CITY OF MANHATTAN BEACH
PARKING AND PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS COMMISSION
MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING
JANUARY 25, 2007

A. The Regular Meeting of the Parking and Public Improvements Commission of the City of Manhattan Beach was held on January 25, 2007, at 6:33 p.m. in the City Council Chambers of the City Hall, 1400 Highland Avenue.

B. ROLL CALL

Members Present: Donahue, Osterhout, Paralusz, Seville-Jones and Chairperson Lang
Members Absent: None
Staff Present: Robert Osborne, Management Analyst
Kara Pompano, Recording Secretary
Erik Zandvliet, Traffic Engineer

C. AGENDA CHANGES

Management Analyst Osborne announced that Item 3 is removed from the agenda as the appellant withdrew the appeal.

D. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – December 7, 2006

A motion was MADE and SECONDED (Seville-Jones/Paralusz) to approve the minutes of December 7, 2006.

AYES: Donahue, Osterhout, Paralusz, Seville-Jones and Chairperson Lang
NOES: None
ABSENT: None
ABSTAIN: None

E. CITY COUNCIL AGENDA

Management Analyst Robert Osborne reported that City Council approved the Commission's recommendation to remove the existing painted crosswalk and install "No Pedestrian Crossing" signs across Sepulveda Boulevard at 14th Street.

F. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

In response to questions from **Dave Watchfogel, 500 Block of 31st Street,** regarding the item removed from the Agenda (Appeal of Existing Policy Prohibiting Removal of a Nuisance Tree - 592 31st Street), Public Works Maintenance Supervisor Juan Price provided background information and clarified staff's recommendation on the matter.

Mr. Watchfogel questioned the City's stance on the issue and why Ms. Knickerbocker has to cover the cost for damages done to her property by this tree.

Mickey Knickerbocker, 500 Block of 31st Street, talked of the damage done to her property by this tree and how she was told the City would be responsible.

Public Works Director Miller confirmed that the City will be removing the tree and that per City ordinance, the property owner is responsible for the maintenance of a tree as well as any damage it causes. However, Ms. Knickerbocker has the right to file a claim to the property owner or the City, whomever she feels is responsible.

G. GENERAL

1. Appeal of Existing Policy Prohibiting Removal of Streetscape Trees for View Enhancement – 8th Street and Manhattan Avenue

Public Works Director Neil Miller presented staff's report and recommendation to deny the appeal and uphold staff's decision to maintain the carrot wood trees from the intersection of 8th Street and Manhattan Avenue.

Audience Participation

Chris Griffin, 200 Block of 8th Street, spoke on behalf of the residents of the 200 Block of 8th Street who have petitioned the City to remove the trees, installed during the Downtown beautification project, and replace them with shorter trees that more closely comply with City Code. Utilizing a Power Point presentation, he reviewed how the current trees are affecting views and are not in line with typical landscaping in the area. He reviewed alternate trees that can be planted, noting that the Downtown Business Owner's Association has not objection to the replacement of the trees.

Richard Buckley, 200 Block of 8th Street, stated that these trees were planted over 20 years ago and their growth and canopy size have gotten worse and worse. The residents are not against trees – they are just asking that the trees be in proper balance to the area. He asked that the Commission consider this petition a reasonable request and act accordingly, adding that he would be willing to contribute to the costs if necessary.

In response to a number of questions from the Commission, Public Works Maintenance Supervisor Juan Price explained that any tree can be relocated, but is a costly expense and the success rate of the replanted tree varies, with about half surviving. The City heavily trims these trees and is actually over -pruning them to maintain their size.

Public Works Director Miller shared that the PPIC and City Council have been asked in the past to remove a Streetscape tree for the purpose of enhancing view and the request was denied by both. The circumstances whereby trees can be removed are described in Section 7.32.070 Public Nuisance. It describes many situations which constitute a nuisance; however view obstruction is not one of those.

