

MINUTES
REEDLEY STREETScape MAINTENANCE COMMITTEE MEETING
February 13, 2001

The agenda for the Streetscape Maintenance Committee Meeting of February 13, 2001, was duly posted in accordance with Government Code Section 54954.2.

A regular meeting of the Streetscape Maintenance Committee was held on February 13, 2001, in the Reedley City Hall Conference Room. The meeting was called to order at 8:05 a.m.

Members Present: Richard Bedoian and Dale Melville.

Members Absent: Jan Minami.

Andrew Benelli, Public Works Director/City Engineer; Jeff Viau, Public Works Superintendent; and Kay Pierce, Administrative Assistant.

Others Present: Steve Loeffler of Loeffler Landscape Maintenance; Sylvia Plata, Finance Department.

Dale Melville made reference to Page 2, paragraph 2, line 8, where it states "Richard Bedoian added that it also takes a vote of the citizens of Reedley to change the angle of the parking stalls." Dale thought that Richard was just be facetious, however, this was not the case. It does require a vote of the citizens to change the angle of the parking stalls because this is a City Ordinance. Staff will research this ordinance. Dale then directed everyone to Page 5, the first paragraph, line 8, where it states "The Committee unanimously agreed that what is needed is a one-time amount of \$5,000 to buy and plant all 40 trees and this funding would most likely eliminate the need for a monthly rate increase." The meaning the Committee was trying to relay was that a monthly rate increase could be postponed for a while, but not indefinitely. A monthly rate increase will be needed in the future. Dale Melville moved, Richard Bedoian seconded, to approve the minutes from January 9, 2001, with the noted correction. Motion carried unanimously.

REPORT ON MAINTENANCE ACTIVITY

A. Steve Loeffler reported that they finished pruning and cleaning up the Magnolias. Steve stated that many of the tree wells are devoid of flowers and will need replanting in the spring. Because of the roots from the magnolias and the difficulty the plants having growing, Steve suggested planting Calendula instead of Gazania. Calendula comes in bright yellow or bright orange and they spread and reseed themselves. The trailing gazania does well, but it is difficult to find and hard to get started. The type we are using now is the clumping gazania, which does OK, but does not fill in the whole planter. Calendula is very bright and spreads well and does well in the heat. Steve is waiting for the temperature to rise before any plants are planted. The irrigation system is shut down during the rainy season. One tree was replaced at Reedley Flower Shop with a Hackberry. Steve noticed that in front of Reedley Ford Tractor there is a bench that has a slat broken

out and needs replacing. Jeff Viau will handle that. Steve asked when the magnolias between 9th and 10th Street are scheduled for removal. Jeff Viau is going to attempt to move those magnolias and try to save them. Andrew added that the last time Jeff attempted to replant the magnolias, they all died. Steve added that magnolias are very difficult to remove and replant. It is difficult to remove enough of the root system from the tree well. Jeff stated that vandalism contributed to those transplanted magnolias not surviving.

Dale Melville asked Jeff whether he has had any luck finding new trash containers for the downtown area. Jeff stated that there are two varieties downtown; the older style is available, but he cannot find anyone who makes the newer style similar to the containers in front of City Hall. The containers cost around \$530 each. Andrew stated that staff has been discussing changing the containers downtown to a more modern container. Jeff added that the containers downtown do need to be repainted. Jeff asked how many containers are need and the response was six additional containers. Jeff asked what account would be used to pay for the containers. Kay Pierce stated that the original containers were purchased through a grant and the last containers purchased by Public Works were paid for through the Public Works Street fund since it is not really a Streetscape item. She also suggested placing this item in the budget for 2001-2002 since they are a high expense item and budget for ten cans, which can be utilized downtown. Each year a line item for new containers can be placed in the budget and eventually change over all the cans downtown to a newer, more pleasing style. Some of the older containers can be placed around the High School and possibly on "I" Street near restaurants and grocery stores. Jeff will get prices for the next meeting.

Richard Bedoian pointed out that the new replacement bench has been installed in front of Reedley Social Services. They still need to decide on the wording for a plaque.

Steve mentioned that some of the Christmas lights are still in some of the trees, particularly in front of Coffee and Candy and Galleria Gifts. He is letting the crepe myrtles grow taller, but there will be a time that they will require thinning in the middle and he doesn't want to get into any discussions with the business owners about the lights still in the trees, because it does make it difficult to trim without accidentally cutting the wires of the lights. Dale stated he would mention this to Jan Minami and hopefully she can bring this up at an RDA meeting. Dale stated that he would stop by both stores this morning and talk to the business owners.

OLD BUSINESS - None.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Sylvia Plata of the Finance Department wanted to go over collection procedures with the Committee. She stated that the reason she is bringing this to our attention for review is because the cost of sending a collection notice certified mail is \$3.74. When Sylvia gets her reports at the end of the month, she will go through and highlight anything over 60 days delinquent. She isn't concerned with the 30 day delinquents and there is no action on those when she gets the statements. First you get a white statement, then a colored statement when you get your monthly billings. The

