

From: [Don Allan](#)
To: [Planning Clerk; ada@co.humbolt.ca.us](mailto:ada@co.humbolt.ca.us)
Subject: CDP 17-047E, SP-17-074E
Date: Friday, November 05, 2021 4:15:40 PM

Dear Zoning Administrator clerk:

I am writing to comment on the Hanks Coastal Development/ Special Permit for removal of up to 15 trees at 881 First Ave., Westhaven; AP# 514-112-019; CDP 17-047E, SP-17-074E. The tree removal occurred in October 2017. I live less than 300 feet in a direct line from the property and was surprised to hear chain saws and feel the ground vibrating from trees hitting the ground on a Saturday morning – reminiscent of the illegal logging tactics employed in Westhaven over the past 30 years to avoid having a public hearing and public input. I talked to planner Tricia Shortridge on the Monday after the logging occurred and I expressed to her the opinions I am going to express here. When I told her that the danger tree claim was exaggerated she admitted that she was new on the job and didn't have the experience to assess the situation herself so she took the word of a report the owner commissioned from a timber consultant – who of course is going to write a report satisfactory to the owner's goal of removing the trees even if they had to stretch the truth on the nature of the hazard trees. This is a sham process. The applicant claimed an emergency with an assessment from a forester hired to give her the answer she wanted. Some of the trees removed were more than 50 feet away from the house and posed no threat to the house – they did not lean toward the house. Further, to claim it was an emergency is just plain false. This property endured many winter storms since I have lived here (1987) without losing one large tree. Branches and tops occasionally blow out so limbing and topping is reasonable – total removal is not.

There was no reason the landowner couldn't have planned ahead and submitted a regular coastal development permit application well in advance of the planned removal to allow for public input prior to the action. Granting an emergency permit and applying for the permit after the fact is backwards and rewards bad behavior by people who do not care about the impacts on the riparian habitat, the bird habitat, or the neighborhood character. I could never understand why people buy a house in the middle of a redwood forest and then want to cut the forest down. We have special laws to protect large trees in the coastal zone and by allowing people to circumvent it through a bogus emergency permit is a travesty of the planning process and environmental protection laws in the State of California. I spoke to an unidentified man on site during the logging with an apparent relationship to the property owner and a foreign accent who told me he "didn't care for busy-body neighbors and their California attitude." He said "where I come from we do what we bloody well please with our private property." A reasonable project would have been removing the two or three trees closest to the house and to limb up tree branches that could fall onto the house, like the previous owner did, rather than total tree removal. Approval of a bogus "after the fact" permit does not provide an assessment of bird and wildlife habitat on site nor an assessment of impacts to the riparian forest and wildlife. How many nesting and roosting trees were destroyed? We normally see a lot of red shouldered hawks in the neighborhood but their occurrence is much less frequent since those trees were removed – I wouldn't doubt if some nesting trees were taken down but we will never know because there was no assessment.

Approving an after the fact emergency permit also eliminates prior notification of neighbors. Living less than 300 feet from the site, I should have had notice that the logging was going to occur prior to hearing chain saws and trees hitting the ground (feeling the shock wave as much as hearing) on a Saturday morning. I should have been given the opportunity to comment before the trees were gone. I have lived in the neighborhood for 34 years and I am very familiar with the property. Not all 15 trees were a threat to the house. This was a clever way to avoid notification of neighbors and a public hearing before the project happened. It was a bogus emergency permit in the guise of removing hazard trees that

succeeded in contributing to the destruction of wildlife habitat and the irreversible change of the neighborhood character. On this same property there was a prior violation for illegal tree removal of an old growth tree with a dead top (pileated woodpecker habitat) next to the creek, and like this one it was authorized under an after the fact permit after the habitat had been destroyed. The County needs to stop enabling bad behavior. I urge you to deny the permit and leave this as a permanent red flag on the property's title.

Don Allan

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