

**Dawn Ross**

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**Importance:** High

**From:** Geza Barnabas Path [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 16, 2025 4:52 PM  
**To:** Dawn Ross <dross@claremontca.gov>  
**Cc:** Jeremy Swan <jswan@ci.claremont.ca.us>; Frederick Roth [REDACTED]; Drew Ready [REDACTED]; Bob Gerecke [REDACTED]; news@claremontcourier.com  
**Subject:** RE: 01-16-25 Community and Human Services Commission Special Meeting Agenda  
**Importance:** High

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I apologize in advance for not being present at the commission meeting and for being unable to address this proposed change at the Tree Committee.

Furthermore, I wish I had more time to address my key points, but I do not, nor do I feel it would be of any use at this level, no offense.

I categorically oppose the bulk of the proposed changes to the Claremont Tree Policies & Guidelines. These are not simple updates. Please understand that what has been proposed – rather, pushed through – is a significant change to the manner that Claremont has approached operations and governance per the current policies. This change diminishes community oversight and removes key elements that checked individual departmental actions.

**Key Points:**

- We have repeatedly asked what is wrong with the current process that has served our community well for more than a decade. The answer appears to be an attempt to streamline department actions and loosen and centralize decision making at the departmental level rather than community oversight.
- The same individuals that proposed a disastrous and short-sighted response to our famous windstorm want the community to give them greater latitude to make decisions. I do not believe adequate competency has been exhibited to date to warrant such trust.
- Curiously, after community outcry stopped the proposal to remove thousands of trees for “infrastructure protection” our city employees decide that the Tree Policies needed an “update”.
- Nearly all suggestions by community groups over the past two years have been brushed aside in the interests of providing the department great latitude when addressing “infrastructure conflicts” at the expense of protecting our Urban Forest.

I’m running out of time; I’m deeply disappointed I’ve been unable to more clearly express my concern that the citizens of Claremont are not being well served by this proposal. Certainly, the department benefits, and perhaps certain special interests, but clearly not the community that is supposed to be served. The expense that has been wasted on this exercise will be the least of what we lose.

It should be noted that not one community member has risen to support this proposed change nor explain why they feel it is necessary while dozens have opposed or commented during the multiple meetings that have been held. Yet somehow, the original proposal is now being presented, essentially unchanged.

Thank You,

Barnabas Path, Account Executive

## Jamie Costanza

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**From:** jcostanza@claremontca.gov  
**Subject:** FW: Public Comment on Tree Policies and Guidelines Manual City Council Agenda Item

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Date:** January 23, 2025 at 12:46:56 PM PST  
**To:** Shelley Desautels <[sdesautels@ci.claremont.ca.us](mailto:sdesautels@ci.claremont.ca.us)>  
**Subject: Public Comment on Tree Policies and Guidelines Manual City Council Agenda Item**

**CAUTION:** This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

To the City Council, City Manager, Director of Community Services Department, Director of Community Development Department, and Community and Human Services Commissioners:

Revision of the Tree Policies and Guidelines Manual in itself does nothing to address the real needs of our urban forest.

The previous/existing Tree Policies and Guidelines Manual was sufficient to preclude Jeremy Swan's/Community Services Department recommendation to remove three species of trees in response to the windstorm.

Yet, the City's response to community outcry opposing the removals has only been to revise the Tree Policies and Guidelines Manual. There still isn't even an authentic Tree Committee to allow community members to serve specifically for the urban forest--- still only as subcommittee members who serve on the Community and Human Services Commission.

There has been no attention given to repeated public comment regarding **the need for structural change in the implementation of existing adopted policies and processes**, which has been stated by members of the public for years now, variously to the Tree Committee, Community Services Department staff, Community and Human Services Commission, City Manager, City Council, and in the public forum of the Courier and social media.

The City's already adopted Urban Forest Management Plan states the need for multi/interdepartmental and public engagement in our urban forest management. In particular, Community Development Department should be the hub of such responsibilities. Numerous Goals and Policies of our General Plan also support integrated decision making for urban forest planning, care and protection.

The City Council's currently adopted Priorities and Objectives (therefore budget) includes attention to urban forest management planning and implementation. Addressing the particulars of process and implementation is the only path to see, and protect, the forest for the trees.

