

~~Att~~ Alissandra Dramov

To: City Council, Carmel

June 30, 2023

From: Niels Reimers

NR

Subject: Carmel trees and the Carmel dunes

Most of you are aware that in 1921, Carmel citizens (basically the entire population!) created a Save the Dunes campaign which successfully stopped development of the dunes. About 100 years later, a SAve our Native Dunes (SAND) committee was formed to advocate restoration of the dunes. SAND was partially successful in that enough trees were removed so that there now is a small area as you descend Ocean Avenue at San Antonio where you can again see toward Pescadero Point and a blink of the dunes.

Attached is an essay entitled Carmel Dunes prepared by SAND for background regarding the history of the dunes restoration and presentations to Forest & Beach. Forest & Beach authorized some trees to be removed, enough to have that blink of Pescadero Point mentioned in the previous paragraph. However, a large clutch of trees remains in the east of the dunes. And no trees at all were removed at the western end (crest) of the upper dunes.

We have met with the City Forester regarding removal of more trees to protect more of the dunes. She (disappointedly) made it clear Carmel's dunes are secondary to trees.

This message will request that the City Council take steps to restore the dunes as Perry Newberry and other council members did to save the dunes for Carmel 100 years ago.

Recommendation #1

Specifically, you likely have seen what the East-West row of cypress trees along the dunes have done and are doing to the dunes. One can anticipate that, as the cypress trees grow along the crest of the dunes, what they also will do to adjacent dunes (all directions but primarily east and west) and, given onshore winds, will do the dunes far beyond to the East. And how they will block normal sand replenishment of the dunes to their east. And how those trees will increasingly block views to the west..... of the sea and sky, Stillwater Cove, Pebble Beach, and Pescadero Point.

Recommendation 1. That the City Council take actions toward removal of all trees along the crest of the dunes from Ocean Avenue to the north.

Recommendation #2

One need only walk to the clutch of trees out north-east about 30 yards from the corner of Ocean Avenue and San Antonio to see their effect on the dunes but also views from San Antonio and Ocean Avenue that were enjoyed by Perry Newberry and fellow citizens 100 years ago.

Recommendation 2. That the City Council authorize removal of the above clutch of trees and any other trees in the southern portion of the North Dunes.

Recommendation #3

There remain the questions (a) of removing the old cypress trees standing in an east/west row between the south side of the dunes and Ocean Avenue.....or at least some of those trees and all other non-native plants in that area and (b), learning whether it is possible to restore the dunes damaged by those trees and, if possible to restore, authorize that restoration.

Recommendation 3. That the City Council authorize a study of the potential removal of the non-native Cypress along the south side of the North dunes and feasibility of restoration of the dunes damaged by those trees.

Closing

SAND has been led by Andrea Thatcher, Jim Emery, and Niels Reimers (all over 90) and many other Carmel old timers have joined SAND. And they recall the pristine dunes and the efforts of the Carmel citizenry in 1921 to save the dunes. Please respect the wonderful accomplishment of those Carmel citizens of 1921 by giving our recommendations serious consideration.

PS. Also, we recall that it was considered important in the past that the view of the ocean down Ocean Avenue be maintained. Usually in the past it was done by trimming pine trees along Ocean Avenue from Monte Verde on down. There is now a large, growing cypress in the center of Ocean Avenue, at the intersection with San Antonio. There also are several new cypress trees planted where cars are parked in the center of Ocean Avenue below San Antonio. We (SAND) are not taking a position...this is just an observation.

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CARMEL DUNES

This essay is written on behalf of SAND (SAve our Native Dunes), a group whose goal is to see restoration of the Carmel dunes, the area north of Ocean and west from San Antonio to the sea. Our core members are long-time residents of Carmel. We dedicate this writing to Elinor Laiolo and Lillian Hazdovac, both of whom passed away in the last 12 months, both in their 90's. At a Forest and Beach Commission meeting, Lillian provided our battle cry, pleading "Let the dunes be the dunes and the forest the forest".

The dunes were almost lost to Carmel in 1920 when it became known they were to be developed, with a hotel on the high west dunes and 40 by 100 building lots up to San Antonio street. Carmel citizens arose to stop the development and were successful. A meeting with Frank Devendorf led to his offering the dunes for a bargain rate of \$15,000, throwing in the City park property at Junipero and Ocean as well.....and title to the beach and the dunes at the foot of Ocean Avenue.

The Carmel Pine Cone, in its September 29, 1921 front page, the headline read Save the Sand-Dunes Campaign Started. Two quotes: "If the vote to fail the property will have sold for commercial purposes". "These dunes have won world-wide fame through being pictured upon the canvasses of many noted artists of this country and Europe".

