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857-2021

Communication

Requested Agenda Type

Communications

Request of Richard Peterson to address Council regarding City policies, procedures and protocols regarding street trees

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A brief description of Communication: Portland Street tree maintenance: policies, procedures, and protocols

Agenda Items

857 Communications in [December 8, 2021 Council Agenda](#)

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From: [Pete Peterson](#)
To: [Clerk General](#)
Subject: Re: Communication Confirmation for December 8, 2021 City Council Meeting
Date: Monday, December 6, 2021 9:24:18 PM
Attachments: [Richard Peterson Communication - PCC mtg of 12-8-21.docx](#)
[ATT00001.htm](#)
[R. Peterson Communication - Attachment](#)
[ATT00002.htm](#)

To the Clerk General,
Thank you for the information you have sent regarding the upcoming Portland City Council meeting and my Communication. A copy of my Communication is attached, as well as relevant documents.

Thank You,
Richard Peterson

Communication to the Portland City Council - December 8, 2021

I oppose the policies and procedures of Portland Parks & Recreation and the Urban Forestry Department within that structure as relates to the maintenance and removal of the City's street trees. I will discuss 6 policies and procedures that are not in keeping with a City That Works.

1. Lack of and Poor Communication. Why didn't the City of Portland send a written notification to property owners with trees when the street tree policy was changed three years ago? Important changes in City policy should be communicated in writing to those affected by the change.

Three years ago, when elm seed beetles invaded our area, we contacted the City – with no reply. When we sent a letter this year, including sample beetles for scientific study, we received no acknowledgement or reply from the Elm Tree Monitor team. Again, no follow-up or follow-through on the part of the City.

Communications other than the “Notice of Violation” were strictly via email, with no personal calls or visits. A simple phone call or visit can prevent missed communications and misunderstandings.

2. Inspection Permit Fee. Our case is unique in that we reported the change in our tree's health to the City. We were immediately told that there was a \$100 fee to pay in order for them to come look at the tree. Should we have to fill out a form and pay a \$100 fee for doing the City's job?

3. Written notices. The “Notice of Violation” received clearly makes the homeowner at the tree site culpable for having “caused or contributed to the death of the tree.” Having been good stewards to our tree, we took this notice as adding insult to injury. The language is offensive and is a lie. Deadlines, fines, and subsequent enforcements were then enumerated. The City makes it clear that it's on us to remove the tree and plant another tree.

4. Fairness. The concept of requiring the few to pay for a benefit shared by all is oppressive. Why burden those with homes near trees with yet another responsibility?

No accommodation has been made to help citizens with large, old trees. Many homeowners have multiple trees. Many citizens cannot afford the high cost of removing their street trees. Where's the help for them?

5. Lack of a Plan. There's no period of transition, no grandfather clause, no rebate, no property tax deduction, thus little incentive for those paying for tree removals, maintenance, and plantings.

6. Transparency. When free trees are offered to citizens, we ask that the City be honest and let people know they're responsible for all tree costs from then on...and include this on the website.

Since Portland often compares itself to other cities when proposing new fees and taxes, why not look at street tree policies in other cities, such as Milwaukie and Salem, who maintain their street trees, with all taxpayers sharing in the cost?

This is about more than money...it's about responsible governing, fairness, and livability in the City of Roses. Let's be The City That Works, not The City That Shirks.

--Richard Peterson