

Minutes CC NOVEMBER 28, 2017

Present: Bourne, Chiariello, DeStaebler, Eckstrom, Heiple, Magill, Murphy, Plunder, Walz

Also Present: John Richards, Council liaison; Simon and Jordana Morgan, new Town residents.

1. Call to Order 7:30
2. Oral Communications – Simon and Jordana Morgan, recently arrived from Botswana tell us about their work with Jasper Ridge studying predator food chains. They are interested in a project that studies these populations in the community outside the preserve. We will put them on February agenda.
3. Minutes of October meeting *unanimously approved.*
4. Current Site Permits – subcommittees reported
 - 9 Buck Meadow, revision
 - 199 Mapache, revision
 - 42 Santa Maria
5. Current Tree permits
 - a. 20 Possum – removal approved
6. Old Business
 - a. Oversight of Significant Town Owned Open Space properties
 - i. Comprehensive Plan. deStaebler, Magill, and Murphy met and drafted an outline of plan. They meet again 12/4. Murphy met with new chair of Parks and Recreation, Stephen Gillett and of Open Space, Craig Taylor to discuss this project and get their input.
 - ii. Springdown
 1. Pond Completed, hand-seeding completed. We think Permit required some planting beyond seeding, it is not clear when this will be done.
 2. Introduce to community. At Earth Fair we will offer guided tours of Springdown and new pond.
 3. Plan for improvement and maintenance is being worked on by Plunder, Chiariello and Heiple
 - iii. Frog Pond – report discussed. Committee agrees with recommendations, suggests a specific list of prioritized tasks be amended at the end for clarity. Eckstrom will lead subcommittee to do this.
 - iv. Ford Field – last report August '17 Requested mowing has been done.
 - v. Town Center – last report September '17 Many of our requested removals were promptly done. Subcommittee will now look at the eastern half of the Town Center property and make a report.
 - b. Tip of Month – informational photos of poppy seedlings /What's blooming now – toyon and coyote brush -Plunder
 - c. Kudos of the Month –Bev Lippman for triangle weeding – Murphy
 - d. BYH deStaebler. Awards presentations at Council 12/13.
 - e. Committee/Town cooperation
 - i. Public Works –pond completed. See 6.a.2
 1. Rodenticide follow up. *Committee proposes that we have a Rodenticide Return at the next Town Hazardous Waste day.* Chiariello.
 - ii. Town Center master Plan Committee
 1. report was distributed to committee. No discussion.
 - iii. Sustainability and Environmental Resources (previously Water Conservation) Committee
 1. Garden Tour 2018 deStaebler, Magill and Murphy

- iv. Trails – Bourne reports they are getting seed from Public Works to scatter along trails. Most trails too shady for this to succeed.
 - v. Open space -
 - f. Weed seedling info sheet photos labeled – Plunder will be ready for approval February meeting
 - g. Spring event: Mountain lions and more - Chiariello, Plunder, Magill
 - h. Broom Pull Sunday March 4, 2018. Denise Enea has said several firefighters might participate.
7. New Business
- a. Earth Fair Saturday, April 28. Committee voted unanimously to participate. We will have a table with our usual wildflower/weed display, rodenticide info
 - b. Meeting time change. Change in meeting time discussed and *we decided to leave it the same.*
 - c. goals for 2018 –we reviewed our list of projects and insured that each one had members willing to work to make them successful.
 - d. election of officers *Unanimous election of Murphy as chair and Chiariello as vice-chair.*
 - e. roster update – no corrections needed
 - f. local towns’ group effort on Dittrichia. We discussed the problem of CalTrans and Stanford neglect of the dense infestations that make our eradication efforts difficult. All the local towns have this problem. We considered creating a working group of local conservation committees to see if we might have more influence. *We decided we do not have the capacity to properly take this on.*
8. Adjournment 9:45
9. Next Meeting **1/23/2018**, Old Schoolhouse.

No meeting in December.
Volunteer party Friday 12/1

Appendix A

Draft Conservation Committee Oversight of Frog Pond

Subcommittee: Paul Heiple
Don Eckstrom
Sarah Gilbert (PVR Landscape Committee)
Susan Hine (PVR Landscape Committee, PVR Fire Safety Committee)
Denise Gilbert (PVR Landscape Committee)

Overview: This town open space area is in good shape overall. A major problem in the past has been the invasion of Harding grass (*Phalaris aquatica*) into the drier upland areas surrounding the pond, but a consistent mowing program under the supervision of Howard Young has substantially reduced the population of this invasive grass. Thistles have also been suppressed. Future efforts should be directed at the ongoing eradication of these two invasives, as well as single-time addressing of problems described below.

Near-term Action Items by Town: A stand of about 6 Monterey pines near the southwest edge of the area have been approved for removal, but no action has been taken. Meanwhile, one of these large trees has fallen, leaving a large trunk lying on the ground with dead limbs, twigs, and leaves hanging in the air. This smaller debris constitutes a severe fire hazard, and a “slash and trash” operation should be carried out (chainsaw all limbs into pieces that end up lying on the ground). ***This neutralization of flammable material is urgent.***

We also recommend that the cat-tails near the school fence on the northeast side of the property be cut down now to reduce reseeding and minimize the growth of this cluster of plants. More aggressive action may be necessary in the future to keep these plants under control.

