

LOCAC Tree & Landscape Minutes from January 9th, 2017

The first item on agenda was a discussion regarding the Oak Woodland Outreach. The ordinance as proposed is basically centered around agricultural conversion of oak woodland for commercial purposes. It is an important first step to preventing the unregulated conversion of native woodland to vineyards and other commercial uses. Committee member John Chesnut suggested that our comments regarding our support for the draft ordinance contain a hard cap, e.g. 40 acre limit to clear cutting. A hard cap at some reasonable number of acres would be preferable to a sliding scale. Permanent ordinance has relevance for LOCAC in the areas outside the coastal zone; the ordinance will impact lands under LOCAC's purview. Only 3 votes are needed to pass the permanent ordinance versus 4 votes to extend the urgency ordinance; subsidiary argument that allowing the emergency ordinance to expire without something to replace it would result in a chaotic situation. In other words we strongly favor passing the permanent ordinance before the expiration of the emergency ordinance. Consideration should be given to protecting valley oak bottom savanna which would encompass riparian Sycamore trees instead of just limiting the ordinance to the protection of designated oak species. The letter should raise the issue of protecting riparian Sycamore and other monument trees; we think the permanent ordinance should clarify the status of valley oak bottoms and riparian Sycamore stands to be included in the same protection. If protecting oak woodland is administratively possible in the coastal zone, the same kind of protection can be extended to inland zones as well. Also, tourism is a major economic driver in SLO county, e.g. wine tourism, and there is a value in maintaining natural landscapes and oak woodlands.

The second item on agenda was further discussion of Tree and Landscape initiative to plant native and/or drought tolerant shrubs in Los Osos. The county right of way located at the northwest corner of LOVR and South Bay Blvd is under consideration. It's a small strip adjacent to the intersection and it abuts the commercial space where Statefarm Insurance office is located. We talked about the possible existence of irrigation which is required to start and establish a new landscape, even if all the plants are drought-tolerant. Committee member John Chesnut suggested two varieties that he currently propagates for various projects involving Sweet Springs and LOMS: Chalk Dudleya and Salvia leucophylla. The committee discussed a potential timeline of late 2017, after the next rainy season begins to ensure the new plantings have the best possible chance of succeeding.