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**CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO  
DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT  
URBAN FORESTRY COUNCIL**

**APPROVED MINUTES**

**Friday, December 12, 2014, 8:30 a.m.**

**City Hall, Room 400  
One Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Jr. Place  
San Francisco, CA 94102**

**Council Members: Dan Flanagan (Chair), Carla Short (Vice Chair) (Department of Public Works), Malcolm Hillan, Rose Hillson, Dan Kida, John Leffingwell, Sandy Sherwin, Andrew Sullivan, Michael Sullivan, and Jon Swae (San Francisco Planning Department). Advisory Members: Yolanda Manzone, (San Francisco Public Utilities Commission); Phil Ginsburg/Ana Alvarez/Lisa Wayne (San Francisco Recreation and Park Department); San Francisco Redevelopment Agency (Vacant); Golden Gate National Recreation Area (Vacant)**

**Order of Business**

- 1. Call to Order and Roll Call.** The Urban Forestry Council meeting convened at 8:32 a.m. Present: Council Members Flanagan, Short, Alvarez, Hillan, Hillson, Kida, Leffingwell, Manzone, Sherwin, A. Sullivan, M. Sullivan, and Swae.
- 2. Adoption of Minutes of the September 26, 2014 Urban Forestry Council Meeting.** (Explanatory Document: September 26, 2014 Approved Minutes) (Discussion and Action) Upon Motion by Chair Flanagan, second by Member Hillson, the September 26, 2014 Draft Minutes were adopted with a correction (AYES: Members Flanagan, Short, Hillan, Hillson, Kida, Leffingwell, Sherwin, M. Sullivan, and Swae; Absent: Member A. Sullivan).
- 3. Public Comment:** Members of the public may address the Council on matters that are within the Council's jurisdiction and are not on today's agenda. There was no public comment at this time.
- 4. Better Market Street Project.** The Council will hear a presentation on the Better Market Street project. Presenter: Simon Bertrang, Project Manager, Better Market Street Project (Informational Presentation and Discussion) This item was not heard and Continued to the Call of the Chair.
- 5. Van Ness Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Tree Selection.** Speaker: Martha Ketterer, Department of Public Works Landscape Architect. The Council will hear a presentation on the Van Ness BRT tree selection process. (Explanatory Document: Van Ness BRT Presentation) (Informational Presentation and Discussion)

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Department of Public Works Landscape Architect Martha Ketterer presented an overview of the Van Ness Bus Rapid Transit System project reporting on Van Ness Avenue history and present day, Van Ness BRT project center median selection, urban design elements, existing median trees and trees to be removed, replaced and saved, the tree selection process, and project timeline.

Council members and Ms. Ketterer discussed plans for soil environment preparation to ensure success of trees to be planted, median tree species selection and planting size, tree selection, ecological/habitat value, the value of trees in offsetting carbon emissions, stormwater projects, California Environmental Quality Act considerations, and sidewalk tree considerations. Council Chair Flanagan requested a meeting with Ms. Ketterer to provide suggestions for tree selection. Council Member Alvarez requested that the meeting include a discussion on selection of a location for the Rosa Parks landmark tree.

Public Comment: Mr. Eric Brooks, Sustainability Chair, San Francisco Green Party; Our City, spoke in support of the Van Ness BRT project. He asked that palms not be included in tree selection and suggested planting *Lagunaria* as a way to increase the aesthetic value of Van Ness Avenue, public appreciation, and habitat value. He spoke of the importance of preserving the Rosa Parks landmark tree and locating the tree to a neighborhood with cultural sensitivity and in a location where the tree would have meaning. Mr. Brooks discussed the negative carbon effects that the project would have initially that would be mitigated if the project were to encourage people out of cars.

- 6. Mature and Historic Tree Stands Best Management Practices Listening Series.** Council members will be hearing from urban forest managers and stakeholders on consideration of Best Management Practices to improve the health of San Francisco's mature and historic tree stands. (Explanatory Documents: Best Management Practices Presentations) (Informational Presentations and Discussion)

Mr. Robert Bakewell, Founder, Friends of the Oak Woodlands, presented on the historic oak woodlands grove in Golden Gate Park that have been located in the area since 1879. He reported on the value of the Significant Natural Resources Area Management Plan (SNRAM) that guides the stewardship and best management practices of the grove and area surrounding the grove in front of the Conservatory of Flowers. Mr. Bakewell discussed infrastructure, social and planting problems that existed in the area and stewardship work accomplished and in progress to manage the historic woodlands, planting of native species, restoration, creating trail access, and increasing habitat diversity. (Reference Presentation)