For one example of previously asserted public comment, which also more fully details some concerns, below is an excerpt of public comment I submitted September 2024, during the public comment period on the draft Tree Policies and Guidelines Manual:

*"Public Comment re final draft Claremont Tree Policies and Guidelines Manual:*

*The revised final Draft Tree Policies and Guidelines Manual does nothing to address the urban forest management and tree care implementation and process issues that provoked the City's hiring of a consultant to revise the manual.*

*Specific to this public comment period, and what will likely be a dearth of comments— which does not reflect the level of community concern for and support for our urban forest— it should be noted that there has been no general notification announcing the existence and availability of the final draft or regarding the public comment period....  
...The Community Services process throughout has ignored, trivialized and/or misrepresented the concerns raised by the public at meetings in oral and written public comments, and in discussions and written communications directly with staff. And obfuscated about the actual original source of this effort, the recommendation by Jeremy Swan, dated 2/13/23, of mass tree removals of three species, Italian Stone Pine, Red Ironbark Eucalyptus, and Canary Island Pine, based on a level one assessment by West Coast Arborists, the City's contracted tree care company.*

*linked here:*

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ZfauCfI52q\\_05hfsEAnkMX0Is09xKJAo/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ZfauCfI52q_05hfsEAnkMX0Is09xKJAo/view)

*It's not that the small proposed changes in the draft Manual might not improve the process, but that the*

*existing version of the manual already contained enough information to prevent Jeremy Swan's previously proposed mass removals of Italian Stone Pine, Red Ironbark Eucalyptus, and Canary Island Pine (and withdrawn after public outcry and the critique of both the rationale and data by Dr. Fred Roth, PhD, ISA arborist certification WE161, SAF Certified Urban Forester, ISA Qualified Tree Risk Assessor).*

*linked here:*

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1LVJc1qTckC8QZAAQ\\_IRyHk8NgT2r7udl4/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1LVJc1qTckC8QZAAQ_IRyHk8NgT2r7udl4/view)

*The problem has been— and is—with our process and implementation of the already excellent and visionary adopted policies of the City's Urban Forest Management Plan, Tree Policies and Guidelines Manual, and related General Plan Goals and Policies— all of which provide for what should and could be an authentically robust and wise stewardship of our urban forest and protection of its contributions to our community.*

*The revised manual still limits all decision making to the Community Service department and staff (and Engineering Dept. regarding sidewalk interface), with no oversight or shared input or recommendation from Community Development Department, which is responsible for implementation of numerous General Plan Goals and Policies listed in the manual, or Sustainability Committee, or any agency outside of the Community Services Department.*

*The Tree Committee, especially since it is a subcommittee of community members drawn to the*

*Community and Human Services Commission, has no expertise or meaningful role, only receiving and approving reports and recommendations of staff, whose focus is sidewalk and street maintenance and risk avoidance—and from whose perspective, it is true and efficient that by removing the tree, they protect the sidewalk and access to it—and not messy (a cause cited in JSwan’s 2/13/23 recommended removals), no falling limbs or private property damage, etc. No tree= no more problem.*

*The draft does not reflect the recommendations of the City’s adopted Urban Forest Management Plan, including inter-departmental input and decision making, and which cites the numerous goals and policies beyond sidewalk management that are required for tree care in the context of urban forest stewardship.*

*According to the draft, the decisions will be by a City arborist or outside arborist, which therefore could be just the City’s own contracted tree management company, West Coast Arborists— without addressing the community’s first concern that the West Coast Arborists both recommends re tree removal and benefits as it is contracted to do the removals, usually provides replacement trees from its own nursery and sells the harvested wood from removals.*

*That potential conflict of interest has been a concern from the beginning.*

*The manual should address how to have qualified opinion beyond what is called for in current draft, in which analysis and recommendations potentially can all be made by the City arborist (with entry level certification) or*

*arborists from the same contractor who benefits from removals— with no requirement for a third party outside consultant.*

*Claremont's Community Services Department used to, but does not, include an qualified and experienced urban forester or any staff whose background is in urban forest municipal management. This should be accounted and compensated for by requiring outside expert opinion and multiple party sign-off before the fact, not just an accounting of already removed trees.*

*The Tree Committee is the only citizen body to have any input into the tree care. Their input should be prior to the fact of removals, not just accounting after.*

*There is no way for a citizen of Claremont whose passion and/or expertise is for trees and our urban forest to apply and serve directly on the Tree Committee— only by serving on the Community and Human Services Commission.*

*Those who serve on the Tree Committee are there because of their interest and efforts as commissioners re community and/or human services.*

*The tree committee members are assigned from the Community and Human Services Commission, expertise or central interest in trees or urban forest— or even attendant concerns of sustainability, ecosystem (birds, etc), or community development—neighborhood character and design, etc.*

*The manual should address the need for a Tree Committee of those who are qualified and highly interested in serving regarding trees/urban forest.*

