

THIS ITEM IS BEING ADDED TO THE AGENDA AS CONSENT AGENDA ITEM L

SUBJECT: Robert Down Tree Planting Plan Approval

PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE: Robin Blakley, Assistant Superintendent
Linda Williams, Principal, Robert Down School

RECOMMENDATION:

Administration recommends that the Board approve the planting that occurred at Robert Down on October 25,2009 as proposed by the site parent group and site Principal.

BACKGROUND:

See attached proposal from Robert Down PTA.

INFORMATION:

See attached proposal from Robert Down PTA.

FISCAL IMPACT:

None, as delineated in Proposal



ROBERT H. DOWN

Elementary School

485 Pine Ave. Pacific Grove, CA 93950

November 4, 2009

Dear PGUSD Board of Trustees,

The tree proposal given to you today, regarding the four apple trees planted on the Robert Down School campus, was written with the directive of submitting to the board a plan which would allow the trees to remain in their current location. In my conversations with Robert Down School stakeholders, the overwhelming majority of the parents, students, staff, and community members are in favor of this tree plan. As site principal, I approve the plan as written in the hope that it will fulfill the educational objectives and landscaping goals of the school.

Please let me know if there are any other questions

Thank you!

Linda Williams, Principal

ROBERT DOWN SCHOOL PTA

To: Pacific Grove Unified School District Board of Trustees
From: Robert Down School PTA
Traci Klarsfeld, PTA President
Matt Nelson, 2009 PTA Fall Sweep Coordinator
Date: November 2, 2009
Re: Planting of Four Apple Trees on the Robert Down School campus

Background

In 2008, twelve trees were cut down on the Robert Down campus in preparation for the painting of the school. In May 2008, the Robert Down PTA submitted a tree plan to the Assistant Superintendent and on July 1, 2008 donated \$1100 to help the district replace as many of those trees as possible. (Please see October 30, 2009 memo to the PGUSD Board of Trustees with additional background information.)

Description of the Project

The school would like to plant four semi-dwarf apple trees on the west side of the school. Two trees would be planted on either side of the walkway to the basement storage area. The west side of the school is an ideal location for four trees as it is currently barren and bland in appearance. The west side of the school was earmarked for a row of trees in the 2008 tree plan submitted to the Assistant Superintendent.

Design and Location (see attached map or please come visit the school)

The trees are a semi-dwarf variety which could grow up to 15-20 feet. The trees may be maintained to any height and circumference with an annual pruning. It is recommended that the trees be maintained at no more than 6-8 feet high for the educational purposes of the Robert Down Elementary students. Each tree has been grafted with four varieties of apples. The trees are planted eight feet away from the school building. The selected trees are tolerant of wet soil, dry soil, and poor soil. The tree resists wooly apple aphids and collar rot.

The trees would provide enhanced beauty and shade to the classrooms on the west side of the school. These classrooms currently become uncomfortably warm in the afternoons.

The west side of the school is away from students' recess and physical education areas. However, the location is ideally close to the school garden which would allow the trees to be included in the garden curriculum. The western side of the school is a sunny location with ample room for growth. The western wall of the school collects heat from the sun which would generate warmth to the trees.

The RD garden committee is able to provide a weed free circle (3') around the trees, apply an organic mulch around the base on a yearly basis, and deep watering during the 4-month fruit production period.

The RD garden committee is aware of organic methods of pest control and disease prevention and would work with the district to provide the services as needed in these two areas.

A pruning is typically conducted once a year. The PTA is willing to commit to pay the cost of hiring a professional in this field should the district not be able to prune the trees once per year or allow a qualified volunteer to annually prune the trees.

The flowering period is relatively short (compared to other trees that were suggested by the district) and peaks for about 2 weeks.

In checking with several Pacific Grove residents who maintain apple trees in their yards, it is reported the trees can be as maintenance-free as desired. Some apple tree owners do absolutely nothing with their trees and the trees continue to bear fruit and are relatively pest free. These Pacific Grove apple tree owners report they did not observe any increase in rats, raccoons, or other pests due to their apple trees. The PGUSD Cooperative Preschool, located on the Robert Down School campus, has an apple tree. The Co-op staff and parents do not perceive that their apple tree is attracting any rats or raccoons. Lisa Hoefler, Director of Operations for the SPCA, oversees the wildlife department for this organization. Ms. Hoefler advises that keeping fruit off the ground and banding the tree trunks will keep critters from the fruit. She reports the biggest problem is generally birds eating or damaging the fruit. If this is an issue, Ms. Hoefler recommends tying reflective tape to the branches as the movement of the tape in the wind and the tape's reflective nature will be a deterrent to birds.