colored statement is just an invoice, and the white one is the statement that shows anything that is previously owing. With accounts that are 60 days delinquent, a stamp that is placed on the bill that states perhaps they have overlooked their billing and it is mailed regular mail costing \$0.34. The 90 day delinquent is stamped with the 90-day notice and that one is sent certified mail, return receipt requested. These billings cost \$3.74 each and come out of the Streetscape account. This amount cannot be added to the billing because it is not stipulated in the Streetscape Ordinance. If the Ordinance is changed to include the price of mailing, she can bill for that. It is usually the same people that are 90 days late. The 120 days delinquent, when they have ignored the certified letter, she mails them a notice by regular mail that lets them know they are now being turned over to collections. The collection company does not get a percentage. Sylvia submits the past due account to the collection agency and the first 60 days the do letter service only, no fee to the City, the whole amount comes to the City if the customer pays from the demand letter. Dale suggested referring the 90 day account over to collections rather than sending them a certified letter. Sylvia stated that the only problem with that is that under their process of collections, all accounts are handled in this manner. Usually when they receive the certified letter, they will come in and bring their account current. She only refers a couple people to collections; most pay after they receive the certified letter. Usually the collection account are businesses that have closed up and left town. This past month there were nine businesses that required a certified letter for a cost of \$33.66 charged to the Streetscape account. Dale Melville stated that his concern for these types of charges for the City as a whole, the City should have a policy in place that if you don't pay your City bills on the date due, additional charges and interest are applied to the account. He feels that is something that should be included in the Streetscape billing. Sylvia stated that is something that the Committee has to change by vote and resolution of the City Council. Without any penalties, you are encouraging people to not pay until the last minute, and this is unfair to those people who do pay their bills on time. Sylvia stated that Finance does charge a fee when they go through a shut off status with the water bills, but there is nothing in the Streetscape collection procedures for them to collect a late fee.

Sylvia explained that Finance has a very low collection rate with water bills. When you sign up for water, if you are a property owner, you do not have to pay a deposit. If you are a renter, you do have to pay a deposit. Ninety-nine percent of the people on her shut off list are renters. They will get their water turned off after 90 days, and late fee is charged. A loss of \$200 for the Finance Dept. is considered a lot. The City of Dinuba takes \$2,000 to \$3,000 per month losses and Sanger takes much more than that. Reedley has done well with collections. Her concern with Streetscape is because the Streetscape budget is small and can't really afford an additional \$30 to \$40 per month in postage for collection letters. It will be up to the Committee whether or not Finance continues to send certified letters for those late payers. Sylvia stated she could not sent the bills certified; send them just a letter with a stamp stating "Sent to Collections", and just send it regular mail and send it to collections and not wait for the 120 days, but instead send it in at 90 days late. Sylvia stated that Fashion 11 has changed ownership and will probably pay the late payments. Styles is a chronic late payer and always has been and probably will continue to be late. Dale asked if a business never pays, does the City have the ability to place a lien on the property? Sylvia replied probably not, because they are not the property owner, but just the business owner. Styles will pay once threatened with small claims court. Andrew Benelli asked if the City could withhold a business license if the Streetscape fees were in

arrears? Sylvia replied she wish she had the ability to do this, but so far this is not an option. Andrew asked if there are very businesses that do not pay their business license? Sylvia stated she has three and she refers them to the police department. The police officer goes out to the business and gives them a first warning and then they are cited and they can be cited on a daily basis. Dale stated that seemed very reasonable, to withhold the business license until all back fees are paid.

Dale recommended that Sylvia discontinue sending notices using certified mail and send the warning of collections at 90 days rather than 120 days. He would also like City Council to change the present business license ordinance to address the issue of not issuing a business license until all city fees are paid in full. The Committee agreed with these recommendations as well as implementing a late fee for the Streetscape payments and have asked staff to bring this up with the City Council.

B. Discussion of Improvement Planning for Downtown Parking Lot Adjacent to Water Towers. City Engineer Benelli stated that this is just an informational item regarding funds to repave this parking lot. When the paving is done, the parking lot is going to have to be closed because it will take approximately one week for the asphalt to cure and get hard enough to drive on. It will cause some parking problems, but in the long run it will be much better. The City is also planning on planting some additional trees in this parking lot. Jeff Viau suggested planting Chinese Pistache. They are a good tree and canopy out nicely, although not a tall tree. They are colorful trees and moderate growers. There are already some oak trees in the parking lot towards the alley side at the north end. Jeff suggested adding some more oak trees along with the Pistache trees. Andrew suggested trying something besides a Scarlet Oak since they tend to look dead in the winter. Some haven't done well due to haphazard watering. New irrigation has been added to the parking lot and the tree well have been converted over the automatic irrigation, so they might do better. Dale Melville would like to see a tree that will canopy over the parking lot. Richard Bedoian asked if the funds for the parking lot were already in place. Andrew replied that the City has \$20,000 set aside for this project. The Public Works crew will construct the tree wells and plant the new trees. Richard suggested sending a notice to all the businesses on that block that the lot will be closed for a week and do all the paving at one time as a cost saving measure.

Dale Melville asked if there would be any reason to have an additional handicapped parking stall near the parkway area. Andrew stated that was a good idea, but there are already designated handicapped stalls in the existing parking lot. Andrew stated that they are thinking about building a bin enclosure in the parking lot as well. Bike racks will also be installed as well as a drinking fountain.

CITIZEN REMARKS - None.

COMMITTEE / STAFF COMMENTS / REPORTS:

A. Dale Melville asked if staff has done anything regarding the midblock crossings. Andrew replied that he went over the drawings submitted by Dale and staff is trying to obtain funding for this project, either grants or budgeted funds. Dale stated that

the Great Valley Center has their legacy grants which might work for this project. They range from \$1,000 to \$50,000. There might also be CDBG funds available.

B. Dale asked if the request for the one time \$5,000 will go to Council anytime soon or at budget time? Staff replied that this is budget time and this item will be submitted. At the meeting in January, Mike Olmos stated that the Committee might have to look to another fund to replace the trees and not raise monthly rates. He might have something in mind for these funds.

8. Adjournment.

Meeting adjourned at 9:11 a.m. Next meeting will be March 13, 2001.

Richard Bedoian, Chairman
Streetscape Maintenance Committee

ATTEST:

Andrew Benelli, Secretary