Public Works Director Miller further explained that the Downtown Streetscape is 20 years old and that a project to redo the area, which includes replacement of these carrot wood trees, is currently on the City's unfunded project list. Staff is not opposed to the replacement of these trees but questions a piecemeal approach, and that funding is also an issue.

Public Works Maintenance Supervisor Price stated that there are a total of 75 carrot wood trees and that even with the severe pruning taking place; these trees will double in size over the next ten years.

Discussion

Commissioner Seville-Jones stated that although she is sympathetic to the residents concerns, she has to question how the City can deal with these four trees and not the rest. She stated that she is leaning toward the short term measure of pruning the trees as much as possible in hopes that the City Council will address the long term solution of replacing the trees.

Commissioner Osterhout agreed, commenting that he does not find reason to overturn staff's recommendation, noting the past decision of the City Council to retain the trees.

Commissioner Donahue pointed out that the trees have been cut back since the pictures were taken for the Power Point, and that he believes the 8th Street residents have a great view. Commissioner Donahue stated that it is best to address the situation of the trees together, versus a piecemeal approach, and that he will support staff's recommendation.

Commissioner Paralusz noted her agreement with Commissioner Seville-Jones, stating that she too is sympathetic to the residents' concerns, however will support staff's recommendation as removal of the trees is not justified under the City's Code.

Chairperson Lang voiced his support of pruning the trees as an interim measure until the City is able to address the long term solution. He also questioned why a Downtown beautification plan includes the planting of trees which can block the very ocean that makes the area so beautiful to begin with.

Action

A motion was MADE and SECONDED (Seville-Jones/Paralusz) to deny the appeal of existing policy prohibiting removal of streetscape trees for view enhancement - 8th Street and Manhattan Avenue; instruct staff to prune the trees more often; and request that the City Council address the trees in Downtown Streetscape in light of the future damage they can cause.

AYES:	Donahue, Osterhout, Paralusz, Chairperson Seville-Jones and Chairperson Lang
NOES:	None

ABSENT: None
ABSTAIN: None

2. Appeal of Existing Policy Prohibiting Plantings or Structures in Excess of 42 Inches – 3404 The Strand

Public Works Maintenance Supervisor Juan Price presented staff's report and recommendations to deny the appeal of staff's decision to have a cluster of Norfolk Island pine trees removed from the public right of way west of 3404 The Strand in accordance with Council policy and Strand Gardens.

The Commission held discussion on this item, with staff clarifying the background of the "Strand Gardens". Although there is not an official ordinance governing this area, City Council instructed staff with the task of bringing the Strand Gardens into the City Council mandated compliance relative to non compliant plantings, structures and rights of way encroachments. This property is one of the few percent that have not complied with the City's policy and complaints stem back 8 to 10 years. Staff has made attempts to contact and work with the property owner to no avail.

Per an inquiry from Commissioner Donahue, Maintenance Supervisor Price shared that he is unsure if the plaque associated with these trees represent a memorial of some type.

Audience Participation

Sharing that he lived on the Strand since 1971, **Wayne Partridge, 3520 The Strand,** stated that this area was literally ignored by the City and the County for a number of years and was filled with dirt, debris and erosion. Residents moved in and started taking care of the area which evolved into what it is today. He agrees that some residents have "overdone" it and doesn't dispute staff's recommendations. However, he does dispute staff's policy that enforcement of non compliance is driven on a complaint basis, as it makes for ill feelings among neighbors. Mr. Partridge also suggested that the City consider grandfathering some of the landscaping planted by those who took the care and responsibility for this area.

Discussion

Commissioner Donahue stated that although they are beautiful trees, they are large in stature. He asked if it would be feasible to replant the trees especially if they were planted as a memorial.

Commissioner Paralusz stated that she is favor of upholding staff's recommendation, It is a beautiful tree but does not belong on the Strand She also voiced her concern that the homeowner did not have the courtesy to respond to staff or appear before the Commission.