*The draft Manual prioritizes ADA requirements for sidewalk access, which is not just legally required but an important community value. But the process is not spelled out well enough to provoke creative solutions that protect trees as much as possible from undue trimming of branches or roots or from removal. Who has the circumspect insight and creativity, especially in the absence of input from the Community Development Department, including planning and architecture staff and commissions.*

*The draft Manual asserts trees can be removed if the value of repair and maintenance exceeds that value of the tree. Every point I have raised in my comments above apply to my concern regarding this criterion/protocol. Who determines the alleged value of the tree, beyond the Community Services Department and West Coast Arborists/ How is value determined regarding the trees' contribution to ecosystem, shade, cooling, beauty, neighborhood character, historic preservation, the added property value to the surrounding private properties, etc?*

*And just because it costs more to maintain than to remove a tree should not in itself be justification for removal. What about the economic and environmental cost to the community from the years of lost value of the removed tree while a replacement sapling tree matures enough to have comparable value to the tree that is removed?*



*The draft Manual does not address the process, implementation and oversight shortcomings that define our current status of tree/urban forest management, and does not reflect the findings and recommendations of the City's Urban Forest Management Plan.*

*The City would be wise to hire Dudek or similar to do the job that is actually needed: review and revision/update of the Urban Forest Management plan— and it's full integration into the implementing tree policies manual, full analysis of how to restructure our processes and procedures to reflect all relevant General Plan Goals and Policies, including consideration of the precedents of past practices— such as full engagement of the Community Development Department, returning the Sustainability Committee to the jurisdiction and staff of the Community Development Department, creation of an authentic Tree Committee— perhaps including members of the architectural and or planning commission, and/or Sustainability Committee, and including the opportunity for community members to serve directly only on the Tree Committee— with members and staff who have expertise and commitment to trees and to the whole of our urban forest.*

*And at the very least, redesigning our process to require adequate input, and oversight of policies and procedures to allow solutions for sidewalk interface issues, ADA access, and affordability of our community services in coordination and cooperation and integration with the Community Development Department and interested community members. And somehow create a meaningful*

*and responsive communication with the public and respectful attention to community concerns and input.*

*The draft Manual policies will not address the issues of the status quo that brought us to this moment."*

Dear Council, please take action to establish an ad hoc process to consider all aspects of excellence in implementing the City's adopted General Plan Goals and Policies and adopted urban forest policies for protecting and nourishing our urban forest, for our environment and all its species, and for the beauty and well-being of our community.

Thank you for your consideration of my concerns.

Jennifer Jaffe

Claremont resident for 55 years

I am deeply troubled that the final draft of Claremont's Tree Policy and Guidelines Manual did not change the process by which the City of Claremont selects nursery trees provided by contractors to be planted in the urban forest. I have previously made my concerns known in writing during the Policy revision process, at meetings of the Tree Committee and in-person to Jeremy Swan.

It is of the greatest importance that, as Claremont restores its urban forest, it ensures that the nursery trees it uses meet the requirements listed on pages 17 and 18 of the Manual. The most important among those requirements is **freedom from circling and girdling root systems** which are very common in containerized trees. The most effective and efficient way to prevent the planting of defective trees provided by a contractor is to require an inspection of the nursery stock by a qualified arborist employed by the city **prior to planting**. The inspection process is simple and quick. But the final draft of the revised manual does not contain this requirement. The passage below is an extract from the final draft that discusses the city's process for insuring quality stock is planted:

**“The City shall reserve the right to refuse any nursery stock that does not meet these standards and may require any person who has planted such sub-standard trees, on City property or within City right-of-ways, to have these trees removed and replaced at that person's own expense.”**

If the City doesn't require preplant inspection, when would they ever identify substandard trees? Furthermore, once a tree has been it is highly unlikely that the tree would be removed and replaced. I know this to be true because I have seen 5 trees planted by contract in the Guadalajara neighborhood in the past three years where a close friend lives. Four of these trees had demonstrably bad root systems at planting, but one has been replaced, and only after I raised concerns about its disabled roots. The other three are still in the ground.

There are many other concerns that have not been addressed by the revision, but my concern about the nursery stock being planted is transcending. If Claremont desires a healthy and **safe** urban forest it is essential that nursery stock be routinely inspected prior to planting.

Fred Roth, Ph.D.

Faculty Emeritus, Cal Poly Pomona

Certified Arborist, ISA

Certified Urban Forester, SAF

Honorary Life Member, Western Chapter International Society of Arboriculture

Editor, Trees Recommended for Southern California