

McClenagan, Laura

Subject: For the Commissioners' Consideration

From: jackson hand <jlhand@protonmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, October 6, 2021 2:39 AM
To: Planning Clerk <planningclerk@co.humboldt.ca.us>
Subject: For the Commissioners' Consideration

If you could please distribute the following to the Commissioners in advance of the Oct. 7 meeting, I would greatly appreciate it. Thank you so very much

Jackson Hand
1972 Locke St.
Manila, CA 95521

October 5, 2021

Dear Honorable Commissioners,

I live on one of the properties that would be seriously impacted by the proposed Shared Use Pathway Project (PLN-2021-17402). Accordingly, I wrote a letter with my concerns and hand-delivered it to the Planning Dept. within the time frame public comments were being accepted. I last saw it, in a manila envelope, in the hand of one of the staffers from the front office, who was walking down the hallway with it, presumably to place in Trevor Estlow's mail slot, or perhaps take directly to his office. However, it seems to have disappeared into the ether between the front office and Mr. Estlow's office. Therefore, I am sending it to you now (see below).

In the meantime, however, there are a number of things that have struck me as I have read through the proposal, which I would also like to address. First and foremost is the fact that none of the issues raised when this plan was originally rejected in May 2020 have been addressed at all. There were letters written, a petition by the residents of Locke St., an appeal filed, but none of the issues raised have been dealt with. I have the original 2020 proposal, and the 2021 proposal, both in front of me, and there is vanishingly little difference between them. The section re: a plan for temporary storage and removal of construction debris appears to have been deleted, as does the section on a plan for reducing impacts to water quality from hazardous materials during construction. And the passage which explicitly states the project will benefit Friends of the Dunes has been removed. Aside from those sections, however, it appears to be virtually the exact same proposal that was rejected in May 2020, with page after page dated 2018, 2019, or 2020.

Given the fact that serious concerns were raised last year about negative impacts to both property values and quality of life, it is disheartening to realize that the old proposal simply re-emerged without taking any of those concerns seriously. Taking into account the fact that the residents of Locke St. will be far and away the ones most negatively impacted by this \$1.5 million project, one might have thought that some of that money could have been spent to mitigate the negative impacts on us (the various residents on the six properties on this side of the street will be effected to varying degrees, but it seems there are four who will bear the brunt of it). The loss of the sound buffer provided by the trees is the most dreaded, it seems fair to say. Yet the proposal calls for a 40-foot wide swath of 40-foot tall willows to be replaced by a four or five foot wide planting of "trees" in one-gallon buckets. These will take years to fill in.

On page 59 of the Public Circulation Draft, it states "Noise associated with the shared use pathway would generally consist of typical human speech, sporadic dog barks, and use of non-motorized modes of transportation including bicycles, scooters, and skateboards." It is not sound from skateboards and bicycles we are concerned about. It is the 18-wheelers blowing by at highway speed.

There has been no discussion at all about possible parking facilities at the ends of the trail, nor the public safety issues involved with placing users on a narrow windy twisty road once the trail abruptly stops. No traffic study has been provided in this proposal, and it would seem that this is an issue which should be looked into and mitigations provided.

I wrote in my original public comments about the flooding resulting on the property I live on as result of Friends of the Dunes removing the vegetation from the steep slope above and increasing the runoff during heavy rains by many orders of magnitude, thereby overwhelming the drainage ditch that feeds into the wetlands on the Caltrans property. The origin of this drainage is a wetland on a small parcel owned by an absentee landowner just south of my landlady's property. During the rainy season, when the runoff from Friends of the Dunes' property, the Carlson's horse paddock, and the wetland south of us combine and flow through our yard onto the Caltrans right-of-way, it becomes one contiguous wetland. It does not appear that the disruption to these contiguous protected wetlands has been fully addressed or adequately mitigated in this proposal. A full EIR is required when any project involves significant disruption to coastal wetlands.

There is a real sense of dread on this street about how this is going to impact property values and quality of life. I know I am not alone in saying it would be greatly appreciated if the Commission would at least slow this project down long enough to seriously consider these concerns and appropriate mitigations.

Thank you for your time and consideration. My original "disappearing" public comments follow.

Sincerely,
Jackson Hand

Jackson Hand
1972 Locke St.
Manila, CA 95521

Sept. 19, 2021

To Whom It May Concern:

First of all, I would like to wholeheartedly endorse the proposal for light standards at Pacific Ave., and especially the much-needed crosswalks at Lupin Ave. and Pacific. I genuinely believe - and have often said - that the several times in my 67 years that I have been closest to death have been crossing 255 at Lupin. These are sorely needed. The reason for a crosswalk at Carlson Dr., however, would seem a bit nebulous, as there are only two private residences, with a total of three occupants, on the west side of 255 there, with no beach access.

However, I have a number of concerns regarding the proposed trail past my home along Rt. 255, including flooding, loss of privacy, loss of the sound buffer provided by the willow trees between my home and the highway, and allowing ease of entry onto my and my neighbors' yards from the highway in a neighborhood already plagued by property crimes.

When I moved here in 2000, the owner of the property I live on, Shar Boekee, had a drainage ditch which collected water from the marsh south of her property, as well as runoff on her property in heavy rains, and runoff from our neighbor's horse paddock. This then emptied into the wetlands along 255. The first few winters I was here in the early 2000's, it flowed regularly and effectively, but then eventually started backing up where it flowed into the Caltrans right-of-way, and flooding our shared yard. As the years went by, and less water emptied out of her property, we experienced increasingly severe flooding during the winter months. In 2009, the property on the other side of the horse paddock was purchased by a private nonprofit, which removed all of the vegetation from the steep dune slope above the paddock, greatly increasing the runoff across the paddock into Ms. Boekee's orchard. (In the meantime, that dune has been overtaken by thick European beachgrass, which has mitigated the problem for now, but the stated intention of the property owners is to eventually remove the beachgrass as well.)

