



City of McMinnville
Planning Department
231 NE Fifth Street
McMinnville, OR 97128
(503) 434-7311

www.mcminnvilleoregon.gov

MINUTES

November 20, 2019
Landscape Review Committee
Regular Meeting

12:00 pm
Community Development Center
McMinnville, Oregon

Members Present: Rose Marie Caughran, Sharon Gunter, Josh Kearns, Tim McDaniel, and Rob Stephenson

Members Absent: None

Staff Present: Jamie Fleckenstein - Associate Planner

Guests Present: Taylor Alvarez, Bruce Billett, and Scott Rosenbalm

1. Call to Order

Chair Stephenson called the meeting to order at 12:00 p.m.

2. Citizen Comments

None

3. Approval of Minutes

None

4. Action/Docket Item (repeat if necessary)

A. L 25-19 – Street Tree Removal - 2010 NE Tilbury Street

Associate Planner Fleckenstein described the street tree removal application for a large Douglas Fir tree on NE Tilbury Street that was between the sidewalk and the property line. There was repeated lifting and damage of the sidewalk immediately adjacent to the tree. It had lifted the sidewalk panel about 16 inches from the curb elevation and was a safety hazard.

Chair Stephenson noted Douglas Firs were not street trees on the approval list.

There was discussion about whether this was a street tree or not. Associate Planner Fleckenstein said it was a street tree due to its location in the right-of-way.

Associate Planner Fleckenstein said because of the damage and lifting of the sidewalk, staff recommended approval of the application and required a replacement tree to be located in the same general landscaping area from the small or medium street tree list.

Committee Member Gunter moved to approve L 25-19. The motion was seconded by Committee Member Caughran and passed 5-0.

B. L 26-19 – Street Tree Removal - 2378 SW Barbara Street

Associate Planner Fleckenstein discussed the street tree removal request. This was a Maple tree located in the planting strip on SW Barbara Street about 2.5 to 3 feet from the water meter. There was a large root that was starting to wrap around the meter box. It was also planted close to the driveway approach and the roots were contributing to the damage of the sidewalk panel next to the driveway. Based on the impact to the water meter infrastructure and sidewalk, staff recommended approval of the application. No replacement tree would be required because it would not meet the spacing standards for the water meter and driveway. The planting strip on the other side of the driveway already had a tree. The applicant would have to repair or replace the damage to the sidewalk.

Bruce Billett, applicant, said the tree was supposed to be planted 10 feet from the water meter and he wanted to find out why this happened. He would like to look at the records and regulations.

Committee Member Kearns said there were no rules when this was planted. It was a plan the landscape architect drew up and the trees were planted.

Associate Planner Fleckenstein said he could follow up with Mr. Billett regarding the records.

Mr. Billett needed to know where the water sources and sewer line were on his property so he did not plant on top of them. He would like to replace the tree. Associate Planner Fleckenstein would help coordinate all the information. There was a street tree plan for this subdivision which defined the trees that were acceptable to plant. As long as he was planting in compliance with the approved street tree plan, spacing, and tree planting requirements, there would be no permit required.

Committee Member McDaniel moved to approve L 26-19. The motion was seconded by Committee Member Caughran and passed 5-0.

5. Discussion Items

A. McMinnville Water & Light Major Pruning Permit

Associate Planner Fleckenstein discussed McMinnville Water & Light's power line pruning clearance program. In the zoning ordinance there was a provision that major pruning of trees in the right-of-way required City approval and from time to time McMinnville Water & Light came across trees that required over 20% removal of the canopy in order to clear the power lines. He had been in discussions with McMinnville Water & Light for what the framework would be for a pruning permit to encompass this type of work. There had also been discussions regarding tracking the types of trees that were repeatedly requiring major pruning and if there should be a process for removing and replacing those trees with something that would be less maintenance. The Planning Department suggested an annual permit that would cover any 20% removal of tree canopy throughout the course of the year.