Commissioner Osterhout pointed out that staff has tried to mediate this situation with the homeowner to no avail. He will support staff's recommendation as the tree is not appropriate and residents need to know that planting on public property can be at risk.

Commissioner Seville-Jones pointed out that this situation was brought to the City's attention because staff was directed by City Council to bring the area into compliance. She believes the issue of grandfathering would be a good idea, noting that if the tree was 40 years old, she would most likely have a different perspective on its removal. Commissioner Seville-Jones stated that she does not believe an official ordinance is necessary as the Coastal Commission would then need to be involved.

Chairperson Lang voiced his support of the removal of the tree and stated that he is less sensitive to the relocation of the tree due to the resident's unwillingness to cooperate or participate. He suggested that one more effort be made to contact the property owner and if there is no response, the tree be removed. Chairperson Lang also stated that he is confident issues such as this can be handled on a case by case basis and that no formal ordinance is needed.

The Commission held brief discussion on the possible relocation of the tree with Public Works Maintenance Supervisor Price stating that he would have to look into whether relocation is technically feasible and that it would be very expensive due to access. He will make every effort to attempt the property owner, noting that she is not living on the premises, and is willing to do whatever it takes to keep peace while trying to be sympathetic to all the residents.

Action

A motion was MADE and SECONDED (Paralusz/Osterhout) to deny the appeal of staff's decision to have a cluster of Norfolk Island pine trees removed from the public right of way west of 3404 The Strand in accordance with Council policy and Strand Gardens.

AYES:	Donahue, Osterhout, Paralusz, Chairperson Seville-Jones and Chairperson Lang
NOES:	None
ABSENT:	None
ABSTAIN:	None

3. Appeal of Existing Policy Prohibiting Removal of Nuisance Tree – 592 31st Street

Above item removed from Agenda per appellant's withdrawal of appeal.

4. Request for Stop Signs – Pacific Avenue at 18th Street

Traffic Engineer Erik Zandvliet presented staff's report and recommendations to deny the request for stop signs at Pacific Avenue at 18th Street; paint 25 feet of red curb on Pacific Avenue between the intersection and the first driveway on the northeast and southwest

corners; and replace and relocate school crossing warning signs on Pacific Avenue at the intersection of 18th Street in both directions.

Audience Participation

Paul Beswick, 1700 Block of Pacific Avenue, referenced their submitted petition for the stop signs, which states that the residents feel very strongly that the current situation at this corner presents a significant hazard to public safety and a potential liability for the City. There is a safety hazard for pedestrians, especially school children, crossing Pacific Avenue and for both cars traveling along Pacific Avenue and those pulling out of 18th Street. He questioned the report's findings on traffic collisions, volumes and speeds, stating that he has personally witnessed accidents. This situation is being brought to City's attention and lack of action can significantly increase the City's liability if a serious or fatal accident occurs in the future. Mr. Beswick also submitted a letter of support from Mr. Bob Taddiken who was unable to attend tonight's meeting.

Mark Solognian, 1800 Block of Pacific Avenue, voiced his support of the stop signs, stating that cars are traveling over 40 mph and the stop signs would reduce speeding. Hermosa Beach had a similar scenario on Sepulveda Boulevard and it took a fatality to get the City to take action. Pacific Avenue has become a thoroughfare with non stop traffic and there are lots of little children in the area. Mr. Solognian asked that the Commission consider their request as it is a serious safety issue.

Ronald Clinton, 800 Block of 18th Street, spoke on behalf of his three small children and his concern for their safety. He lives on the corner of 18th and Pacific Avenue and constantly sees cars speeding down the street all hours of the day, witnessing two accidents and numerous close calls. Pacific Avenue has stop signs on just about every corner, except 18th Street, which causes cars to speed past 18th Street. It also causes confusion with drivers who think there is a stop sign on this corner. Mr. Clinton stated that stop signs are the best suggestion because they are the most respected measure and the stopping process is the safest measure.

