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March 3, 2026

TO: Rio Dell City Council

FROM: Kyle Knopp, City Manager

SUBJECT: Discussion and Possible Action Related to Trees at Memorial Park

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT THE CITY COUNCIL:

Direct staff to:

Procure the services of a professional arborist to conduct an analysis on the trees and return to the Council; or,

Authorize staff to acquire bids for tree removal and return to the Council with a proposed tree replacement plan.; or,

Take no action. This is not recommended.

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION

Concern exists regarding the condition of the trees located at Memorial Park. Pest infestation and visible cracks on the trees are a concern. Staff regularly reviews the condition of the trees and has in the past hired professional tree service companies to occasionally limb dead or distressed branches. Most recently, our tree services company has recommending cutting the trees down due to their condition.

The trees are a type of Poplar, a species known for quick growth but a short life span. The species can begin to be subject to pest and disease at only 25 years of age and typically live only 30-50 years. It is not known when the Poplars were planted. Historical satellite photos show the trees were likely planted sometime during or shortly after 1983, placing their maximum age at 43 years.

In 2009 the trees were subjected to some sort of unidentified pest infestation that defoliated the leaves. The trees recovered, however in the spring of 2024 a new infestation emerged. The Humboldt County Agriculture Department confirmed the infestation as the Satin Moth, which

defoliated or partially defoliated all the trees that year. The trees did not appear to fully recover in 2025 and there is concern that many if not all of the trees are in the process of dying.

As a public safety and liability concern, the issue needs to be addressed.

Staff seeks direction from the Council to either hire a professional arborist to evaluate the trees and make recommendations to the city, or to proceed with the removal of the trees and to begin the process of replacing the trees with a more pest resistant variety and researching funding options.

Attachments:

Satin Moth material provided by the County of Humboldt
Photo of a Satin Moth found on the side of City Hall in 2024.

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INSECTS *of the* **PACIFIC NORTHWEST**

Herbert Haggard & Judy Haggard



TIMBER PRESS FIELD GUIDE

TUSSOCK MOTHS Family Lymantriidae

This is a somewhat large family of moths, although relatively few species are native to the United States and Canada. Similar to the noctuid moths (Noctuidae), the adults are medium in size, stout, and nondescript in color, usually brown to grayish white. The females of some species are wingless. The males have feathery antennae. The adults of all species are short-lived and do not feed. The slender larvae typically have long tufts of hair, called

tussocks, at each end of the body (hence the common name for the family) and shorter, often brightly colored tufts on the back. The larvae of most species commonly feed on the foliage of trees and shrubs and are often seen in gardens. The pupae are enclosed in loose cocoons that often incorporate larval hairs. Some species are serious pests of forest and shade trees.



Leucoma salicis, adult and pupal skin



Leucoma salicis, larva

Leucoma salicis

SATIN MOTH

ADULT Above, forewings satiny or shiny white with leading margin edged with light yellow. Legs banded black and white. **WINGSPAN** 50 mm. **LARVA** With series of large, creamy white dorsal spots in between which are pairs of red bumps; sides covered with white hairs. **FOOD** Larva: Willow (*Salix* spp.); black cottonwood (*Populus balsamifera*), quaking aspen (*P. tremuloides*), and other poplars (*Populus* spp.). **FOUND** Very common throughout the U.S.

This species was introduced from Europe. Pete has seen huge poplars that have been completely stripped of their leaves by the larvae. When threatened, the adult releases from the base of its head a liquid that repels predators (see photograph).