The November 24, 1921 Pine Cone front page trumpeted Voters Approve Bond Issue To Purchase Dunes. That issue also contained news of "baseball on the Eight Acre Tract this afternoon. Players are 50-50 male and female".

But there was more to come about the dunes in 1924 when citizens were asked to approve a zoning ordinance restricting development. One reader asked "Isn't the City sure of the sand dunes, even if this ordinance is defeated?". The Planning Commission response was "The City does not own all of the sand dunes. One and 7/10 acres, including much of the large white dunes, were sold almost 20 years ago, prior to advent of the Carmel Development Company, to the Pacific Land Glass Company of San Francisco. Use of that sand for commercial purposes, now possible on account of the development of motor transportation, would ruin that part of the dunes. Without zoning, the beauty of this portion of the beach would be endangered.

There are several colorful Carmel histories telling in detail of the many actions of the Save the Dunes Campaign and the great support of the Carmel community.

In her 1925 book Crossroads and Chaparral, Eunice Gray tells of the dunes: "These dunes are the unique feature of Carmel's shore, loved of every person who has set foot of their slopes, the despair and joy of the painter and the perfect playground of the child; yet so heedless had we become in the cheerful gregariousness of our second decade that these dunes were all but

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lost by Carmel, almost lost to the real estate speculator and show-front clients. It was only after that kind of a fight which a man makes for his birthright that a part of the dunes was saved". Eunice goes to tell of the beautiful outlook over the dunes to the bay and sea beyond, Pescadero Point and "sister" Point Lobos and east to from there to the Santa Lucias.

Decades later, however, after the streets began being oiled the annual stream of water down 4th Avenue during winter rains gradually increased. Where the stream had previously flowed down to Pescadero Creek after crossing San Antonio Street, it was diverted (purposely or by nature) to flow into the dunes, bringing in pine cones, acorns, and other detritus. The flow into the dunes ended when pipes were put in by the City to carry the 4th Street water under the North border of the dunes. However, trees and plants non-native to the dunes began to grow. The beautiful views described by Eunice Gray were blocked. Cypress were also planted intentionally, further destroying the dunes.

The crowning blow was in around 2005, when 23 cypress trees were planted across the dunes, and provided with water. The City then authorized a professional botanist, Jean Ferreira, to prepare a plan for restoration of the dunes. Her excellent July 15, 2008 plan "North Dunes & Del Mar Dunes Habitat Restoration Plan" was approved for implementation by the Forest & Beach and Planning Commissions. This plan called for removal of the trees and non-native (to the dunes) plants.

However, the plan did not make it to the City Council. It was altered to make tree removal permissible rather than required and resubmitted to Forest & Beach, where it was approved. Planning then received the "slightly" altered plan and approved it and, according to a Planning Commission member, had not been advised the changes were major. The altered plan was approved by the City Council September 1, 2009.

Jean Ferreira is outraged the changed plan was presented as her work product. She was advised by the City Planner the changes were made "to avoid a large, expensive and controversial tree removal program on their hands".

Incongruously, what was not changed in the revised plan were all the botanist's arguments as to the negative effects of tree detritus and shade upon native dune plants.

The City then hired Joey Canepa to carry out the restoration plan. Joey is a wonderful person and botanist but also loves trees. It was only with pressure by a later Forest & Beach Commission that any trees at all have been removed.

The primary obstacle to full restoration of the dunes has been, what SAND members call, the "tree people". At a public meeting on the dunes, a SAND member noted the trees form a wall, blocking the beautiful views of Stillwater Cove, the sea, and Pescadero Point. A tree person's

response was "who wants to look at millionaire's homes?" And in response to SAND supporters' comments of noting trees are not native to the dunes and require considerable water to live and how wonderful it was walking through the natural dunes as a child, we were told: "The native plants likely did not thrive because you likely walked on them. And the trees died because you likely poisoned them" The Forest & Beach chair (and a tree person) closed the meeting noting: "F&B has too many important things on its plate to contend with than this matter". We noted their previous two F&B meetings were cancelled for "lack of topics".

We ask today's Carmel citizens to make it a point to view the dunes from the Northwest corner of San Antonio and Ocean. Imagine if the grouping of trees directly in front of you were removed and you could look over the flowing dunes to the sea and Pescadero Point.....seeing what early citizens had loved, fought for, and paid for.....and decide for yourselves if you wish the dunes so cherished by early Carmelites were restored.

If the trees are removed there will be the detritus of leaves, etc from the trees. This detritus will, for the present, not be able to be fully removed. In time, however, nature's winds will restore the beautiful white dunes we so loved.

In time, the grand eucalyptus at the corner of San Antonio will pass on. A fantasy of ours is that its trunk, up to about 4-5 feet, remain and a statue of a 5 year old girl or boy be placed there, looking over the dunes to the sea with a pail and sand shovel in hand. (Or a girl and boy!)