



Item No. 18 Town of Atherton

CITY COUNCIL STAFF REPORT – REGULAR AGENDA

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL
GEORGE RODERICKS, CITY MANAGER

THROUGH: ROBERT OVADIA, PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR

FROM: SALLY BENTZ-DALTON, PARK MANAGER/TOWN ARBORIST

DATE: NOVEMBER 17, 2021

SUBJECT: DISCUSS FINAL RESOLUTION REGARDING MEDIAN STREET
TREE REPLACEMENT FOR TUSCALOOSA AVENUE AND MT.
VERNON LANE AND ACCEPT A DONATION TO FUND A
LARGER TREE AT MT. VERNON LANE

RECOMMENDATION:

Discussion of final resolution regarding median street tree replacements for Tuscaloosa Avenue and Mt. Vernon Lane; and if appropriate, accept a donation to fund a larger size tree on Mt. Vernon Lane.

BACKGROUND

Due to the poor condition of the median trees on Mount Vernon Lane and Tuscaloosa Avenue and the associated risk to public safety, the City Council, at their April 21, 2021, meeting, approved the removal of the trees. Staff provided public notification to area residents in advance of the tree removals and advised them of the Town's intent to plant replacement trees. After the removals staff met via zoom with interested residents on each immediate street to discuss replacement options and potential constraints. During each meeting, staff provided a PowerPoint presentation with recommended species and residents had the opportunity to provide input.

At the September 15, 2021, meeting the City Council considered the replacement of the median street trees on Tuscaloosa Avenue and Mt. Vernon Lane that were removed due to safety and liability concerns. Council indicated support for replacement of the Mt. Vernon tree with a Cork Oak on the side of the roadway, due to the limited roadway width, with the understanding that the fronting property owner would maintain the tree. The Council further supported the replacement of the Tuscaloosa median tree with a Valley oak, within the existing median island.

The Council further advised that the Town would fund the replacements at a 60" box size and requested that staff investigate the potential for larger size trees (72" box) if supported and funded

by the residents. On Tuscaloosa, such investigation would include an assessment of the potential expansion of the median to support the larger tree.

ANALYSIS

Tuscaloosa Avenue

The planting hole necessary to accommodate the planting of a 72" box tree would need to be a minimum of 7 feet by 7 feet. The planting hole necessary for a 60" box tree will need to be a minimum of 5.5-6 feet x 5.5-6 feet. The existing Tuscaloosa median is an oval shape, approximately 19 feet long and 7.5 feet wide at its widest point. Thus, anything larger than a 60' box tree could not be accommodated in the current median.

Staff assessed the median and studied the possibility of an expansion. To provide enough space for planting the larger tree, the median would need to be widened a minimum of 1 foot on each side. Expanding median would necessitate widening the paved roadway to accommodate a travel lane in each direction with a buffer at the median and on the edges. Such a widening would predominantly impact improvements and parking along the frontage of 185 Tuscaloosa, with less of an impact to 184 Tuscaloosa. In reviewing the existing utilities, it was noted that there is an existing sewer line in close proximity to the median on the northside. Allowing tree roots to migrate closer to the sewer line is not favored.

Staff met with the property owner at 185 Tuscaloosa, who was most interested in increasing the tree size, to review the issues and impacts of increasing the tree size. Following the consultation, the property owner was supportive of replacing the tree with the 60" box that would fit within the existing median.

It is recommended that Council approve the 60" box Valley Oak tree in the existing median. The median island would be raised to provide a 6" curb and pavement markings and delineators installed for visibility and safety.

Tree Movers quoted the 60" box Valley Oak which includes delivery, crane if needed, planting and a 1-year warranty to be approximately \$8,000. The approximate specification on this tree is 16-20' tall by 7-11' wide.

Mt. Vernon Lane

As noted above, the planting hole necessary to accommodate the planting of a 72" box tree would need to be a minimum of 7 feet by 7 feet. Staff reviewed the proposed planting location with the fronting property owner and verified that there is adequate space along the frontage strip to accommodate a larger tree, if funded by the residents.

The cost to purchase a larger 72" box size tree is estimated to be an additional \$4,000 - \$6,000. A site visit is needed by Tree Movers to determine if a crane will be needed for to plant the tree. The estimated cost for the crane is an additional \$4,000-\$6,000. These costs were shared with the Mt.

Vernon Lane residents. Multiple residents on Mount Vernon Lane have pledged to donate up to \$16,000 to cover the cost of the larger tree.

It is recommended that Council accept the donation from Mt. Vernon residents to allow for planting of the 72” box Cork Oak along the frontage strip of Mt. Vernon Lane, with the understanding that the tree would be maintained by the fronting property owner.

POLICY FOCUS

The replanting of these trees will follow Town policy. Per section 8 of the Town’s Tree Inspection and Risk Policy the Town must replace City trees that are removed with the same or a similar species in the same general location unless soil, terrain, planned improvements or other conditions make another type or location for planting more appropriate. In locations where new trees are needed the species of new trees shall be approved by the Arborist and shall meet International Society of Arboriculture guidelines. Selection criteria will include, but not be limited to, height and size at maturity with resulting impact on hardscapes, curbs, gutters, walkways, and utilities, predicted longevity, and maintenance requirements.

FISCAL IMPACT

The funding for the replacement trees (60” size) will come from the Street Tree Maintenance budget. The current budget for the care and maintenance of the Town’s Street trees is \$70,000, which includes scheduled pruning, emergency pruning, removals, and plant health care. Additional funding related to the proposed increased size of the replacement tree on Mount Vernon Lane needed would be donated by residents on Mt. Vernon Lane.

GOAL ALIGNMENT

This Report and its contents are in alignment with the following Council Policy Goals:

- Goal B – Preserve Small Town Character and Quality of Life

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public notification was achieved by posting the agenda, with this agenda item being listed, at least 72 hours prior to the meeting in print and electronically. Information about the project is also disseminated via the Town’s electronic News Flash and Atherton Online. There are approximately 1,200 subscribers to the Town’s electronic News Flash publications. Subscribers include residents as well as stakeholders – to include, but be not limited to, media outlets, school districts, Menlo Park Fire District, service providers (water, power, and sewer), and regional elected officials.

COMMISSION/COMMITTEE FEEDBACK/REFERRAL

This item ___ has or ___ X ___ has not been before a Town Committee or Commission.

___ Audit/Finance Committee (meets every other month)

Median Tree Replacements

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- Bicycle/Pedestrian Committee (meets as needed)
- Civic Center Advisory Committee (meets as needed)
- Environmental Programs Committee (meets every other month)
- Park and Recreation Committee (meets each month)
- Planning Commission (meets each month)
- Rail Committee (meets every other month)
- Transportation Committee (meets every other month)
- Tree Committee (meets each month)

ATTACHMENTS

None