

Capitola Planning Commission

Agenda Report



Meeting: December 5, 2024

From: Community Development Department

Topic: Chapter 12.12 Community Tree and Forest Management

Project Description: Chapter 12:12 Community Tree and Forest Management Ordinance overview and discussion.

Recommended Action: Accept the presentation on Chapter 12:12 Community Tree and Forest Management and provide feedback on the existing ordinance.

Background: Chapter 12:12 Community Tree and Forest Management Ordinance was adopted on 2004 and amended in 2011. Since 2011, the ordinance has been in its current format (Attachment 1). Commissioner Wilk requested that a discussion on the tree ordinance, specifically tree removals, be placed on an agenda for discussion.

Discussion: Within Chapter 12.12 Community Tree and Forest Management Ordinance, tree removal in Capitola follows two different processes; one due to circumstances related to the tree and the second due to a development application.

Tree Removal Due to Circumstances Related to Tree

When a tree removal application is received staff will inspect the tree(s) to determine if they are damaging structures or present an immediate danger. The full findings for tree removal can be found at 12.12.180C and include the health or conditions of tree concerning disease infestation, or danger of falling, safety consideration, or situations where a tree has caused, or has the potential to cause, unreasonable property damage and/or interference with existing utility services. If staff cannot make the required findings, then an arborist report is commissioned to provide an expert opinion.

Tree Removal Due to Development Application

When tree removal is proposed in conjunction with a development application, the Planning Commission has full authority to approve or deny the tree removal and is not bound by the same findings. The Planning Commission routinely evaluates canopy coverage, proposed landscape, and development plans in a holistic approach to reach a determination for proposed tree removal in the context of the proposed development project. The Planning Commission may also consider other factors such as the age of existing trees, useful lifespan of proposed structures, best arboricultural practices, and better outcomes for a project and the community.

Attachments:

1. Chapter 12:12 Community Tree and Forest Management Ordinance

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