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PG&E to Remove 51 Trees Along St. Mary's Road in Moraga

By Sophie Braccini



Intersection at St. Mary's Road and Rheem Boulevard Photo Andy Scheck

tree deemed dangerous is located on public land, along St. Mary's Road next to the Rheem Boulevard crossing. "There is one tree (on town property) we are extremely uncomfortable with and that poses a very high risk," said Guarino.

The 50 other trees are spread along the same arterial, but on CCCSD property, with many bordering the St. Mary's Gardens development.

Staff initially asked PG&E to replace one tree for one tree removed, but town councilmembers Dave Trotter and Teresa Onoda asked that the utility be subjected to the same rules as everyone else and replace each cut tree with two new ones. While PG&E agreed to the rule, at this time the town has no idea where the replacement trees would go, so suggested creating a tree bank that could be used as beautification opportunities arise.

CCCSD's representative at the meeting said that while the district is technically the owner of the land and the trees, it is stepping out of the tree replacement process, stating that the town is the best entity to determine where the replacement trees should go, for beautification purposes.

But others may be interested in getting involved. While there were no representatives from the St. Mary's Gardens homeowners association present at the meeting, Bob Kennedy, a resident on the board of another neighboring HOA asked PG&E to keep them involved, since he believed the trees belong to that HOA. "We have an encroachment agreement with Central San to maintain the landscaping," he said, "so, in fact, we own the trees."

PG&E representatives who were contacted after the meeting indicated that there is no specific date slated at this time for the tree removal.

The Pacific Gas and Electric Company's Community Pipeline Safety Initiative, the new program presented to the Moraga Town Council Aug. 26 by PG&E's government relations manager Tom Guarino, will include the removal of 51 trees, most along St. Mary's Road on Central Contra Costa Sanitary District land. Unlike an earlier plan PG&E presented a year ago, Guarino said PG&E is now only targeting trees that are dangerous in the short-term and the utility will defer to local regulations regarding tree replacement. The previous plan, which received backlash from infuriated local governments, had targeted over 200 trees in Moraga that were located above major gas pipelines, and disregarded local rules on tree removal.

"We took the time to re-evaluate every single tree in Moraga," said Guarino, differentiating between trees on public and private land. Only one

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