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Brookwood Road will be mitigated, not necessarily how residents prefer

By Sora O'Doherty



Photo Sora O'Doherty

staff was requested to present renderings of the three options being considered and bring it back to the council. All three options included a fence, either a six-foot or a 12-foot redwood fence, with or without landscaping.

Residents had expressed a preference for the 12-foot fence option, seeking greater safety as well as possible noise reduction along the busy highway. The staff report was presented by Chief City Engineer Sivakumar Natarajan. Written comments had been received from some Brookwood Road residents, who also spoke at the meeting.

As the city council discussed the options, several points arose. First of all, since the trimming of the vegetation that had resulted in Highway 24 becoming very visible along Brookwood Road, some vegetation had regrown, which softened the view of the highway but also raised questions about repeated clearances in the future. Second, the council considered the two fence proposals in terms of cost, effectiveness, maintenance and coordination with existing and possible future vegetation.

In terms of future vegetation, the city will undertake the management of the landscaping, which should reduce the potential for a repeat of the extreme clearing that occurred last year. Although the city council members started the conversation favoring the six-foot fence option, considering the 12-foot fence to be excessively costly and unusual, gradually it became apparent that the council members actually preferred to rely on landscaping alone, with neither the shorter nor the taller fence.

Council Member Amy Worth suggested that native plants such as Scrub Oaks, Sugar Bush, and Coffeeberry really prosper in the location. She suggested selective planting and maintenance to keep the trees clear of undergrowth. Council Member Nick Kosla expressed surprise at how quickly vegetation had grown back, and suggested that larger specimens could be planted for quicker coverage. Council Member Darlene Gee agreed with Worth and Kosla, suggesting that the primary focus should be on landscaping to improve the situation.

Vice Mayor Inga Miller suggested that she heard consensus among the council on doing as much as possible through landscaping, and Mayor Dennis Fay said he had been astounded to see how quickly nature was recovering in the area. At the conclusion of the discussion, Natarajan said that he understood that the council wishes to look at a solution using landscaping alone in a strategic manner to fill in gaps, looking for larger plants to start with. "We can get an arborist involved," he said, "and we'll bring it back with a cost estimate and a specific plan."

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