

**Lisa Natusch**

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**Subject:** FW: Concerned Community Member re: Tree Protection Ordinances/Agenda Sept 13,2021  
**Attachments:** Trees--Hillsb 2.pages

**From:** Polly Stephenson <[REDACTED]>

**Date:** September 10, 2021 at 11:35:01 AM EDT

**To:** Al Royse <[ARoyse@hillsborough.net](mailto:ARoyse@hillsborough.net)>, Christine Krolik <[ckrolik@hillsborough.net](mailto:ckrolik@hillsborough.net)>, Marie Chuang <[MChuang@hillsborough.net](mailto:MChuang@hillsborough.net)>, Sophie Cole <[scole@hillsborough.net](mailto:scole@hillsborough.net)>, Larry May <[LMay@hillsborough.net](mailto:LMay@hillsborough.net)>

**Subject:** Concerned Community Member re: Tree Protection Ordinances/Agenda Sept 13,2021

Polly Stephenson  
[REDACTED]  
Hillsborough, CA 94010

September 9, 2021

Alvin L. Royse, Mayor

Christine Krolik, Vice Mayor

Marie Chuang, Council member

Sophie Cole, Council member

Laurence M. May, Council member

1600 Floribunda Ave.

Hillsborough, CA 94010

Re: Discussion on **Tree Protection Guidelines**

Dear Mr. Mayor, Ms. Vice Mayor, and Council members:

I am glad to see on the Agenda September 13, 2021 that you are discussing the Tree Protection Guidelines for Hillsborough. It is an issue that is badly in need of review and renewal.

The Town Ordinances say that preservation of trees is necessary "in order to preserve the scenic beauty" in the town. The purpose of the town ordinance is to "retain as many trees as

possible.” The ordinance sites several reasons for preserving trees, including counteracting pollutants, decreasing soil erosion, maintaining climatic balance, etc. But the inherent contradiction to these goals is that only trees with a diameter of 36” or more are protected.

Before I sat down to write this to you, I went outside and walked my acre of land. I did my best to count the trees on my property. I lost count somewhere around 100. But it is safe to say that we own about 100 significant trees in Hillsborough, give or take a few. My husband and I have lived at this lovely spot for almost 33 years. Because we accepted our position as stewards for these beautiful living things, we have trimmed, and watered, and fertilized and sought professional advice for these precious trees all of these years. But, in keeping with Hillsborough’s ordinances, if I wanted to cut them all down tomorrow, I could. That is, I could cut down all but ONE. Only one tree on our acre measures the 36” diameter required by the Hillsborough ordinance—a giant sequoia. Most of our trees were here when we moved in, and most likely, they will be here when we move out, at a point which is presumably decades in the future. We would not need a permit to obliterate our trees. We would not need to ask our neighbors what they think. But I am certain that it would create an uproar.

A version of this scenario just played out with us along our property line. We have new neighbors. Just 3 weeks into their residency, they hired 6 men with chain saws. Without a single word to us in advance, they took out a grove of mature trees that were about 75 years old and about 50 feet tall or more. These eight trees provided seclusion, privacy and beauty to

our lot. They gave much needed shade for a mature shade garden in our back yard. They created a sound barrier from the noise of the neighbors' young children. When I went over and introduced myself to the new neighbor the morning the saws were blaring, my intention was to explain that the actions on their property impacted our property significantly. I was met with the response, "They are my trees and I can do what I want with them." This neighbor, John Noell at [REDACTED], had not had the property line surveyed. He naively went on the assumption that the old fences represented the property line—they don't. Only because I advised him of the fact that part of our land lies on the far side of the fence, did they stop in time before taking out more trees that are actually ours.

If Hillsborough had ordinances like some of the neighboring towns which protect trees that are 10" to 15" in diameter, ALL of the trees this neighbor cut down would have required a permit for their removal. A permit would have given me as a neighbor appropriate notice and the right to review the situation. I would have had a chance to talk with the neighbors before the chainsaws started to destroy. A town ordinance could have created an atmosphere of cooperation and consideration between the neighbors. Surely we could have reached an agreement with the new neighbors in which both of our interests could be considered.

Because the town has an ordinance that is too broad to provide reasonable protection, I have a relationship now that is full of anger and resentment. The town is in a position to promote neighborliness—but the town is turning a blind eye, or so it appears.

