



Minutes

Lakewood City Council

Adjourned Regular Meeting held
January 25, 2005

MEETING WAS CALLED TO ORDER at 6:30 p.m. by Mayor Rogers in the Executive Board Room at the Civic Center, 5000 Clark Avenue, Lakewood, California.

ROLL CALL: PRESENT: Mayor Todd Rogers
Vice Mayor Wayne Piercy
Council Member Joseph Esquivel
Council Member Larry Van Nostran
Council Member Robert Wagner

REPORT ON LAKEWOOD'S URBAN FOREST

Director of Public Works, Lisa Rapp, displayed slides and gave an oral presentation on Lakewood's Urban Forest, beginning with background data going back to the late 1970's. She reported that Lakewood had 25,043 street trees, which were maintained under a maintenance contract and by a small in-house maintenance program. She reviewed policies for tree removals and replanting, and the tree planting grant the City had received for the current fiscal year. She advised that her department maintained a database of all City street trees, which had recently been verified and updated. She reported that there were 2,892 locations that were considered as non-sites since for a variety of reasons, such as lack of space, they were unsuitable for a street tree.

Hardscape Manager Randy Reynolds responded to questions from Council Member Van Nostran by stating that residents may receive a permit to remove a tree at their own expense if certain conditions, such as hardscape damage or non-recommended species, were indicated. He stated that residents were counseled at the time of removal about the City's replanting program, but that many residents expressed the desire to have no street tree.

Ms. Rapp stated that there were currently 409 residents on record as having requested that no tree be planted in the parkway. She also noted that during the preparation for tree planting under the grant, 450 letters were sent to residents advising of the planned tree planting, resulting in over 100 calls indicating that the resident did not want a tree to be planted. She reported that the tree planting policies needed to be reevaluated, especially with regard to species flexibility. She also reported that Lakewood was the only city currently served by West Coast Arborists (WCA), our tree maintenance contractor, that did not utilize their software program for tree inventory and maintenance.

Council Member Wagner, recognizing the proprietary nature of the software, inquired if the data could be preserved if the City changed maintenance vendors. Assistant City Manager Michael Stover advised that the computer program currently being used for tree inventory was an old, adapted program that would be "orphaned" when the City's financial management system was replaced in the next several years. He stated that there would be a process in place that would allow the City to download all of the current tree data, in the event of a contract change.

REPORT ON LAKEWOOD'S URBAN FOREST - Continued

Ms. Rapp also noted that the program used by WCA provided several optional fields that the City could adapt to meet any special needs and that some of the features of the old program were now able to be addressed through the City's GIS system.

Vice Mayor Piercy reported that the trees in his portion of the City had been replanted last year and that the instructions for care of the new trees had been very clear and easy to understand. He inquired if there was a separate system that kept a record of trees in City parks and on the parkways. Ms. Rapp stated that park and parkway trees were in separate parts of the inventory. Vice Mayor Piercy inquired if an amount had been costed out for planting for inclusion in the next budget year. Ms. Rapp stated a phased approach would probably be best, since there were many vacancies and no data on how many of those locations would be hostile to having a new tree planted.

Responding to a question from Council Member Van Nostran, Ms. Rapp stated that the current contract price for a 24 inch box tree was \$160, but that was a very old price which would likely require adjustment when a new maintenance contract was negotiated.

Council Member Wagner stated with over 4,300 vacant locations, that even if the rejection rate was 25 percent citywide, there would still be a need to plant 3,000 trees. He stated that while the City should be sensitive to locations where residents would not take care of newly planted trees, it was important to replant as many locations as possible, since street trees were an important feature that distinguished Lakewood from many other local area cities and had a direct impact on the quality of life in the City. He encouraged the appropriation of additional funds for planting trees in this fiscal year, with a re-evaluation of the entire replanting program during the next budget cycle.

Council Member Van Nostran agreed with Council Member Wagner that it was important to replant quickly after a tree removal, so that residents did not get too used to having no tree at all. He suggested a survey and review during the budget process.

City Manager Howard Chambers advised that staff could do a cost projection on tree replanting and conduct a resident survey.

Mayor Rogers instructed staff to bring a report to the City Council which would include a plan on how gauging public opinion on tree replanting could be accomplished.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to be brought before the City Council, Mayor Rogers adjourned the meeting at 7:28 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Denise R. Hayward, CMC
City Clerk