Cost

\$550 provided by the PTA Tree Donation of July 1, 2008 (3 trees)

One additional tree donated by a Robert Down family

Completion of Project

The PTA volunteers who purchased and planted the trees were under the direction of Mr. Fred Ballerini. Mr. Ballerini is a parent and biological consultant. He is the recipient of the Green Roofs for Healthier Cities' 2009 National Award of Excellence. He has expertise in habitat restoration, native grasses, and a background in gardening in the Pacific Grove climate. His ecological talents have been featured in the New York Times newspaper and Sunset magazine. Mr. Ballerini reviewed the guidelines and generic, non-native list of trees provided by the district's lead groundskeeper. Mr. Ballerini also kept in the mind the learning activities and educational objectives of the school in making the tree selection. While all trees have pros and cons, the positives of the semi-dwarf apple trees for the purposes intended at Robert Down School make this tree an excellent choice.

Support of District's and School's Instructional Objectives

The planting of apple trees for use with the educational program for elementary students aligns well with the district's 2009-10 Strategic Plan to Implement Board Goals. It will help to fulfill the following action plans and goals from the strategic plan:

“Students will:

- *Bring information gained outside of the classroom back into the classroom to share and evaluate*
- *Be involved in outside classroom activities which apply skills learned at school*

Lessons will:

- *Be presented in multi-sensory/modal learning styles when possible*
- *Address individual learning styles*

Parents and community members will be invited to participate in school site and district committee and programs.

Each campus will provide a welcoming environment where students and staff may come to school each day feeling safe, respected, proud and can comfortably focus on learning.”

In addition, the planting of apple trees will support the following educational objectives:

1. The focus of Robert Down School in the past few years has been to allow all students to participate in projects in the school garden. By planting apple trees on the west side of the school, they would be in close proximity to the garden and allow for garden activities to include the four apple trees for all students K-5. The RD trees are late-fruiting varieties (September to October) so the students will be able to enjoy the fruit during the school year.
2. Allows the kindergarten and first grade students to observe the life cycle of a seasonal, fruit-bearing tree. This is a part of the life and earth science standards for these grade levels. There was a fruit-bearing plum tree, which was cut down prior to the school painting. The plum tree was studied and observed throughout the year. Students currently go off-campus to study and observe the changes of a fruit tree. The students in these grades also have units and activities in reading, writing, art, and mathematics regarding apples. Having fruit-bearing trees on campus would enhance the learning in these two grade levels.
3. There are 60+ preschoolers on the Robert Down School campus. Many of the preschool activities would be embellished having a living apple tree on campus. Some of the preschool units center on the change of seasons, the life cycle of a tree, the celebration of Johnny Appleseed, where food comes from, and cooking.
4. An autumn theme in the school library is Johnny Appleseed. Having apple trees on campus could be incorporated into the library unit used with students preschool through fifth grade.
5. Learning about decomposition, the carbon and nitrogen cycles, and composting
6. Study of how fruit forms by examining fruiting spurs, see how the fruit color and quality is dependent on the limbs access to light

7. Learn how the leaves are the factories producing sugars for the fruit by utilizing light, carbon dioxide, and water.
8. Learn about the process of ripening. Use a refractometer to measure sugar content or goniometer to measure hardness and softness
9. Use a magnifying glass to see the openings of the vessels supplying the fruit with water and sugars
10. Sample the fruit to see how the ripeness affects the sweetness and flavor.
11. Study the seeds to see how the ripeness correlates with the darkness of the seeds
12. Learn about the trees nutritional needs: nitrogen, phosphorus, and potash