Mr. Eric Brooks, Sustainability Chair, San Francisco Green Party, discussed his expertise in maintenance and restoration of forests and forest eco systems. He spoke in opposition to what he believes to be City and Natural Areas Program policies to clear cut trees and apply herbicides to restore previous habitats instead of utilizing urban forest stewardship programs to preserve forests, biodiversity, and endangered species from extinction. Mr. Brooks discussed similarities between the eugenics movement that resulted in a mass sterilization of people throughout the country with the invasive biology mentality applied to trees, plants and wildlife. He discussed how clear cutting trees creates more carbon dioxide in the atmosphere and the threat imposed by climate change to biodiversity. Mr. Brooks referenced a Science Daily article "Presence of Wolves Allow Aspen Recovery in Yellowstone."

Mr. Peter Brastow, Department of the Environment Biodiversity Coordinator, presented on the natural environmental context of San Francisco's urban forest, discussing his job to convene everyone to save San Francisco's natural heritage and indigenous habitats and to introduce nature into the urban environment. He reported on San Francisco's urban forest and the importance of trees, grass and scrub to the city's current landscape and natural areas. Mr. Brastow discussed the incredible biodiversity in San Francisco and the endangered species that are located here. He discussed the Urban Forest Plan's vision to green the intersection of 101 and 280, California geology, and the importance of preservation and stewardship restoration efforts to save the natural ecology of San Francisco. (Reference Presentation)

Ms. Lisa Wayne, Open Space Manager, San Francisco Recreation and Park Department Natural Areas Program Manager presented on forestry recommendations in the Significant Natural Resource Areas Management Plan (SNRAMP). Topics of discussion included SNRAMP history, natural and significant natural resource areas, biodiversity objectives, trees and urban forest values, natural areas tree/forest facts, condition and impacts of blue gum eucalyptus in natural areas, summary of Plan actions by area, trees and forestry recommendations, and the Environmental Impact Report assessment process. (Reference Presentation)

Mr. Josiah Clark, Consulting Ecologist, presented on San Francisco's mature and historic tree stands and the question of what San Francisco is managing for. Topics of discussion included prioritizing preservation efforts, local regional native woodland types, target species for San Francisco's urban parks, perception of nature and biological diversity, structural diversity as a habitat resource, preserving and maximizing biodiversity at the forest edge, native tree diversity, identifying and maximizing riparian conditions, diversifying plantings to maximize biodiversity and breeding sites and in San Francisco's mature and historic tree stands. (Reference Presentation)

Mr. Mike Vasey, Professor of Conservation Biology, San Francisco State University, discussed the concept of adaptive management, a key part of the SNRAMP. He discussed San Francisco's inverted landscape and as a biodiversity hotspot consisting of many unusual species that are restrictive to the coast and are only found on certain kinds of soils. Mr. Vasey discussed the influence of fog and the marine layer on chaparral on the coast and the importance of fog to vegetation on the coast. He reported that trees are a dominant aspect of natural areas that did not exist in San Francisco before and spoke of the ancillary impacts that trees may pose such as the potential for fog diminishing along the coast, a drying climate, and fire risks. He discussed the dependence of habitat on grasslands and scrub. Mr. Vasey discussed the need to try to protect and expand natural areas as a way to protect the legacy of San Francisco and urged decision makers to support the SNRAMP.

Mr. Jake Sigg, California Native Plant Society, Yerba Buena Chapter, complete excerpt as provided by Mr. Sigg: Before talking about CNPS concerns, a personal note. Discussion of Tasmanian blue gum seems to set people off; there are many who love it and many who hate it. I am personally deeply enamored of it, as well as the ribbon gum--and I have been defending and promoting them for decades. It is a tree that enhances our maintained parks, a tree that is unfamiliar to many visitors. Wm Hammond Hall, in setting the design and philosophy for GGP, took note of the advantages of our climate vs that obtaining in most sections of the country and pronounced it a climate that favored evergreen over deciduous plants. Visitors to the city, who may enjoy the brilliant autumn color of deciduous trees at home, may marvel at these unfamiliar grand creations. The eastern end of GGP and the Panhandle is where Hall started planting the

Park, so that is where we have our oldest and grandest trees. The City should be singling out this area as a special arboretum for heritage trees.

