



## HISTORICAL COMMISSION MINUTES

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### Special Meeting

7:30 p.m., Thursday, December 18, 2003  
Hillview Community Center, Room 2  
97 Hillview Avenue, Los Altos, California 94022

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### CALL TO ORDER

### ROLL CALL

Present: Chair Carpenter; Vice-Chair Hull; Commissioners; Dai; Drewes, Foerster, Humphries and Schink; and Staff Liaison Crawford. Absent: None.

Also Present: Nineteen members of the Los Altos community and Dave Brees, Recreation Director.

### APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

Approval of the minutes of the November 24, 2003 meeting was deferred until the January 26, 2004 meeting. The Minutes of the December 9, 2003 Joint Study Session with Council will be distributed in the January packet as well.

### PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

### PUBLIC HEARING

1. Heritage Tree Designation – Rinconada Court Canary Island Palm Trees
  - A. Presentation of the Findings Memo on Designation of the Rinconada Court Canary Island Palm Trees—Vice-Chair Hull, Commissioners Foerster and Drewes.

Vice-Chair Hull made a short verbal summary of some of the key findings in the attached report; 1. that the trees were definitely more than fifty years old meeting Criteria A. in 12.44.030 of the Municipal Code; 2. Criteria 12.44.030.B.1—Historical significance and heritage; 12.44.030.B.5—Value as part of the neighborhood's unique character and identity; and 3. that the majority of the residents in the neighborhood support preservation of the trees.

Both Commissioner Foerster and Commissioner Drewes briefly re-iterated points in the Findings Memo attached. (Attachment A.)

2. Public Comment: Ken Lorell, resident; Lou Becker, resident; Steve Larson, resident; Robert Peterson, resident; Jim Balassone, resident; Sandy Herman, resident; and Carissa Steefel, resident. All commenters are Los Altos residents. Mr. Lorell provided copies of his comments (Attachment B).

Comments from community representatives included history and historic appearance; the beauty and esthetics of the palms, the street and neighborhood; longevity and respect for trees that have been in the community many years; that about 54 children have been raised in the neighborhood without adverse effects from the palms; there was no disclosure in the sale of the property about the neighborhood's history; nor disclosure of the landmark designation for 439 Rinconada Court; there are rats to be seen in the neighborhood; the fronds have sharp spines which can be dangerous; the scale of the very tall palm trees is not necessarily in keeping with or esthetically pleasing in relation to the one story homes; the fronds may drop even if kept trimmed; and that many people probably have cut fresh Christmas trees in their home at this season.

1. Discussion by Commission of the Findings and Recommendation on Designation—All

Commissioner Humphries suggested that the Commission should explore transplanting the tree at 449 Rinconada Court to the yard of a receptive neighbor. She also suggested that two options exist: one designating all Canary Island palm trees as heritage trees and a second option: to designate as heritage trees the 4 or 5 palms that are most closely associated physically and historically with the two story landmark designated home (five within the Planned Unit Development, Palm Court, around the cul-de-sac) and then designate the trees that are being offered voluntarily for designation by the neighbors along the street. (This option could leave out the one tree on 449 Rinconada Court.)

Commission Discussion: The community approached the Historical Commission to protect the trees and there are a majority of neighbors in favor of protecting all the trees.

Commissioner Foerster moved that all Canary Island Palms Trees on Rinconada Court be designated Heritage Trees. Commissioner Drewes seconded the motion. After discussion, Chair Carpenter and Dave Brees, the City of Los Altos' Recreation Director, recommended

that the trees be identified by address and by number of trees associated with each address. Vice-chair Hull amended the motion moving that the two palm trees at 451 Rinconada Court; the one tree at 449 Rinconada Court; the palm tree shared by 447 and 445 Rinconada Court and the tree at 432 Rinconada Court all be designated as Heritage Trees. In addition, the motion includes the four trees at the beginning of the cul-de-sac; two City street trees in a traffic island and two on the common area in the community garden be designated (these two are owned by the Homeowners' Association). Commissioner Foerster accepted the amended motion and Commissioner Drewes seconded the amended motion.

Chair Carpenter called for the vote: it passed with six in favor of the motion. Commissioner Humphries voted against the motion, preferring an alternative proposal for the trees most associated with the two-story landmark house to be designated; and for voluntary designation of trees in front of one-story homes.

3. Chairperson's Report –Chair Carpenter

Chair Carpenter discussed with the Commission that if the neighborhood comes to a consensus to move the tree at 449 Rinconada Court that it might be desirable to move it to another position in the line of trees for continuity. If a heritage tree is designated and then moved, that would require a permit and would likely be referred through the Historical Commission as part of the permit process.

**OTHER MATTERS/NEW BUSINESS**

Future Agenda Items: To be determined.

Next Meetings: January 26, 2004, Los Altos City Hall, Council and Community Meeting Chambers; and February 23, 2004.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Vice-Chair Hull moved to adjourn, seconded by Commissioner Dai. Approved.  
The Commission adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

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