These are just a few of the many educational objectives which can be incorporated into classroom lessons. The learning activities from having a live apple tree on campus are endless. To care for a tree which bears fruit and to eat that fruit can cultivate a generation of healthy people who are ecologically informed. Recent studies support that students who garden and learn with hands-on outdoor activities are more likely to be “earth-friendly” as young adults than students only read about being ecologically minded or simply do such activities as recycling their waste. While most students have TVs, computers, and video games at home, they simply don’t have an apple tree in their backyard. The parents of Robert Down School have a strong, ecological sense which they would like to see inspired at school as their children become stewards of the environment. Long-lasting values and caring for the environment develop at a young age. Already, the apple trees have had a more profound effect on our school community than any parent, staff, or student imagined. It has brought our school together with a sense of camaraderie, perseverance, and a sense of purpose. It is the Robert Down School PTA’s hope that the school board will help us to accomplish our goals by allowing the four trees to remain in their current location.

Thank you for considering our proposal.

Traci Klarsfeld , President
Robert Down PTA

Matt Nelson, Fall Sweep Coordinator
Robert Down PTA

13TH ST - ONE WAY

ONE WAY

NO PARKING - PASSENGER-LOADING ZONE

FIELD

SPRUCE AVE

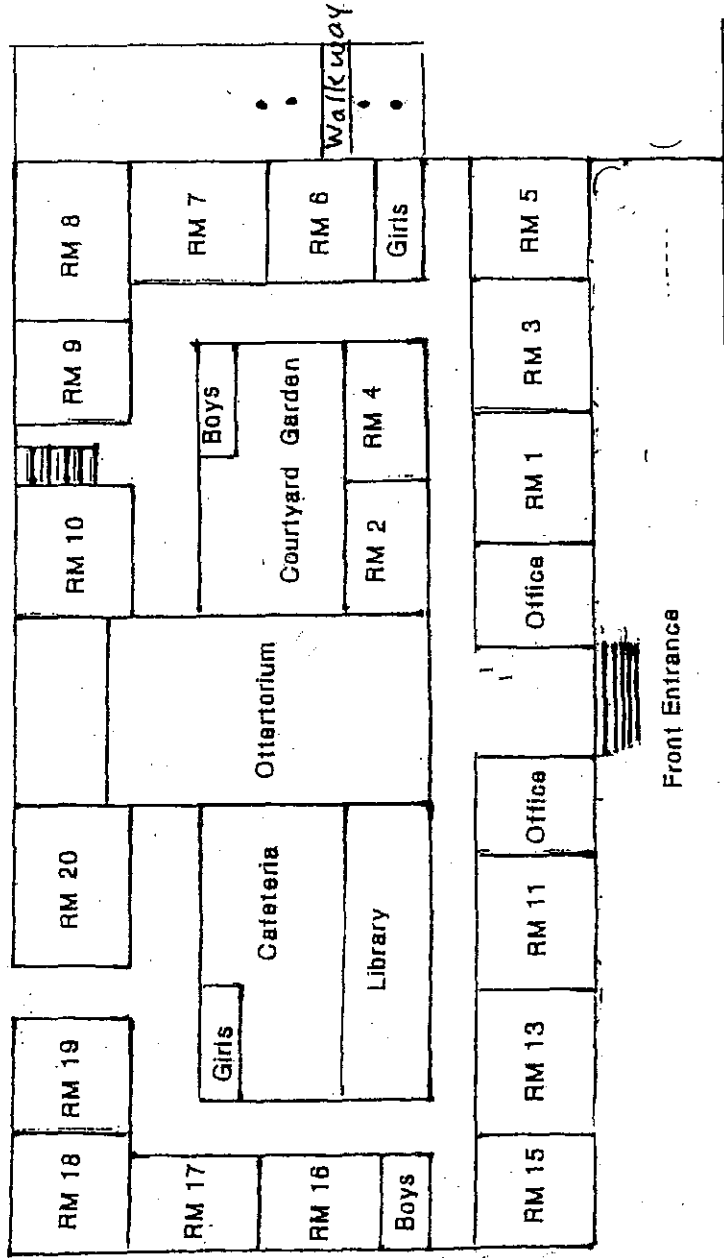
PLAYGROUND

ROBERT DOWN SCHOOL

After School Care

First Grade

Kindergarten



• = Tree

PINE AVE

Robert Down School Map and Traffic Directions