But those trees are nearing the end of their lives, and they are no longer being planted, so that in two or three decades there will be few if any, a fact that makes me very sad. Speaking of the blue gums and ribbon gums, there are no other trees that combine their enormous size and brute strength with grace, apparent fragility, and clean, sensuous lines. We don't sufficiently appreciate them. If they were in a museum with a frame around them, they would be fawned over. I have urged RecPark to begin planting replacement trees, looking to the day when the present patriarchs are gone.

Putting on CNPS hat: I felt it necessary to make clear my personal feelings about the tree that is causing dissension. It clearly has a place in our developed parks, where it cannot create problems. The situation in a developed park is different from a wild area, which is dependent on natural factors. In 1990, long before the City established its Natural Areas Program, I talked to the MPIC regarding the deteriorating situation of the Mt Davidson eucalyptus plantation, which I loved and wanted to see saved. As a gardener, it was apparent to me that the domination of the understory by three plants was displacing the native plant understory that provided diversity and wildlife habitat and replacing it with aggressive invasives with little to no wildlife value: English ivy, Himalayan blackberry, and Cape ivy (not a true ivy, but a viny member of the sunflower family). To boot, the English ivy was climbing the trees, and I could see where the situation was heading. It was this situation that I tried calling attention to; I did not ask for removal of any trees, merely to manage the understory for diversity.

A quarter of a century later, that simple remedy will no longer suffice, as the deterioration has now reached a crisis. Ivy has climbed 150-200' into the crowns of large numbers of trees, competing for light, which the trees must have to produce energy. Some trees have already died from this cause, others will soon, and other have been toppled by the sheer weight of ivy (which must weigh several tons). The plantation has evolved into a chaotic mess, and it is trending to becoming of little use to humans or wildlife. The remedy becomes more costly the longer it is delayed: hundreds of trees and acres of blackberry and ivy need to be removed and disposed of. Bear in mind that there are an estimated 11,000 trees on the mountain, so a few hundred will not be very noticeable. The time has passed when we can ignore this deteriorating and dangerous situation.

Summer hikers on Mt Sutro or Mt Davidson often encounter wet, mucky trails and streams from fog drip. Suggest the possibility of fire in such a place and you meet with laughter and derision. Yet the summer and autumn we just passed through was a very dangerous time in San Francisco. The blue gum evolved in a year-round rainfall regime, and it is unaccustomed to dry summers. Three dry years in a row created a potentially catastrophic situation of dying trees and years of accumulation of dry fuel. All the ingredients were there except a spark to ignite. Fortunately, we got to the rainy season without this happening.

That does not mean the danger is over. Trees benefitting from fog drip--on the west sides of Mt Sutro and Mt Davidson--although stressed by the drought, survived in reasonable shape. Those deeper into the plantation and not directly exposed to the wet fogs--in effect in the "fog shadow"--endured prolonged stress from the dry conditions. Many of them are dead now and others will be dying, as their root systems were weakened and their stored energy was depleted. Not many trees died in the short but intense drought season of 1976-77; however, there was a

delayed reaction and many died in the following two years. Expect worse--because of the three-year drought--in the coming year.

We can no longer ignore this evolving catastrophe. We are now beginning to see the difference between a forest and a plantation. The latter has not stood the tests of time, as the planted groves are only a little over a century old. The situation requires adaptive management, as drier areas of the city--for example, Glen Canyon, McLaren Park, Yerba Buena Island, and Bayview Hill--are proving uncongenial to this exotic tree. The draft Significant Natural Resource Areas Management Plan covers much of what needs to be done. However, it was drafted many years ago. In the meantime, the plants burgeoned while the Plan remained unchanged; it is therefore out of date. Because of the delays in adopting the Plan, it is too conservative and therefore will leave many problems unaddressed that it should address.

The expense of cleaning up the developing mess will be enormous and beyond the City's ability to fund, so will require FEMA money. FEMA does not dispense funds without a plan; we hope that the City will have a plan soon.

Ms. Ruth Gravanis, Alliance for Natural Areas, presented on maximizing the benefits of historic tree stands discussing the benefits of Blue Gum trees that are a part of historic tree stands in Glen Canyon Park. She urged the endorsement of the SNRAMP that provides Best Management Practices of these tree stands and to increase public education to address misconceptions of elements of the plan. Ms. Gravanis discussed the benefits that the SNRAMP would provide to the public and wildlife. (Reference Presentation)

Council Members held a discussion with presenters on Best Management Practices.