As the years went by, the flow from the drainage ditch from our property slowed consistently, as the end on Caltrans' right-of-way became increasingly clogged. The horse paddock on the adjacent property had originally been graded in such a way as to cause the runoff to flow onto the property Ms. Boekee now owns. The winter of 2014-2015 saw her orchard and our yard under water for months. Her garden, which was always very important to her and into which she put a tremendous amount of energy and love, was underwater until mid-June - obviously much too late to plant. (In addition, the flooding killed her fig tree.) The following year, it was under water until mid-May. If the trail goes in as planned, there will be a berm between our drainage ditch and the wetland it currently feeds into. Absent a culvert, this will not only mean that the property I live on will become a lake every normal rainy season, but it will deprive the wetland of the water that currently feeds into it (however slowly). In addition, water from the west side of the berm will flow back down into our yard, further exacerbating the flooding. It will also greatly diminish Ms. Boekee's property value.

When I first moved here, the mills at either end of the peninsula were both still open, and we had chip trucks passing through all day and night. I never ceased to be amazed in the fall, when the foliage fell from the willows and their effectiveness as a sound buffer was therefore diminished, just how effective they were in blocking the highway noise. We currently have maybe 45- 50 feet of willows between our homes and the highway, and the plan is to remove 40 feet of them. That will mean the noise from the 18-wheelers and other vehicles will be only minimally reduced. It will mean that our homes will be visible from the road. It will mean that it will become easy to cut into our yard on foot from Rt. 255 (or, rather, from the trail), which is currently not possible due to the density of the trees. And it will mean folks walking past on the trail will be walking past our windows.

All of these issues - loss of the sound buffer, loss of the visual barrier, and ease of entry onto the property - will also diminish Ms. Boekee's property value.

I am certainly not in any way opposed to bike and walking trails, to say the least. I am in favor of anything that gets people out of their automobiles - so long as it does not cause harm. But this project will cause harm. And its benefits seem small, especially at the cost. \$1.5 million in public money for a trail from the Carlsons' driveway to Pacific Ave sounds to me like the very definition of the phrase "government boondoggle." Even before I knew the details and realized how much it would impact me, I thought that was a lot of public funds for what seems to me to be a vanity project. (If someone wanted to improve transportation alternatives in Manila, they could take a look at the abysmal bus service on the peninsula, which has a 5 hour gap between buses between midday and late afternoon on weekdays. Obviously not a planning issue, but - a bus schedule that conformed to folks' work schedules might get a few cars off the road.)

It's worth pointing out that Peninsula Drive is a quiet residential street paralleling 255 just a few dozen feet to the east (just a few feet, at certain points). People in the neighborhood who walk or bike tend to use Peninsula, even if it means a longer walk or ride, to avoid the noise and exhaust fumes on 255. Of course, safety is also a major factor, and that would be addressed by the trail. But it would still leave users with cars whizzing past at highway speed, spewing exhaust fumes. I would prefer biking or walking on Peninsula to being a few feet from the roadway on 255 just on the grounds of ambience alone.

My concerns about the planned trail are as follows:

1. Removal of the trees will result in loss of the sound barrier between our homes and the highway, invasion of privacy, and easier egress for criminal behavior. These in turn will result in loss of property values. When residents of Locke St. were first contacted about this project in 2019, we were told a fence might be erected if needed. That concept seems to have fallen by the wayside, as current plans only address the planting of willows or wax myrtles to replace the willows taken out. This, of course, will only be on a small sliver of the land that currently holds the willows, and will provide greatly reduced protection of privacy, and from highway noise. It does not seriously address concerns of increasing the vulnerability of our properties to intrusion from the highway side.

2. Flooding. This is a very serious concern. Unless a culvert is put in to connect the drainage ditch to the wetlands along 255, the property on which I live may be doomed to be under water a good portion of any year in which we receive normal or above-normal rainfall. This is also very much dependent on the whims of the non-profit and whether they continue to remove vegetation from the steep slope above the adjacent paddock.

3. It does not appear that the plan was submitted for review to the California State Water Resources Control Board. It is my understanding that California law requires their approval for any project that impacts wetlands.

4. Potential conflict of interest. This project was initiated by the leadership of a private nonprofit (many feel as a means of funneling people to their location). The Senior Planner to whom this project is assigned is a former member of that organization's Board of Directors, and is married to a current member of its Board of Advisors (and its original Restoration Manager). The Planning Department already has an image problem in Manila, with many in the community expressing frustration that the Department often acts as if it works for this nonprofit rather than for the citizens of the County. One might think they would be especially cautious to avoid even the appearance of a conflict of interest, given these already existing perceptions amongst much of the community.

5. When this project came up in 2020, there was considerable public comment, and even a petition filed by Locke St. residents. It does not appear to me that those comments are all included or taken into consideration in the current proposal.

In summary, while I am entirely in favor of projects to decrease our dependence on the automobile, and generally enthusiastic about walking and biking trails, it seems a 0.6 mile trail with no real terminus on either end does not seem that helpful, and definitely not worth the invasion of privacy, increased noise, and potential for flooding. And potential loss of property values. These are serious concerns, which do not seem to have been taken seriously by those who planned this

project. I would hope that these issues would be given due consideration, and the weight of their potential impacts taken as seriously as we in the neighborhood take them.

Thank you for your consideration.

Jackson Hand