

CITY OF NEWPORT BEACH

**Parks, Beaches & Recreation Commission
Regular Meeting
May 5, 2026 – 5:00 p.m.**

I. CONVENE MEETING OF THE PARKS BEACHES & RECREATION COMMISSION TO ORDER – 5:00 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Present: Anne Yelsey, Chair
Amy Waunch, Vice Chair
Hassan Archer, Commissioner
Diane Daruty, Commissioner
Keira Kirby, Commissioner
Kate Malouf, Commissioner

Absent: Travis Piridy, Commissioner (excused)

Staff: Sean Levin, Recreation & Senior Services Director
Justin Schmillen, Recreation & Senior Services Deputy Director
Kevin Pekar, Parks and Trees Superintendent
John Nelson, City Arborist
Mariah Stinson, Administrative Support Specialist

III. NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

IV. PUBLIC COMMENTS ON CONSENT CALENDAR

None

V. CONSENT CALENDAR

A. Minutes of the Parks, Beaches and Recreation Commission Meeting of April 7, 2026

Recommendation: Waive reading of subject minutes, approve and order filed.

B. MOD Activity Report

Recommendation: Receive/file Report of past and upcoming projects and events.

C. RSS Activity Report

Recommendation: Receive/file Report of past and upcoming projects and events.

Chair Yelsey opened public comment, and there were none.

Motion by Chair Yelsey, seconded by Commissioner Malouf, to approve Item V. CONSENT CALENDAR.

The motion carried by unanimous vote.

VI. CURRENT BUSINESS

A. Reforestation Request - 2701 Harbor View Drive - Front 1, Side 1,2,3,4,5

Recommendation: Consider the reforestation request of six Magnolia 'Little Gem' (Magnolia grandiflora 'Little Gem') located at 2701 Harbor View Drive.

The applicant, Ms. Jennifer Durham, residing at 2701 Harbor View Dr. has provided the required homeowner association (HOA) board meeting minutes and board signature of approval to remove and replace the trees with Magnolia 'Little Gem' (Magnolia grandiflora 'Little Gem') trees. If approved by the Commission, there will be a one-for-one replacement tree for each tree removed with a 24-inch box tree installed at the applicant's cost.

City Arborist John Nelson reported that Jennifer Durham of 2701 Harbor View Dr. is requesting to reforest six magnolia little gems. He noted that it is a corner house with the six trees surrounding the property on three sides, and the applicant acknowledges that they are mature, although sparse, but healthy. He added that the trees are topiaried to preserve views. He read an email from the applicant stating that the trees would be replaced by leafy 24-inch box trees that would have ample time to grow before blocking views, adding that the current trees have become overly tall and top-heavy.

City Arborist Nelson reported that the magnolia little gem is the neighborhood's designated street tree, with the applicant requesting a variance on the standard replacement to use a 24-inch box instead of the standard 36-inch box to gain additional growth time before views are impacted again. He confirmed that the appropriate area was notified of the meeting.

In response to Commissioner Kirby's inquiry, City Arborist Nelson stated that magnolia trees can live to be over 120 years old, noting that some in Corona del Mar are four times as large. He estimated that these trees are between 10 and 15 years old, terming them as being adolescent.

Commissioner Kirby reported driving past the subject property and feeling that the trees are not overly large, adding that she expected to see bigger trees.

In response to Commissioner Kirby's inquiry, City Arborist Nelson reported that he requested pictures of the view blockages from the applicant. He added that he did not take any pictures of the view blockages himself, noting that the applicant has also submitted a request to prune a tree across the street. He stated that he did not perceive a view blockage from the trees in question.

In response to Vice Chair Waunch's inquiries, City Arborist Nelson reported receiving no response to the mailings about the meeting. He stated that the applicant's email reported that she is not in attendance because she is celebrating her mother's 91st birthday. He deferred to the Commission on whether the trees should be removed, stating that the pictures in his presentation speak for themselves. He stated that he does not think the trees are top-heavy and, while appearing to have been topiaried, they do not appear malformed or disfigured, adding that the trees appear nice. He acknowledged that the replacement trees would take a longer time before they impact views, adding that the intent of the applicant is to reset the clock until this inevitably happens. Parks and Trees Superintendent Kevin Pekar added that the applicant has paid for supplemental trimming in the past, theorizing that she may be trying to avoid doing it repeatedly with this application. He added that the applicant has likely pruned the trees herself.

