

**Parks and Parkways Commission
Special Public Hearing
January 21, 2016**

The meeting was called to order by Chairwoman Karin Crosby and the secretary called the roll.

Present: Karin Crosby, Anne Marie Fargason, Lee Frederick, and Nancy Clark

Absent: Scott Discon and Dodie Marshall

Also Present: Louise Scott, Planning Director; Catherine Casanova, Landscape Inspector; and Mayor Donald Villere

Ms. Crosby said the Planning and Zoning Commission had case V16-01-02, the request removal of a live oak tree at 1829 Lakeshore Drive, on their agenda. Ms. Clark said there was a recommendation from Dr. Malcolm Guidry regarding the health of the tree.

Lynn Mitchell, architect for the owner, stated there was also a recommendation from their Arborist, E. J. Dennis, who recommended removal. He looked at the site as an overall project. While this was the only tree intruding into the public property, behind it was 300 years' worth of live oak that was a statement. Mr. Mesa was locating his home behind those two trees which had been stressed by the storms and he was working to preserve them. To prevent any disturbance to the two live oak trees, the best idea was to place the driveway to the right side and make it straight. In doing this, enough of the tree would have to be removed that it should all be removed. After seeing the way contractors drive, creating a serpentine drive to save the tree caused concern about damaging the two statement oaks. Mr. Dennis had stated in his letter that it would never be a great tree.

Mr. Mitchell asked the board if they did not want the tree removed to recommend a better access or how to protect the two statement live oaks. To the west of the tree at the street was a utility pole and a City storm drain inlet which could not be moved without significant problems and expense. To get the driveway away from the tree, the driveway would have to be placed to the east of the pole and drain which could then intrude on the two statement oaks. He was looking at the best overall environment for the property.

Ms. Clark said she relied on Mr. Mitchell as a capable architect to find a solution. Their job was to preserve the tree canopy. Dr. Guidry said in his letter that the tree could survive and Mr. Mitchell disagreed. Ms. Clark said this had been a vacant lot and the area welcomed new neighbors, but everyone would rather see them protect the tree canopy. The tree was healthy and for the owner's purposes it was in the wrong place and that was not the tree's fault. Ms. Clark asked if they would consider keeping the gravel drive rather than concrete after the construction was complete.

Mr. Mitchell said the drawings were submitted last fall indicating the tree was to be removed. The permit was rescinded because it was determined to be a live oak tree. Mr. Dennis' statement said with the Cleco wire location, the tree could pose a hazard to bicyclists and pedestrians across the sidewalk. He was concerned that a serpentine driveway with construction would be difficult. Ms. Clark said these were existing conditions when the property was acquired. This may not be the most beautiful tree, but it contributed to the canopy and had fought through the fence to survive. The board embraced it as part of the canopy, and being a nice quirky piece that was part of the environment. Mr. Mitchell stated that he did not want to put the other two trees in jeopardy. Mr. Mitchell was concerned with construction deliveries and running over the fencing.

Ms. Crosby said the City was in discussions and was obtaining estimates from Cleco about burying the wires underground. Depending on the costs, burying the wires would mean less tree cutting issues. Mr. Mitchell agreed, but asked for a timeline. Ms. Clark said it would be some time in the future. Mike Mesa, property owner, said there were two trunks on the tree and he offered a compromise to remove one part of the tree for the driveway and keep the quiriness of the tree. Ms. Clark asked about caging the canopy of the tree to provide adequate space.

Ms. Frederick asked about relocating the driveway. Mr. Mesa said there were magnolia trees to be preserved on the other side of the property. Ms. Frederick asked about the footage from the proposed driveway to the predominant part of the tree, and suggested raising the canopy of the tree. Mr. Mitchell said it was a 12' driveway. Ms. Frederick suggested with shaping Mr. Mesa could still accomplish what he wanted. Mr. Mesa said he liked oak trees and was trying to save the other two trees.

Ms. Fargason asked what was on the east side that he could not relocate the driveway. Mr. Mitchell said there were two magnolia trees that would be preserved. Mr. Mesa said then it would be under the canopy of the two live oak trees. Mr. Mitchell said they could consider a total gravel driveway. Mr. Mitchell said the house would be a pier type foundation so there would not be a dam under the house and with the oak tree size would absorb about 2,000 gallons of water per day.

With the house location it would get a natural system and wind protection with the trees. If a concrete driveway was installed, it would not be until the next fall. Ms. Crosby asked why Mr. Mesa had chosen the position of the house. Mr. Mitchell said by placing it to the left it provided for more side yard and open area. This was also a concession to the adjacent neighbor and provided a better view.

Ms. Clark suggested trimming the tree. Mr. Mitchell said this was a suitable compromise. From a public standpoint, it was most advisable. Mr. Mesa said it would have to be trimmed for the pedestrians and bicyclist. Mayor Villere said there was a City project on the south side trimming the trees up to 7'. Ms. Clark suggested the trimming should be on a tree by tree basis.

Ms. Crosby summarized that Mr. Mesa offered an alternative of trimming the tree to allow the driveway. She asked if there was a way to pump the concrete from the street to the house. Mr. Mitchell said not for a 150' distance. Mr. Mitchell said Mr. Mesa was essentially giving the City the entire front yard with the setback.

There was a draft that would be modified for trimming the canopy to allow access for construction vehicles. There was a discussion and agreement for the project to overseen by Dr. Guidry. Ms. Crosby moved to adopt Resolution 15-01 as amended, seconded by Ms. Frederick and was unanimously approved. The resolution would be forwarded to the Planning and Zoning Commission for consideration. Mayor Villere said the City would pay for Dr. Guidry's supervision. Mr. Mitchell said they would clip the wire and unwind it.

Ms. Crosby moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Ms. Clark and was unanimously approved.



Lori Spradley, Secretary



Karin Lorenz-Crosby, Chairwoman