Public Comment:

Ms. Dee Seligman referred to a classic forestry textbook, *Ecology and Silviculture of Eucalyptus Forests*, that states that thinning only benefits eucalyptus under 15 years of age. Thinning older trees, such as Mt. Davidson and Mt. Sutro's 120 year-old eucalyptus trees would send them into sharp decline because of intergrafted roots and wind protection interdependence. Additionally, *The California Forestry Handbook* of the CA Dept. of Forestry indicates all trees should be thinned early and regularly because it is "expensive, slow, hard work." Thinning is not usually done unless there is an economically viable commercial product. Dr. Joe R. McBride, a local eucalyptus expert who wrote a management plan for the Presidio's eucalyptus plantations and 14 reports on Bay Area eucalyptus for CA Dept of Parks and Recreation, advises decisions should be made park-by-park. He urges us to figure out what our goal is before deciding how to manage a forest, since ecosystem function is different than a production forest. We know that "*blue gums are biomass machines*" for storing carbon.

Mr. Paul Rotter discussed the reduction of eucalyptus trees on Tank Hill 20 years ago and the request made by neighbors to halt tree removal on Tank Hill until more native trees are planted and reach a sustainable condition. He reported that hardly any of these trees remain. He discussed the planting of non-native tree seedlings by the Nature Conservancy in Minnesota in an area with a warm and drier climate and how well they are doing. Mr. Rotter discussed the dangers imposed by climate change issues and urged that any discussion of an Urban Forest Master Plan should be done in the shadow of a changing climate. Mr. Rotter urged the Council

to ask the Board of Supervisors for an improved brief of the Urban Forest Plan so issues could be addressed in a more scientific manner.

Ms. Rupa Bose stated that there used to be a theory that eucalyptus trees had a 120 year life span, but that current research shows they have a 300 to 500 year life span. She stated that the eucalyptus trees in question are relatively young and healthy. Ms. Bose referenced the Hort Science report that shows that almost 80 percent of the eucalyptus trees on Mt. Davidson are in fair to poor condition. She pointed out that the report references a small sampling of trees at the edge of the forest that is not representative of all of the trees in the area. Ms. Bose stated that a tree in fair condition is fine in a forest that is supposed to have trees in a variety of conditions. She pointed out that the dead trees on Mt. Davidson were found to be girdled due to anti eucalyptus tree activism. She spoke of the adaptive nature of eucalyptus to a dry climate.

Mr. Joshua Arce, Commission on the Environment President, thanked the Council and relevant agencies for their work on Best Management Practices. He reported on public comment received at the Commission on the Environment and Policy Committee asking that there be an action taken to reconsider plans for removal of trees. He spoke of his background as a Civil Rights Attorney and discussed the lens in which communities of color receive and process this information. Mr. Arce stated that eucalyptus trees are known to provide a good source of carbon sequestration and discussed the negative aspects that removal would have on climate change. He suggested that plans be reconsidered and that only dangerous trees be removed and to repair those that are in fair or poor condition.

Council Secretary Monica Fish read public comment into the record by Ms. Linda Shaffer, Vice President, California Native Plant Society, urging that recommendations contained in Recreation and Park Department's Significant Natural Resource Areas Management Plan for best management practices for mature and historic tree stands in parks and open spaces be included and that Council Members watch *Becoming California*, a recently released documentary produced for PBS at Sacramento State in which the concept of cutting some trees in a tree stand to make the rest of the trees healthier is directly addressed (Reference Public Comment Linda Shaffer).

Ms. Mary McAllister suggested that the Council visit forest areas managed by the Natural Areas Program such as Pine Lake and Stern Grove before endorsing a management practice that has not been successful. She discussed the destruction in these areas for the purpose of providing more light for native plants. Ms. McAllister stated that many of the native trees that were planted did not survive because they will not grow on hills where most natural areas are and because they require more water than the trees that were destroyed, do not tolerate wind, and the soil will not support the trees.

Ms. Anastasia Glikshtern, spoke in opposition to the Natural Areas Program and Significant Natural Resources Area Management Plan. She provided pictures from 1942 of a Mount Davidson landslide that was caused due to removal of trees and vegetation. Ms. Glikshtern discussed the clear cutting plan for Mt. Davidson in the MA1 area to plant California Huckleberry which grows everywhere.

Mr. Richard Drexler discussed information that can be attained from reports made by birders of bird populations that are contrary to what is contained in the SNAMP and discussions presented

today. He suggested that these reports be referenced as a way to generate public policy, stating that the data shows that we are in a better situation than we think we are in.