Scott Rosenbalm, representing McMinnville Water & Light, introduced himself and Taylor Alvarez, who was representing the pruning contractor. They followed accepted utility pruning practices and they were mandated to have vegetation management programs for safety and reliability. It used to be that the linemen pruned the trees without thinking about the health or aesthetics of the trees. Now they hired a contractor tree trimmer. They paid the contractor \$9,000 per week. There were several areas around town where the lines were there before the trees and they had to make it work together. They planned for a three year trimming cycle. They also took care of trees that were brought to their attention throughout the year and some trees needed pruning more often than three years. Cutting trees down and replacing them would be a long term solution.

Associate Planner Fleckenstein said through an annual renewable pruning permit there was the opportunity to establish a framework of guidelines and definitions to determine how many times they should prune a tree within a three year cycle. If there were trees that were continually problematic, they could track them and come up with solutions to address them.

Committee Member Kearns asked how many trees were being pruned every week. Mr. Alvarez said it was about 40 trees per week on average. Mr. Rosenbalm said they had about 180 miles of overhead primary line and there were overhead secondary lines as well.

Committee Member Kearns thought with the amount of money they were paying the contractor, they could remove and replace some of the problematic trees. Mr. Alvarez said for some of the trees it would be quicker to remove them than trying to prune them and more cost effective.

Mr. Rosenbalm pointed out that most of the lines were in the right-of-way. They were also required to share their poles with communications facilities. These facilities were often attached down as far as 13-14 feet on the poles. They trimmed for the safety and reliability around the power lines, and did not typically trim around the communication lines unless they were too close and would put undue stress on the poles.

Associate Planner Fleckenstein noted the current standard was to trim between 8 and 16 feet clear on all sides from the lines. Mr. Alvarez said that was why often the trees were pruned lower than the clearance because that was where they found the proper cuts defined by arborist standards. The other considerations were the species of the tree, growth rate, and removing any hazard limbs.

Associate Planner Fleckenstein thought there were many factors to take into consideration including safety and reliability of the service of the utility and aesthetics of the trees.

Committee Member Kearns thought for directly under power lines to not have any street trees but only groundcover. He thought when McMinnville Water & Light had to pay more for tree trimming, that cost was passed down to the customers. They would be costing customers more money by maintaining the trees planted under power lines. At \$9,000 per week, it was an expensive undertaking to have tree canopies under power lines.

There was discussion regarding undergrounding utilities in new developments and how there were still feeder lines and boxes that could be problematic.

Chair Stephenson suggested a visual map of the problem areas. Mr. Rosenbalm said they had not documented or identified the problem areas yet.

Associate Planner Fleckenstein said for the first couple of years of this permit process they could track and compile the data of where the problem trees were and at what rate they were re-growing into the power lines and if there was a cost benefit to replacing some of the trees.

Committee Member Kearns thought they could look at Google Earth and highlight where the main lines were and they would be able to see if all those trees were removed and only had grass under them, how much area they were talking about.

Chair Stephenson thought the Committee needed that to make the right decision.

Mr. Rosenbalm would look into providing the overlay.

Committee Member Kearns thought they should create an approved ground cover list for these situations as well.

Committee Member McDaniel wanted to make sure that they put thought into how they would discuss this with property owners.

There was consensus to continue this discussion at a future meeting.

B. 2020 Work Plan

Associate Planner Fleckenstein had updated the LRC's Work Plan for 2020. He asked if the Committee had items to add or delete.

Chair Stephenson thought they should add what they had just talked about, decreasing the tree canopy under main power lines.

Chair Stephenson left the meeting at 12:58 p.m.

The Committee reviewed the items on the Work Plan. Associate Planner Fleckenstein would bring the Work Plan back to the next meeting for adoption.

6. Old/New Business

None

7. Committee Comments

None

8. Staff Comments

Associate Planner Fleckenstein gave an update on Council's decisions on legislative changes and upcoming application for the Baker Creek North subdivision which would go to the Planning Commission and City Council instead of this Committee.

9. Adjournment

Vice Chair Gunter adjourned the meeting at 1:08 p.m.