

OAK PARK MUNICIPAL ADVISORY COUNCIL MINUTES

May 25, 2021.

The Oak Park MAC held a meeting on Tuesday, May 25, 2021 at 6:00 PM
via Zoom Online/Teleconference.

1. Call to Order of the meeting

The meeting was called to order by *Chair Jane Nye* at 6:00 PM. MAC members *Seema Chandra, JL Diaz, Alon Glickstein*, and *Janice Smets* were present.

2. Flag Salute

JL Diaz led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. Adoption of the Agenda

Jane Nye made a motion to move Item 11b to before Item 11a and move all Advisory Matters before Item 8. The motion was seconded by *Alon Glickstein* and approved 5-0.

4. Approval of the special meeting minutes of January 28, 2021

Seema Chandra moved to approve the draft meeting minutes as written. The motion was seconded by *Alon Glickstein* and passed 5-0.

5. Public Safety reports

Ventura County Sheriff's Office Senior Deputy John Chiaramonte reported that neighboring areas are experiencing catalytic convertor thefts and there is now a program called Etch and Catch, with several auto shops participating to etch the Sheriff's stamp and driver's license plate onto the catalytic converter as a deterrent. He said the VIPs are not back yet but is hoping they will be soon. Lastly, he said Moorpark had some residential burglaries and urged residents to be vigilant and report any suspicious activity.

CHP Officer Ryan Ayers said the CHP is also trying to pioneer avenues to reduce catalytic convertor thefts and has partnered with the Sheriff's Office on this issue with many successful vehicle theft task forces. He reported there have not been any collisions since the last MAC meeting. He said the Sheriff's Office is now opening driving classes, including Start Smart classes for ages 15 to 19 years, and the Age Well Drive Smart program for older drivers. Classes are advertised online for those interested. *Alon Glickstein* reported on a large truck on Rockfield parked for a few weeks, and a trailer on Kanan being left out for a few days. *Officer Ayers* said CHP will talk to owners if complaints are received. He also said that residents are allowed to leave recreational vehicles parked for loading/unloading and maintenance for a short time frame, but if it is left for longer periods to contact the CHP.

6. Comments of Ventura County Supervisor Linda Parks

Supervisor Parks said she attended the Oak Park Unified School District retirement ceremony and honored retiring superintendent Tony Knight with a resolution from the Board of Supervisors. She mentioned his many accomplishments in the school district and community. She welcomed new Rancho Simi Recreation Park District (RSRPD) Recreation Director Zack Miller and thanked Lisa Weagley who is retiring month. She announced that Jan Osterhaven is also retiring and thanked her for all her hard work over the years on many important issues in the community, including administering over 150 MAC meetings. She said Vanise Terry will take over administering the Oak Park MAC. She reported that Ventura County will be moving to the Yellow Tier on June 3rd, which will open up more capacity for businesses and on June 15th the State will fully open up. She said the Board of Supervisors will most likely begin in-person meetings by September.

7. Information items

- a. Links to public meeting agendas of independent agencies in Oak Park can be found on the websites for the Oak Park Unified School District and Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District-
www.oakparkusd.org www.rsrpd.org
Information was noted on the agenda.

8. Public Comments

Deena Perry mentioned dogs being allowed to run off-leash at Mae Boyer Park and suggested giving reminders to the public or posting signs at the park. **Janice Smets** suggested taking pictures of dog owners that can be turned into the RSRPD park ranger. **JL Diaz** said he would also bring up as RSRPD representative.

9. Council Comments

JL Diaz provided updates on RSRPD, including a group wanting to organize a non-profit organization to protect open space, an open position for a student representative, and repairs on the trails.

Janice Smets said the company putting out rodenticides in Oak Park will be fined and urged residents to report this type of activity so the rules can be enforced.

Jane Nye was notified by the Ventura County Planning Commission that the appeal hearing for the Verizon Churchwood project was formally withdrawn and the appeal and application for this project will not be moving forward at this time. She said the two new trash cans voted on by the MAC in 2020 have been added on Kanan Road. She said Oak Park Unified School District (OPUSD) Environmental Education and Awareness Committee successfully launched an Adopt-a-Road program and collected approximately 25 lbs. of trash during the first Clean Up Day on May 1st. This will continue every month and there is now large community involvement. As OPUSD Liaison, she provided a certificate and orchid to Ragini Aggarwal for the Oak Park Community Spirit Award. She said at the retirement ceremony over 13 OPUSD retirees were honored. OPUSD will have a new Superintendent, Dr. Jeff Davis, on July 1st and in-person classes for all grades will begin on August 9th. She said all culmination plans will be in-person this year but with limited number of guests. However, they found leaking ground water on the football field so OPHS graduation will be on the baseball field. She announced there are reports from the Diversity and Equity Task Force and from the District's Equity Consultant, Dr. Terry Walker, available on the school's website worth reviewing. Lastly, she said the Triunfo Water & Sanitation District / Joint Powers Authority (JPA) organized three "Taste the Water, Explore the Garden" events in May. She reported there were two local fires in Calabasas and Westlake Village, and another fire in Palisades, so she wants to be sure residents are aware, especially with a possible drought.