In response to Commissioner Archer's inquiries, City Arborist Nelson confirmed that there are no safety issues. He confirmed that they cannot know for certain what level of view obstructions exist from the house because the applicant did not provide evidence.

Commissioner Archer stated that he is struggling to understand why the trees should be replaced.

In response to Commissioner Kirby's inquiry, City Arborist Nelson confirmed that a proper street tree has a bare bottom due to stability issues, impacts to the right-of-way, and traffic views.

Chair Yelsey opened public comment, and there was none.

Commissioner Daruty noted that there are similar trees along the street, so it does not make sense to remove these trees.

Motion by Commissioner Malouf, seconded by Chair Yelsey, to deny the request.

The motion carried by unanimous vote.

B. Overview of City Council Policy G-1 – Retention and Removal City Trees Update

Recommendation: Receive and file the overview of updates to City Council Policy G-1 – Retention and Removal of City Trees (G-1).

Parks and Trees Superintendent Pekar reported that City Council Policy G-1 was adopted in 1966 and has since been amended 26 times. He reported that the most recent revisions were intended to better organize the Policy, which had become overly complex, redundant, and unclear through its many amendments. He added

that the most recent revisions were of limited substance as the focus was on creating a new framework to more closely align with other City permitting processes.

Parks and Trees Superintendent Pekar reported that substantive changes to the previous version of the Policy include adding tuliptree scale infestations and trees preventing a property owner from obtaining fire insurance to the problem trees section, a maximum of 100 properties for petitions in dense communities, a seven-day notification for standard and problem trees, the Commission's decision being final on appeals and reforestations, and an updated special tree inventory. He added that Sections VI, VIII, and IX of Policy G-1 were moved to Policy G-6, which is more focused on maintenance and planting.

Parks and Trees Superintendent Pekar reported that consultants are presently helping the City update its tree inventory and draft an Urban Forest Management Plan (UFMP) that should be completed in about a year, adding that the Commission will have an opportunity to review the UFMP and provide suggestions to the Plan and Policy G-1. He stated that, about this time next year, he expects to request the creation of an Ad Hoc Committee to assess Policy G-1 along with the UFMP.

In response to Commissioner Archer's inquiry, Parks and Trees Superintendent Pekar confirmed that the City Council has approved the Commission having final approval for tree removals.

Chair Yelsey opened public comment.

Jim Mosher expressed concerns about removing the opportunity to appeal decisions to the Council. He stated that the rewritten Policy is flawed and merits review sooner than one year from now.

Chair Yelsey closed public comment.

Commissioner Daruty called for annual training sessions for new Commissioners who will use the Policy regularly, particularly as it relates to the appeal process. Commissioner Malouf echoed Commissioner Daruty's comments.

In response to Commissioner Malouf's inquiries, Recreation & Senior Services Director Sean Levin stated that the Policy is final, as the revisions were approved by the City Council. He noted that the Policy has been amended 26 times and may be amended again in the future. He recommended that the Commission work with the updated Policy for the next year to evaluate how it is working, particularly with the new provision prohibiting appeals to the City Council. If, after that time, the Commission would like to recommend changes, it could review the Policy at the Commission level and forward any proposed revisions to the City Council for consideration.

Commissioner Kirby reported that she informed Council Members that the Commission is interested in creating an Ad Hoc Committee to discuss the Policy in the future.

Chair Yelsey received and filed the report.

VII. ANNOUNCEMENTS/FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Recreation & Senior Services Deputy Director Justin Schmillen reported that the Field of Honor will be starting on May 15th at Castaways Park with an Armed Forces Day ceremony on May 16th and Memorial Day ceremony on May 25th. He stated that the Older Adults Social and Information Services (OASIS) Senior Center will have its annual resource expo on May 16th. He added that the annual Movies in the Park series will begin on June 5th with a screening of Zootopia 2 at Marina Park.

Parks and Trees Superintendent Pekar noted that there was a question at the last meeting about a public-facing donated tree map. He confirmed that the map is on the City website and provided a demonstration on how to find it. He added that it can also be found by searching the website for Graphic Information System (GIS) dashboards, noting that there is a column on the donation dashboard for trees. He thanked the Commission for attending a successful Arbor Day event.

Recreation & Senior Services Director Levin reported that former Commissioner Debra Allen passed away earlier today, adding that she was also a volunteer at the OASIS Senior Center.

VIII. PUBLIC COMMENTS ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

None.

IX. ADJOURNMENT – 5:35 p.m.

Submitted by: _____
Mariah Stinson, Administrative Support Specialist

Approved by: _____
Anne Yelsey, Chair