Outstanding Attributes: This area constitutes a fairly large and quite homogeneous open space, bordered by an almost solid row of oaks along the southern edge, coyote bush (with wood rat nests) along the western edge, and mixed trees along the northern edge providing a boundary with the Corte Madera school. As indicated by its name, the pond is a breeding area for frogs, and their croaking is a notable feature of the neighborhood.

Native Plants: In the wettest parts of the pond area, there are several species of Sedges and Rushes thought to be native but not yet known as to species, as well as Water Plantain (*Alisma triviale*) and cattails (*Typha latifolia*). In the uplands, there are grasses: *Danthonia californica*, *Elymus glaucus*, *Stipa pulchra*, *Stipa lipida*. Trees include *Quercus lobata*, *Quercus agrifolia*, *Prunus ilicifolia*. Shrubs include *Baccharis pilularis* and *Frangula californica*.

Rare Plants: None

Heritage Trees: There are medium sized live oaks along the northern edge of the property and some young live oaks and valley oaks along the east edge of the property (along Indian Crossing), but none of a size that would constitute heritage rating.

Invasives: As noted in the Overview, this area has been marked by invasion of Harding grass, but the mowing program now underway in the higher, drier areas has made progress in eradicating this species. However, it persists in the lower, wetter areas that have not been getting mowed (presumably because the ground is too wet when mowing takes place). Likewise, some thistles are still growing just within the un-mowed areas.

We recommend that because of the success in suppressing Harding grass in the drier areas, the town now shift to a strategy where these drier areas are mowed every other year, and in alternating years the mowing take place in the lower, wetter areas. This "lowland" mowing can be postponed as necessary until the ground is dry enough to support the equipment.

When "highland" mowing takes place, we recommend that it be extended in toward the center of the pond by an additional 12 feet along the south side of the pond.

Another invasive found was pennyroyal (*Mentha pulegium*). It has likely been in the pond for a long time and does not seem to have taken over. No treatment is recommended at this time.

Issues: The site would benefit from constructive action by its neighbors on the southern and northern sides. In the former case, the row of live oak trees has been allowed to form a dense wall by the unconstrained growth of seedlings under the parent trees. Separation of these seedlings can be as little as 3 feet. We would strongly encourage the property owners to remove the smaller plants to create a typical separation of at least 10 feet, which will allow the bigger specimens to flourish.

On the northern side, Corte Madera School has a number of dead or dying redwoods that should be removed, as they are at risk for dropping limbs and are also a fire hazard (?). There are also a row of Monterey pines straddling the boundary between the school and the Frog Pond.

These pines are in poor health and are of great concern to the PV Ranch Fire Safety Committee because of their flammability in an area of possible ignition sources. We encourage the Town to work with the school district to either limb up or remove these trees. Although they are in better health than their immediate neighbors on the school property line, we would not object to removal of the four large Monterey pines between the property line and the Frog Pond (**one of these pines has several dead limbs near the ground that should be removed immediately**). Finally, there are also thistles along the fence line that should be removed and bagged immediately so as to avoid spread of seeds.

Minor recommended actions: Several years ago someone bulldozed a drain path from the pond to Corte Madera creek on the southwest, significantly changing the ecology of the pond. Bags of concrete were placed in this path to raise the pond level back towards normal levels, but it would be good to add an additional layer of bags to further restore the pond level.

There is a small fruit tree near the east end of the pond that is in poor health, and should be removed. The larger fruit tree nearby is healthier, but it is still non-native and could also be removed.

There are a large cotoneaster, an old plum tree, and a pyracantha at the west end of the area that should be removed.

The holly-leaved cherry would benefit from a few years of caging to help it increase in size.

There are a wooden pallet and several large wood poles lying in the grass near the schoolyard fence that should be removed.

Appendix C

GOALS FOR 2018

TASKS:

Mandated:

Advisory function

ASCC – landscape review, site visits and meeting attendance

Tree Removals

Public Works consultations

Annual Report to Town Council

Budget

Requested:

Open space Comprehensive Plan – Murphy, deStaebler, Magill

Committee Initiated:

Broom Pull – all

Earth Day/Town Picnic Day - all

BYH – deStaebler

Tip of Month – Magill

What's Blooming Now? - Plunder

Kudos of Month – Murphy/Plunder

Oversight of Main Town Owned Open spaces:

Springdown Plunder, Bourne, Chiariello, Heiple

Town Center – Chiariello, Magill, Murphy

Oak Grove at Town Center Planting Plan – Eckstrom

Native Plant Garden by Schoolhouse - Murphy

Guide to Town Center plantings brochure– Chiariello

Native and low water use Garden tour – Murphy, deStaebler, Magill

Ford Field – deStaebler, Walz and Open Space member Neilsen

Rossottis Field – ?

Frog Pond – Eckstrom, Heiple and PVR representative

Other sites - all

Committee Liason with other Town committees

i. ASCC Murphy and ?

ii. Town Center Master Plan – Murphy, alternate ?

iii. Trails – Bourne

iv. Open Space – Chiariello

v. Sustainability and Environmental Resources - Murphy

Monarch Butterfly support – Murphy/Heiple

Weed seedling Information Sheet – Heiple/Plunder

Poison Bait advisory – Chiariello, deStaebler, Heiple

Web site upgrade – Plunder, Chiariello

Wells – Bourne,

Native Seed collection and Distribution – Plunder