

Citizens dislike proposed tree code

By Nicole Krueger
Managing Editor

Sixteen local residents spoke out against a proposed revision of Eugene's Tree Removal Permit program at a City Council public hearing Monday night, reminding the council of how much Eugene loves its trees.

No private citizens spoke in favor of the revision, which would place regulation of tree removal in Eugene from the hands of the city to those of the private sector. Barbara Keller, former city councilwoman and author of the initial tree removal ordinance, called the proposal "too flawed even to amend."

The existing code provides a permit process by which applications for removal of street trees and trees on private lands are evaluated. However, due to budget cuts caused by Measure 50, the council last spring discontinued city staff administration of the permits, complaint investigation and code enforcement on private properties, the cost of which totaled an estimated \$60,000.

According to Public Works Director Chris Andersen, the code revision is an attempt to continue meeting the goal of tree protection while working within the limits of the budget. Under the revised code, permit applicants must obtain private certification by a certi-

fied arborist or a licensed landscape architect that the tree removal is the minimum required to implement an approved development plan or to alleviate a danger to life or property. The applicant must absorb the cost of the certification.

City staff will issue permits based on this private certification and will neither investigate complaints of violations nor actively enforce the code. Instead, Eugene residents must enforce the code through court action if tree removal without the required permit occurs or is threatened to occur.

"This is our best shot at trying to achieve the goals of the city Urban Forestry Program," Andersen said. "We feel that this is a reasonable proposal, although not ideal."

Residents raised numerous concerns about the proposal, including whether certified arborists and landscape architects are qualified to evaluate whether a tree should be removed. Tom McCartney, a certified arborist, said people who receive this certification often have no experience and are not necessarily qualified to make this judgment.

Another concern raised was that requiring private certification for tree removal permits might create a conflict of interest for these arborists and landscape architects.

"[Relying on] private arborists is like the fox guarding the henhouse," resident Mary Ann Holser said. "You can always hire someone to give you the opinion you want."

McCartney, along with several other speakers, suggested the council nominate a group of "proven arborists with local track records" to provide certification for the tree removal permits.

Some speakers also expressed concern about the lack of city enforcement of the code.

"Essentially, you're taking the power of enforcement and putting it in the hands of private citizens," said Martin Gascoyne, a representative of the Eugene/Springfield branch of the Oregon Landscape Contractors Association. "A lot of people are not going to want to take on the responsibility, and those who do will run a risk of coming into conflict with their neighbors."

Keller agreed. "Do not expect individual citizens to do your job of protecting trees," she warned the council.

Overall, many speakers agreed that the revision will merely weaken the code at a time when strengthening is needed. Keller, who wrote the initial code five years ago, said the code has worked well in the past and was meant to be expanded, not reduced.

Andersen defended the revision, but she admitted that it is "not a flawless approach" and said the staff would be willing to listen to any other approaches.

The issue will be discussed further at the City Council meeting on Monday, which will take place at 7:30 p.m. in the City Council Chamber. The council expects to take action on the proposal at this time.



NEWS BRIEFS

Forum will address harmful chemical use

Students representing OSPiRG, MEChA, the Multicultural Center, CAER (Coalition Against Environmental Racism) and HOPES (Holistic Options for Planet Earth Sustainability) will be sponsoring an awareness forum on chemical usage. The forum will take place at 5:30 p.m. on Wednesday, April 8 in the EMU Ben Linder Room. For additional information, contact Eric Colbeck of OSPiRG at 346-4377.

Work party to help preserve wetlands

The Nature Conservancy of Oregon is inviting volunteers who are interested in protecting the ecology of the Willow Creek Preserve to participate in a work party Saturday, April 11. The event is one of eight work parties held on the second Saturday of each month. Volunteers are encouraged to bring along their own equipment. For additional information, contact Ed Alverson at 682-5586.

Hearing scheduled to discuss bike plans

The Springfield Planning Commission is inviting the general public to a hearing on the city's draft bicycle plan on Tuesday, April 7 at 7 p.m. The discussion will take place in the Springfield City Council Chambers at the Springfield City Hall, 225 Fifth St. Discussion of the plan will cover a period of 20 years and contains 50 proposed projects. For additional information, contact Dean Bishop at 726-3683.

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CERAMICS

HANDBUILDING / SCULPTURE
Tues, Apr 7-May 5 (6:30-9:30 pm) \$38†

CERAMIC CLOCKFACES
Tues, May 12 & 19 (6:30-9:30 pm) \$16/\$20*

PHOTOGRAPHY

CONTINUING PHOTO
Mon, Apr 6-May 11 (6:00-9:00 pm) \$48†

ALTERNATIVE PHOTO
Sun, May 10 & 17 (12:30-4:30 pm) \$34

MED/LARGE FORMAT PHOTO
Sat, Apr 18-May 2 (12:30-5:30 pm) \$45†

PAINTS, PENS, PAPERS

DRAWING
Thu, Apr 16-May 21 (6:00-8:30 pm) \$33/\$37*

SILKSCREEN
Mon, Apr 6-May 11 (6:00-9:00 pm) \$45†

OIL PASTELS
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FIBER ARTS

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Mon, Apr 20-May 18 (6:00-9:00 pm) \$45/\$49*

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Wed, May 6-27 (6:00-8:30 pm) \$28/\$32*

SPINNING
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NAT. DYENG ON SILK SCARVES
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GLASS

FLINT KNAPPING
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STAINED GLASS BEADS DEMO
Sat, May 9 (1:00-4:00 pm) \$8/\$12*

JEWELRY

JEWELRY TECHNIQUES
Wed, Apr 8-May 20 (3:00-6:00 pm) \$45†

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