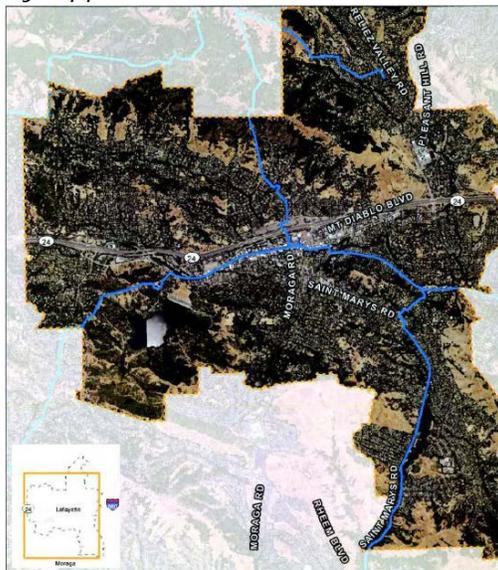


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PG&E to remove trees in Lafayette

By Pippa Fisher



The city of Lafayette has been working to move forward with Pacific Gas & Electric Co. on its Community Pipeline Safety Initiative, which requires the removal of 216 protected trees within the city of Lafayette.

The removal is required under the CPSI to clear areas around pipelines of trees to allow access for first responders and crews, so that tree roots do not damage the pipe and so that the pipe can be properly inspected.

Initially in 2014 PG&E called for the removal of over 1,000 trees, but since then has done further analysis, including an inspection and appraisal of every individual tree by arborist Michael Baefsky of Baefsky & Associates, Environmental Landscape Consulting and Contracting. This report indicated that within Lafayette, 272 trees on private and public property are deemed to be an unacceptable risk and require removal. Of those, 216 are considered "protected."

Baefsky concludes that the total payback to the city will be \$530,965, with \$56,160 in replanting and \$474,805 in payments.

At the March 27 city council meeting, council members heard from Assistant Planner Megan Canales, who requested the council authorize City Manager Steve Falk to execute the agreement with PG&E and place mitigation payments collected in a restricted reserve fund for future planting of median islands in Lafayette. The likely locations for such median islands would be on the east and west ends of Mt. Diablo Boulevard and on Pleasant Hill Road between the freeway and Deer Hill Road.

Marvin Nushwat of PG&E reassured the council that the pipes in Lafayette are constantly monitored and that they are safe. He said there are no anomalies and that this is a proactive rather than reactive step. But, he added, "You don't want trees on high pressure gas transmission pipelines."

PG&E has identified trees for removal on EBMUD land, private property, East Bay Regional Parks land and city land. They will provide the city with a site plan and must show authorization from private property owners.

Council Member Mark Mitchell commented on the good work done reducing the number of trees to be removed from over 1,000 to 216. Council Member Cameron Burks pointed out the importance of safety balanced against the semi-rural feel of Lafayette so valued by residents.

The motion passed unanimously, with Mayor Mike Anderson, Burks and Mitchell in favor. Vice Mayor Don Tatzin was absent and Council Member Ivor Samson recused himself.

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