- 7. Planning Commission Approval of Urban Forest Plan.** The Council will hold a brief discussion of the Planning Commission adoption hearing on November 20, 2014 and next steps. (Discussion)

Council Member Jon Swae reported that the Planning Commission adopted the Urban Forest Plan on November 20, 2014, and as a condition of approval, recommended that a glossary be added, which has been included. He reported that an Ordinance for amendment to the General Plan was forwarded to the Board of Supervisors, and a hearing would be held in mid-January, date to be determined.

- 8. Review and Approval of Urban Forestry Council Draft Resolution 2014-08-UFC Commending Member Emeritus Mike Barrow for his Service to the Urban Forestry Council.** (Explanatory Document: Approved Resolution) (Discussion and Action)

Council Coordinator Mei Ling Hui read the Resolution commending Council Member Emeritus Mike Barrow into the record. Council Member Emeritus Barrow thanked the Council, discussed the positive contribution made by the Council to the community, and potential for future contributions. Upon Motion by Chair Flanagan, second by Member Sherwin, the Resolution was approved (AYES: Members Flanagan, Short, Hillan, Hillson, Kida, Leffingwell, Sherwin, A. Sullivan, M. Sullivan, and Swae; Noes: None; Absent: None).

- 9. Committee Reports:** (Informational Reports and Discussion)
- Planning & Policy Committee.** Chair's Report. Committee Chair Andrew Sullivan reported on Committee plans to synthesize the Best Management Practices listening series for Council review and idea of combining the Planning and Funding Committees that would be discussed at the next Committee meeting. Committee Member Leffingwell reported on meetings held with the Forest Service to discuss Urban Forest Master Plan obstacles and opportunities in San Francisco and opportunities for ongoing collaboration.
- Funding Committee.** Chair's Report. No Funding Committee report was issued at this time.
- Landmark Tree Ad Hoc Committee.** Chair's Report. Committee Chair Hillson reported on the withdrawal of a nomination for a landmark tree and asked for an update on whether landmark tree markers will be discussed at a potential January 8 Committee meeting.
- 10. Staff Report.** (Informational Report and Discussion) Council Coordinator Mei Ling Hui reported on her vacation schedule. Chair Flanagan requested that a meeting be scheduled with Van Ness BRT staff.
- 11. Chair's Announcements:** Chair, Urban Forestry Council (Information and Discussion) There were no Chair's announcement made at this time.
- 12. Urban Forestry Council Member Announcements.** (Information and Discussion) Member Alvarez congratulated Council Secretary Fish for her commendation by Local 261 for her service to the City and County of San Francisco and Council Coordinator Hui's certification for Sustainable Landscape Design and Maintenance by the Bay Friendly Coalition.

**13. New Business/Future Agenda Items.** (Information and Discussion) Chair Flanagan suggested that the Council work on identifying Best Management Practices at future meetings. Committee Member Alvarez asked that departments that are responsible for trees report on the loss of trees caused by the recent storm and their plans to proactively manage trees due to increased storms caused by climate change. Member Michael Sullivan suggested that the Council work on creating a list of introductory tree species that will thrive in San Francisco open space areas and increase the diversity of tree species. Chair Flanagan suggested a discussion of this issue at the next Planning and Policy Committee meeting.

**14. Public Comment:** Members of the public may address the Council on matters that are within the Council's jurisdiction and are not on today's agenda. There was no public comment at this time.

**15. Adjournment.** The Urban Forestry Council meeting adjourned at 11:45 a.m.

The next meeting of the Urban Forestry Council is scheduled for Friday, January 23, 2015 at 8:30 a.m., City Hall, Room 400, San Francisco, CA 94102.

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Copies of explanatory documents are available to the public at (1) the Department of Environment, 1455 Market Street, Suite 1200, San Francisco, California 94103 between the hours of 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. Photo identification is required for access to the building; (2) upon request to the Council Secretary at the above address or telephone number 415-355-3709 or via e-mail at [Monica.Fish@sfgov.org](mailto:Monica.Fish@sfgov.org) within three business days of a meeting. Explanatory documents may also be available at the Council's meeting or agenda website

<http://www.sfenvironment.org/about/taskforce/urban-forestry-council/agendas> as attachments with each agenda or meeting minutes. Meeting audios can be accessed at the following weblink <https://sites.google.com/a/sfenvironment.org/commission/urban-forestry-council/urban-forestry-council-and-committee-meeting-audios>.

Respectfully submitted by Monica Fish, Commission Secretary  
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