

MEMORANDUM

TO: Park Advisory Commission

FROM: Colin Smith, Parks & Recreation Services Manager

DATE: February 28, 2012

SUBJECT: Resolution to recommend allowing DTE to plant 23 trees in Riverside Park to satisfy the Conflicting Land Use Buffer section of Chapter 62 of the City Code

DTE has indicated a need to construct a new substation, to be called Buckler Substation, at their Ann Arbor Service Center property at 984 Broadway to provide a necessary increase in electrical power in the downtown area to address the increased community utility needs. The Buckler Substation will abut Riverside Park.

In the City Code, Chapter 62 (Landscaping and Screening) requires a Conflicting Land Use Buffer for any portion of a commercial site that abuts a public park. The Conflicting Land Use Buffer section of Chapter 62 requires the following: a) a landscaped buffer strip at least 15 feet wide, b) one tree for each 15 feet of abutting land, and c) a hedge, berm, wall, fence, or combination forming a continuous screen at least 4 feet high to help screen vehicles.

Due to existing constraints at their Ann Arbor Service Center DTE is seeking a variance on part (a) and (c) of the Conflicting Land Use Buffer by proposing the placement of the landscaped buffer strip in Riverside Park. City Parks staff has reviewed this proposal and are amenable to it.

The portion of land proposed for a 15 foot buffer zone currently serves a similar function. The area is not reserved for active recreation given the proximity to the substation and the proposed buffer zone currently consists of sporadic placing of trees of negligible quality.

The DTE proposal would result in the park gaining 23 trees of species selected by the City Forester, along with a formal mulch bed between the trees and fence line. The mulch bed would decrease mowing for the City and better serve as a visual transition zone between park and substation.

After PAC, DTE will need to attend the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) to request a variance of the Conflicting Land Use Buffer. ZBA may refer to the PAC recommendation in making their decision. After ZBA the plans will move to City Council for approval.

City Park staff is supportive of the DTE proposal.

RESOLUTION TO RECOMMEND ALLOWING DTE TO PLANT 23 TREES AT
RIVERSIDE PARK TO SATISFY THE CONFLICTING LAND USE
BUFFER SECTION OF CHAPTER 62 OF THE CITY CODE

Whereas, DTE needs to construct the Buckler Substation at their Ann Arbor Service Center site to meet community energy demands;

Whereas, Buckler substation abuts Riverside Park;

Whereas, DTE intends to request a variance from this requirement from the ZBA;

Whereas, the 15 foot proposed buffer zone currently serves a similar purpose;

Whereas, DTE will plant 23 trees of type and quality identified by the City Forester and landscape the 15 foot buffer to City specifications;

Whereas, Parks staff have reviewed the proposed plans and are supportive of them;

RESOLVED, That the Park Advisory Commission recommend allowing DTE to plant 23 trees at Riverside Park to satisfy the conflicting land use buffer section of Chapter 62 of the City Code.