

# Haystack Heights to lose nine high-risk trees

## Arborist report finds health concerns

By Erick Bengel  
Cannon Beach Gazette

Two trees recently toppled onto the same house in Haystack Heights in fairly quick succession, so the public works department now plans to remove from the neighborhood nine potentially hazardous trees, which are standing in the city right of way in the next couple of months.

In terms of risk management, the city may face some serious consequences “if we don’t proceed with the removal,” Public Works Director Dan Grassick told the City Council at its Tuesday work session.

Last fall, a tree in the city right of way fell onto the property at 379 Elk Run Avenue during a storm, striking the house with a glancing blow. The property owners, Sue and Doug Friddell — second-home owners who live in Issaquah, Wash. — repaired the damage and had the tree removed.

Then, during the storm of Jan. 4 and 5, the trunk of a second tree, also in the city right of way, snapped several feet from the base, rotated and clipped the side of the house on the way down, damaging the eaves, gutter and front porch, Grassick said. (The tree is still in the Friddells’ yard, chopped up and waiting to be used as firewood, near the splintered stump.)

Consequently, the Friddells, who were “definitely concerned,” asked the city to evaluate the other 13 trees clustered around their house in the right of way, which starts about 10 feet east of the couple’s property, Grassick said.

The city’s arborist, Will Caplinger, examined the grove twice and recommended that nine of the trees along East Chinook Avenue be eliminated. The lingering stump will be flush cut.

Of the nine trees, six are Sitka spruce between 25 and 125 feet tall, and three are western hemlock between 20 and 60 feet tall, according to Caplinger’s report. The troubling trees show signs of deteriorating health and stability, including, in some instances, basal decay. Some are either dead or dying.

“We believe these trees to be a danger to our family, our home and to others that live nearby,” the Friddells wrote in a letter to the city. They declined to speak with the *Gazette*.

The trees, left over from when the area was initially cleared, also appear to have been damaged years ago, possibly when the neighborhood roads were built, Grassick said. “They are now starting to show that damage as the trees have gotten bigger.”

### Replanting

Though Grassick’s presentation was for the council’s information only, he brought the matter before them because the project is “much bigger than our normal tree-removal request,” he said.

In addition, he said the project would “make a difference on that corner on terms of look and appearance.”

After notifying nearby property owners, the city received one letter of opposition from residents who wrote that the tree loss will “change the character of the neighborhood!” The city advised



ERICK BENDEL PHOTO

The tree-beleaguered home of Sue and Doug Friddell, who live at 379 Elk Run Avenue, has been hit twice with falling trees within the last several months. (The logs in the foreground are the remains of the second one.) The public works department plans to thin the grove on city right of way within the next couple of months.

them of the appeal process but didn’t receive a response, Grassick said.

The city sometimes replants after removing trees from its rights-of-way, though “it’s not a hard-and-fast requirement,” Grassick noted.

He cautioned against planting similar trees, ones that — like Sitka spruce and western hemlock — grow tall and develop sprawling limbs, because the city may find itself with similar problems as the ungainly specimens start to compete with the “built” environment.

“I think it’s important that we actually put a species back that makes sense in our right of way, to actually maintain some sort of street tree cover,” City Manager Brant

Kucera said.

Grassick said that public works will wait a year after the tree removal to determine if replanting should happen or if the four mature trees remaining — three Sitka spruces between 120 and 130 feet tall, and one 60-foot-tall western hemlock — will have to do.

Much will depend on whether the city can find a species that can coexist with the neighborhood’s high-density development. “We want to make sure we know what it looks like when we’re done,” he said.

Mayor Sam Steidel said it would be good for the city to have a policy that stipulates, if the city is going to maintain its rights-of-way, “we should

do it in an aesthetic way.”

He added that the parks and community services committee could explore different vegetation options — such as salal or something hedge-like — to see “what could plant here nicely.”

### Memories of ODOT

Caplinger’s report, Steidel said, includes the kind of detailed analysis of the trees’ health that he felt was missing from the Oregon Department of Transportation’s tree-removal project on U.S. Highway 101, which provoked a kerfuffle between ODOT and Cannon Beach residents last month.

However, Grassick noted that the Haystack Heights situation is distinctly different:

ODOT removed the trees from its right of way because they leaned over the highway, potentially endangering drivers; the health of the trees, he said, was not a primary concern. “It was strictly a high-way maintenance issue,” he said.

Though the *Gazette* previously reported that the trees ODOT took from the highway were dead or dying, the department actually cut down healthy trees as well because they, too, could have slid down the embankment and/or fallen over, Grassick said.

By contrast, all of the targeted trees on East Chinook Avenue seem to suffer from the same maladies that caused the two trees to collapse onto the Friddells’ home.

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