

HMDAC meeting by Zoom with City of Vallejo

By Zoom call on 3/3/2021

Present for the call were Byrne Conley, Chris Brittle and Bob Schussel for HMDAC, with Rick Navarro for the City and Brian Kilian, landscape architect.

We reviewed a “65% Progress Print” prepared by Brian. Brian proposes to reduce the height of plantings on the median at the entrance so the Hiddenbrooke sign is more visible to incoming traffic. He would get rid of the arbor, which is dry rotted anyway, and have the sign enhanced to “pop out” visually. Upgrade to the sign and lighting it should cost about \$5K. He would also extend walls at the front, coming from right behind the fountain to the street, with a matching wall on the other side, with embedded stones, to match the look of the ones further back. This would also serve to shield the utility boxes on the right as one drives in. This would cost an estimated \$2K to \$5K.

We all agreed that it is “worth it” to spend money on the areas near the fountain and near the Welcome Center, since they have the most visual impact. If the bid price is out of line with these estimates, we can consider dropping the wall extensions, for instance. The final plans will show demolition of the arbor and additions.

Page 3 shows a stretch with light poles. They will have decomposed granite at the base for 6 feet, either side, then 6 feet of cobblestone. There are 35 light poles in all and the estimated cost is \$1K per pole. This is a one-time cost, however, and would not require later maintenance.

Along the front side of the road edge, we will have native grasses, low shrubs, and ginko trees spaced 50 feet on center from each other. On the back side of sidewalks, they will mostly be left barren unless visible to drivers; the plans show where they are penciled in as barren vs. landscaped. We will not landscape areas that are “downslope” from the sidewalk edge as these will not be visible from the street.

There will be some planting at the area designated for the entrance to the “Grove” but no trees or anything that would be difficult to pull up if construction ever begins there. [The entrance is not depicted specifically in the plans.] It will just be edge planting on this area, presumably the developer will be tasked with relandscaping the entrance when work is done on the Grove. This only involves a 100 foot easement out of 5400 feet of street-front, total.

We are going to keep all trees, with a few exceptions. We advised Brian that we opposed clear cutting the trees, making the area into a construction zone again, but if individual trees were diseased or conflicted with the design plan, we were not opposed to them being replaced.

Brian indicates the design would increase in “rhythm” as a driver approaches the Welcome Center (see page 6 of the plan). There would be blocks of 7 plants, with more formal planting. Less native, more ornamental, flowering. The landscaping along the West side is existing. He would redo the edge planting. A little more of the flowers, more color, less native plants.

The goal is to preserve the sycamores and add “large, bold plants.” If we remove some sycamores near the Welcome Center, it would be to replace them with more flowering trees. He

would take away 2-3 sycamores on either side of the Welcome Center and replace them with crabapple or plum trees, in tighter spacing. There might be one sycamore in the center median to open up the view of the Welcome Center, replacing the current Redwood. Brian noted the Redwood tree near the Welcome Center is out of place. It is a coastal tree that lives best in clusters, in foggy areas, needs a lot of water, and out of place where it is placed now. It is “old style” landscaping more popular 30 years ago than now. He would like to replace it with a tree more consistent with the design plan.

We noted that near the Welcome Center, some thought should be given to planting a more mature tree even if more expensive, vs. a sapling that might be installed along the long stretch stretch of the Parkway.

Bob Schussel noted that it is most important to upgrade the appearance near the fountain and near the Welcome Center, those are the most important views to drivers.

Brian indicates that from visual inspection, he sees that there are lots of leaks in the old landscaping system, and with a replacement of laterals and replanting, there could be a 50 percent reduction in water use.

Near the fountain and Welcome Center would be annual flowers than would need seasonal replanting, everywhere else the plants would be perennial. Once planted, the latter would be given time to rest and grow, and Brian would not even want them pruned initially. The design includes geometric spacing so the plants can grow out. Maintenance costs should go down from the current situation.

We talked about the area past the Welcome Center as one drives in. The Committee members felt it would be best to address that area as well, as long as this major project is to be done. In particular, the design of that area should complement the design Brian is proposing for the rest of the Parkway. For example, there is a large grassy area near the mailbox that literally no one uses, except to walk to the mailbox. It may be a good idea to landscape that are similarly to the rest of the parkway, leaving an off-street walking path to the mailbox, but otherwise with low maintenance design.

Rick Navarro indicated that his engineer’s estimate of the cost of these plans is \$1,369,543, with contingencies of 20% for a high estimate of \$1,643,451. This did not include adding work on the “inside” portion past the Welcome Center. We discussed whether to phase the work or do it as a single capital project. The Committee members felt it would be better to fund this as a capital project out of the HID surplus, and do it all at once, rather than a piecemeal approach. The funds are already available in HID, and we would like to avoid pressure on the HMD budget, with a resulting tax increase on homeowner annual HMD payments.

Brian indicates that “save our water” rebates from the State were touted at one time, but his clients’ experience has been that they were miniscule or non-existent in practice.

Our next call will be to review the plans at the 100% stage, to be held on Monday, April 29 at 10 a.m.