10. Written Communications

There were no written communications.

11. Advisory Matters

a. MAC recommendation, CSA #4 landscaping area proposals; for sidewalk repairs and tree removals along Hawthorne Dr. at Rockfield St. and at Mareto Way

Chuck Alvarez and **Valerie Lopez**, **Ventura County Public Works Agency**, presented information and a power point on sidewalk repairs proposed. Mr. Alvarez noted that the trees proposed for removal are not protected by the County's tree protection ordinance nor do they meet the definition for protected heritage trees based on measurements specified in the County ordinance. Mr. Alvarez said they are sensitive to the concern in the community about the loss of the trees, so they can be replaced with larger, 25-gallon trees that have non-invasive roots.

Jane Nye asked if there is a plan for looking at and making repairs to sidewalks across the entire community, rather than one at a time. **Mr. Alvarez** said the Transportation Department has a program to inspect sidewalks and Enhanced Landscape should be doing the same. As hazards are located, they will make repairs because it becomes a liability issue and they must respond quickly.

JL Diaz questioned the cost estimate and whether they had the ability to opt to not cut the trees. He asked to see the arborist report and if grinding could be done to save on costs. **Mr. Alvarez** said the estimate from Transportation for all four sites was \$14,350, and the estimate from Enhanced Landscape for only two sites was \$10,068. He said trees must be removed, because only cutting the roots would destabilize the tree. He said an arborist was brought into look at the trees and that he can provide the report. He said even heritage trees can be removed if they come in conflict with a public project such as repairing sidewalks.

Janice Smets mentioned there are other ways to protect trees than using measurements to determine heritage trees. She discussed "landmark trees" noted by the San Francisco Landmark Tree Program as a

way to protect trees. She provided information on this program and discussed the importance of carbon. She requested a copy of the arborist report and asked for another neutral arborist to also look at the trees. **Seema Chandra** said she has visited the locations and that location #2 is very concerning because the sidewalk lift is very dangerous. She mentioned the need to balance saving the trees and ensuring public safety. She said she felt the first estimate from Enhanced Landscaping was too high and she pushed for a second estimate, which is the current estimate from Public Works Agency.

Jane Nye asked about liability issues for sidewalks needing repair all over Oak Park and to understand the costs for fixing all necessary areas. She asked for the timeline to give a recommendation and next steps. She noted she has received 10 emails from residents asking to keep the trees.

Chuck Alvarez said he cannot promise any delays in moving forward with repairs, that location #4 is just grinding with no tree removals so no need to delay that. He said the MAC can make a recommendation, but Public Works will make the decision based on protecting the County and that will most likely happen very quickly.

Carolyn Cass-Barton said she is against removing the trees and noted that Public Works Agency ground down her sidewalk and replaced segments on her street where there was uplift over two inches without removing any trees or cutting roots. She took issue with the measurements for heritage status taken higher on the trunk because they do not meet the requirements, while they do closer to the ground. She suggested consulting with the Public Works Department overseeing Westlake Village on Agoura Road between Lindero Canyon and Lakeview because the trees there are majestic pines lining the streets that have been maintained and preserved over the years while also keeping the sidewalks safe. She believes there are alternatives that can fix the sidewalks and save the trees as well.

Nena Suwara commented that she would like to see other options rather than just cutting trees down and suggested that roots could be shaved or cut to help fix the sidewalks while also saving the trees.

Janna Orkney said other sidewalks are far more lifted than the sidewalk slated for tree removal. She believes there should be a total inspection of the community. She does not want to see any trees removed because they are a value, and said the community is pro-tree and will be very unhappy if they are removed.

Jay Kapitz expressed his opposition to removing the pine trees and noted that in the past there have been other workarounds to save trees slated for removal. He suggested having additional arborists give an opinion.