Randy Forbes, 1800 Block of John Street, relayed his support of the stop signs, sharing that he walks to American Martyrs daily and this area has become a funnel to downtown.

Jim Sheekey, 1700 Block of Pacific Avenue, indicated that he has a petition against the installation of stop signs, stating that he has lived in the area for 28 years and has never seen a problem at the intersection. Very few pedestrians use the intersection to cross and the traffic studies indicated cars are traveling 25 mph. Stop signs will cause traffic congestion and create more air pollution. Mr. Sheekey stated his support of staff's recommendations, adding that the cutting back of an overgrown hedge along the corner will also help visibility.

Lisa Weber, 1700 Block of Pacific Avenue, stated the she initially agreed with the need for stop signs and signed the petition. However, after further review she has reconsidered her position and would like her name removed from that petition. She stated support for

the opposing petition, as she believes the stop signs will create more noise, air pollution and traffic congestion.

Barbara Sheekey, 1700 Block of Pacific Avenue, stated that the need for stop signs has been overblown and she hardly recognizes what is being said about this intersection. There are peak times with traffic but stop signs are not warranted.

Malissia Clinton, 800 Block of 18th Street, indicated her support of the stop signs, stating that two schools are in such close proximity and the stop signs will make the area safer for children crossing the intersection. Staff's submitted traffic data is "stale" and needs to be updated, and she does not believe their recommended measures are adequate to ensure the safety of the children.

Bob Schoel, 1800 Block of 18th Street, shared that this is a "tight neighborhood" where neighbors get along well with each other. Either solution will be a win/win. Stop signs will increase noise and traffic congestion, but will increase safety. Because of the safety issue he will support the installation of stop signs.

Discussion

In response to questions from the Commission, Traffic Engineer Zandvliet clarified that the traffic volume count was conducted on January 16, 2007 not October 30, 2001 as indicated in the report. The traffic collision history was from 2004 and the traffic speed data was completed in 2003. The suggested travel route to Pacific School is to stay on the same side of the street until you reach the school and then cross with the crossing guard. Traffic Engineer Zandvliet also clarified that the installation of stop signs does not impact speed; they actually encourage motorists to increase speeds to make up for the stop. Repeated stop signs also make for more intolerance and increase roll throughs.

Commissioner Seville-Jones complimented the residents for the high minded discussion and the manner in which their differing views were presented. Referencing Traffic Engineer Zandvliet's statement that stop signs do not help in reducing traffic speed, she stated that she does not believe stop signs are warranted and will support staff's recommended measures to increase visibility at the location.

Commissioner Osterhout also complimented the residents on the positive discussion. He too will support staff's recommendations and does not support stop signs at this location, stressing that they do not assist in controlling speed. In regard to comments made relative to the City's liability, Commissioner Osterhout stated that the City did hear the petition and performed due diligence.

Commissioner Donahue agreed that stop signs are not warranted at this location and stated that although he is generally not in favor of removing parking spaces, he will support staff's recommendation to remove the spaces to increase visibility.

Commissioner Paralusz stated that she was proud to be a part of such a civilized discussion and that she too will support staff's recommendations, adding that the referenced hedge should be trimmed back to also increase visibility.

Chairperson Lang noted his agreement with staff's recommendations and that stop signs do not slow down traffic. The problem at hand is speeding which needs to be addressed through police enforcement. Chairperson Lang further stated that there is a stop sign on 19th Street which is where school children should cross the street.

Action

A motion was MADE and SECONDED (Seville-Jones/Osterhout) to approve staff's recommendation to deny the request for stop signs, paint 25 feet of red curb on Pacific Avenue between the intersection and the first driveway on the northeast and southwest corners, and replace and relocate school crossing warning signs on Pacific Avenue at the intersection of 18th Street in both directions.

AYES:	Donahue, Osterhout, Paralusz, Chairperson Seville-Jones and Chairperson Lang
NOES:	None
ABSENT:	None
ABSTAIN:	None

H. COMMISSION BUSINESS

None

I. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:40 p.m.