When I think of trees with a 36" diameter, I think of giant sequoias or eucalyptus. These

trees have their own brand of beauty to be sure, but quite frankly, they are not the best suited specimens for a semi-suburban neighborhood like Hillsborough. These are not the trees that should be among the privileged few varieties that are protected due to their sheer size.

Eucalyptus are heavy fuel trees that burn easily; giant sequoias pose a liability for falling and for blocking views. Most trees in Hillsborough do not have the capacity to even grow that large—as a result, most trees in Hillsborough have no legal protection whatsoever.

What is the goal of the Hillsborough tree ordinance? I honestly can see no reason why it is so lenient here when our neighboring communities have ordinances that are far more protective and reasonable.

I am out of town at a family wedding on the day of your discussion, otherwise I would gladly participate by Zoom. In the meantime, I ask that you read my letter and take the issues to heart. Trees matter. Neighbors matter. And right now, the Town is doing nothing to help either.

If interested, I can provide photos of the before and after. And I can provide arial views of the property line from which the trees were removed. I wrote to Tim Andersen on the day of the destruction and asked him to circulate my letter, so perhaps you are already aware of this situation. I am more than willing to meet with any or all of you in the future to discuss what needs to be in order to protect future trees from senseless and wanton destruction—and to move toward a more neighborly atmosphere in our community by requiring permits and

notice.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter—

Very Truly yours,

Polly Stephenson

**Lisa Natusch**

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**Subject:** FW: Tree Removal

**From:** Martha Dannis [REDACTED]  
**Date:** September 13, 2021 at 9:09:46 AM PDT  
**To:** Christine Krolik <[ckrolik@hillsborough.net](mailto:ckrolik@hillsborough.net)>, Al Royse <[ARoyse@hillsborough.net](mailto:ARoyse@hillsborough.net)>  
**Subject:** Tree Removal

To:

Alvin L. Royse, Mayor

Christine Krolik, Vice Mayor

Marie Chuang, Council Member

Sophie Cole, Council Member

Laurence M. May, Council Member

I was unable to find email addresses for Ms. Chuang, Ms. Cole and Mr. May but I am more than happy if you are able to share my email regarding tree removal with the other council Members.

1600 Floribunda Ave,  
Hillsborough, CA 94010

I was away from home a great deal of this past Spring due to family health issues.

While I was checking in frequently, the first thing I noticed pulling into our driveway a few weeks ago was a pile of tree limbs 10-15 ft high in my neighbor's yard along with a chipper shredder. I had not been aware that the property had been sold as it had been a rental for some time. I had cultivated a very natural "fence" between the neighbor's house and ours at the request of the prior owner of the property (Belle Gorin) She adamantly wanted complete privacy which resulted in privacy for both of our properties.

The new owner of the property has removed shrubs, bushes and **a healthy oak tree** which appeared to be about 15-18" in diameter at it's base (where it was cut down) which has eliminated most of our privacy as we can now look through to our neighbor's property from our patio and home as well as having a view of most of our neighbor's back yard. Prior to the removal of trees and plants by our neighbor, we did not have any view into that property. I believe he plans to build a fence to restore privacy but due to the slope of our two properties, it appears a very tall fence will be necessary if the privacy of both properties is to be restored. One of the reasons we moved to Hillsborough was because of the trees and beauty of the town. I was stunned when I drove home and saw the changes made by removing tree limbs and trees on our neighbor's property. I have no photos before the tree removal, although the gap in the canopy which creates our new view of the neighbors yard is indicative of the size of the tree removed.

I noticed that the agenda for the council meeting on Monday includes a discussion of Tree Protection Guidelines. I believe the city needs to establish clear guidelines for tree removal and trimming as well as making sure that new residents to Hillsborough are made aware of the policies – to the extent of reading the policies and signing off that they have read and will comply with the policies established by the city. It is too easy to remove a tree and plead ignorance of city policies. In the past, we always received a letter from the city when construction activity was going to take place. I do not recall receiving those letters recently.

If I had received notification of the neighbor's plans, I would have asked the new resident to come to our house and look at what we see of his property looking from our house (built in 1936) as well as suggesting that we work together with careful trimming and tree preservation to preserve privacy for both properties. After the removal of trees and shrubs, however, we have a view into his back yard that we never wanted and never had before.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of these issues. Martha Berry  
Dannis