Linda Kapitz said all trees should be saved, especially older ones that take years to grow.

Supervisor Parks suggested possible alternatives to cutting down the trees could be looked into such as ramping, and rubber sidewalk segments like those successfully used in Thousand Oaks. She said however that she would not be in favor of saving trees that are leaning and at risk of falling.

Chuck Alvarez said the trees planted were not appropriate for the sidewalks and not replacing the trees could lead to increased costs in the future because sidewalks will likely crack again. He said from a County ordinance perspective, a ½ to one inch lift can have ramping or grinding to fix, but anything greater than one inch must be eliminated and replaced to reduce liability, and the arborist report said trees must be removed. He said the decision will be made from a public safety and liability perspective.

Janice Smets said she needs to see the arborist report in order to ask questions on that report before she can make a decision on a recommendation. **Mr. Alvarez** said the item was brought to the MAC for a recommendation only because the cost for repairs is in excess of \$10,000 not because of the trees slated to be removed. He also said anytime a tree is slated for removal, Public Works always alerts Supervisor Parks' office ahead of time for transparency.

Alon Glickstein is concerned about long-term liability and would like to see all of the sidewalks in Oak Park fixed. He also requested to see the arborist report.

JL Diaz made a motion to not recommend cutting the trees but to continue the sidewalk repairs. **Janice Smets** seconded the motion and it was approved 4-1, with **Seema Chandra** dissenting.

b. MAC recommendation, CSA #4 draft budget for Fiscal Year 2021/2022

Chuck Alvarez and **Debra Cavaletto, Public Works Agency**, presented the proposed 2021/2022 CSA 14 budget. Ms. Cavaletto noted that the street lighting is an estimate on prior bills, but since this is the first

year with LED lights, they are just starting to see savings. While they continue to add a cushion in 2022, they do expect to see lower bills eventually. The crossing guard budget is higher due to an increase in payment to the crossing guards that were underpaid in prior years. There was also a one-time savings with the Kanan Shuttle not needing funding. **Mr. Alvarez** discussed going to the Local Agency Formation Commission with a request to activate the power to provide green street services, which will happen in the new fiscal year. Should it be approved, they will contract about 50% of annual cost for these services. **Janice Smets** asked for follow up on the hourly wage of the crossing guards, and the process for calculating the property tax revenue for Oak Park.

JL Diaz requested clarification on the fund balance carried over and whether it reflects savings from the crossing guards. Ms. Cavaletto said \$42,000 would be carried over and the reserve currently is roughly \$1.9 million. She discussed savings and spending in the budget by line items.

Seema Chandra noted that they are spending into their reserves.

Alon Glickstein asked where they could look to minimize expenses. Ms. Cavaletto said water for landscaping is the large cost that could be examined.

JL Diaz asked about increasing revenues. **Mr. Alvarez** said to increase the assessment would take a minimum of two years and require a vote of property owners.

Seema Chandra moved to recommend approval of the budget as presented and **Alon Glickstein** seconded the motion. It was approved 4-1, with **Janice Smets** dissenting.

c. Protocols for use of social media for Oak Park MAC news

JL Diaz said the MAC established a Public Relations Committee so there should be official communication channels created, such as Facebook or Twitter, and protocols for using them. The Committee includes JL Diaz and Janice Smets and they will begin working on this issue. **Jane Nye** will provide information she has put together as well. **Janice Smets** noted that per her communication with Supervisor Parks, anytime comments are made not as an official MAC member, a disclaimer should be provided.

d. MAC recommendation, the dollar amount of CSA #4 work proposals above which the MAC votes recommendations

Janice Smets expressed support for reducing the dollar amount threshold of bringing work proposals to the MAC from \$10,000 to \$6,000 for more visibility on what is being proposed for landscaping. **Seema Chandra** supports keeping the threshold at \$10,000 because there are many smaller repairs that are needed and waiting for a MAC vote could cause delays. **JL Diaz** said that with the shortfall in the budget the MAC should review at a lower threshold. **Alon Glickstein** said with the MAC meeting once a month and sometimes longer, the raised threshold allows for projects to get done without delays. He said the MAC is already notified of expenses.

Janice Smets made a motion to reduce the dollar amount threshold of bringing work proposals to the MAC from \$10,000 to \$6,000 and **JL Diaz** seconded the motion. The motion not approved 2-3, with **Alon Glickstien**, **Seema Chandra** and **Jane Nye** dissenting.

12. Adjournment

Chair Nye adjourned the meeting at 8:21 PM.