enforced penalties for violations of the tree ordinance, and it is unlikely they will to do so in the future.

For 40 years the City of Pacifica has supported the urban forest by having a comprehensive tree ordinance, a city arborist, and low fees for tree permits. Most cities recognize the urban forest as a community benefit because it combats climate change and improves our health and property values. There is no discussion of "cost recovery or subsidizing" for the urban forest (as well as for police and fire services) because of the value to the community.

We are pleased to see in the Staff Report that an RFP is out for an arborist. Tree City Pacifica lobbied for the passage of Measure Y to help the city afford to hire an

arborist. One arborist handling all tree related tasks, such as the model in Pacific Grove, could be more efficient and cost effective than the current use of multiple consultants. We support the simple process of the city arborist inspecting the tree and deciding to issue the permit.

Other cities have tree permit fees of \$105 or \$112. Those cities make this fee more affordable to encourage residents to follow their ordinances. Tree City Pacifica is requesting that the Council recognize the urban forest as a community benefit and change the tree permit fee to \$150, a reasonable amount similar to that of neighboring cities.

Thank you.

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From: Coffey, Sarah
Sent: Monday, September 11, 2023 9:02 AM
To: Public Comment
Subject: FW: Pacifica council Meeting Date: Sept 11, 2023. Agenda Item 7 - Tree Permit Fee

-----Original Message-----

From: Mary Rummelhart [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, September 9, 2023 9:31 AM
To: Bigstyck, Tygarjas <tbigstyck@pacificagov>; Beckmeyer, Sue <sbeckmeyer@pacificagov>; Coffey, Sarah <scoffey@pacificagov>; Vaterlaus, Sue <svaterlaus@pacificagov>; Bier, Mary <mbier@pacificagov>; Woodhouse, Kevin <kwoodhouse@pacificagov>
Subject: Pacifica council Meeting Date: Sept 11, 2023. Agenda Item 7 - Tree Permit Fee

[CAUTION: External Email]

Dear Pacifica Council and Staff,

I would like to express my concerns with the Pacifica Tree Application Permit requirement from personal experience.

I am having my upper deck on the second story replaced due to dry rot issues. This deck extends from the living/dining room and kitchen. I hired a local architect and applied for a permit

The Permit came back from the City requiring a review for “ PUBLIC WORKS – TREE APPLICATION DEVELOPMENT REVIEW REPORT ” as there was one tree in my yard and one in my neighbor’s yard within 50 feet of the deck. With my approval, the architect hired a licensed arborist to access the trees and requirements and handle the required documents.

He entered my yard and could see almost immediately there were no issues with either tree in accordance with the tree ordinance. It’s my understanding that most city ordinances require trees be located closer to the project and that trees 50 feet away do not normally affect the project. Not sure how the City obtained the “arial”View - Goggle maps?

It cost me \$2500 for arborists’ fees for a “non-issue”. That’s quite an additional cost to me that was not necessary.

The original permit application was submitted to the City in mid-June, the Tree documentation in August. I am hoping for a final approval from the City any day now and hope my contractor can still work on my project which was tentatively scheduled in August.

Hopefully, the City can amend this ordinance to be more realistic and/or specific to residents of Pacifica requiring permits of this type. I agree that it’s important to keep our trees safe when doing any type of construction work. My deck is a replacement of an existing deck and could be a safety issue if not replaced. A visual observance by anyone could see there was no issue causing harm to either tree.

Thank you.

Mary Rummelhart



Sent from my iPhone

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From: Cindy Abbott [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, September 11, 2023 12:00 PM
To: Public Comment; Bigstych, Tygarjas; Mary Bier; Boles, Christine; Beckmeyer, Sue; Vaterlaus, Sue
Subject: City Council, Sept 11, Item 7, Tree Permit Fee

[CAUTION: External Email]

Dear Mayor and City Council Members,

Thank you so very much for bringing the subject of the Tree Permit Fee back to Council for deliberation. I hope that you will move forward to returning the fee to the \$200 - \$275 range that it has been for many years and that is more in line with how other Cities in the area operate.

City staff's analysis misses a key point: trees are an asset to our community and their review and protection should not be subject to "full cost recovery". City Council Goals to 2) Improve and steward City infrastructure, streets and facilities, and 4) Pursue climate change adaptation and mitigation, should be acknowledged as including the important, actually critical issue, of understanding and preserving our urban forest.

Following the approval of the new Tree Preservation Ordinance (Heritage Tree Ordinance) city staff has added layers of complications to the review process. Burdening the community because of this change is not appropriate. Actions that should be considered are:

- Hire an arborist (which is how the city operated for many years and without such key staff now, has suffered);
- Re-review the process that did not have the extensive layers of city departments and consultants as have been added into the current structure.
- Educate the public on how to maintain and preserve trees.

Interest has been expressed to support city staff to get the word out about the ordinance, tree maintenance, and can also be utilized to review the current process and communication.

Please do NOT put off implementation of the new ordinance, move forward with documenting the urban forest, but do this for the overall good of the community that does benefit from the beauty, climate enhancing and heat reducing canopy.

I am available to help with this process.

Thank you.

Cindy Abbott

West Sharp Park

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