

LETTERS TO PTL EDITOR AS OF MARCH 10, 2022

Leave the poplar trees in place along Sims Way | Letter to the editor

Posted Friday, September 24, 2021 11:17 am

The Sims Way poplars are far more than an emotional experience. These trees first and foremost create a spectacular corridor in all seasons with their structure and colors.

Their fall show is iconic. But they also filter dust and pollutants that come off the boat work in the port. No “environmentally appropriate” trees (call them popsicle trees) can provide the benefits and beauty of these lovelies. Moreover, the poplars act as windbreaks during severe blows and they provide oxygen/CO2 exchange.

Engineers may find it challenging to work around trees but they are not hired to make aesthetic determinations to facilitate straight lines. It is unfortunate that public works thinks more paving and sidewalks are needed along this very broad reach of grass and trees. There are quite adequate sidewalks and bike lanes along the lagoon side of the road.

And the lagoon itself acts as stormwater catchment — no need for any expensive rainwater gardening.

The road and sidewalk work in front of the Salish Sea School and along Rainier are examples of over engineering to the point of ugliness and sterilization using tons of concrete, a major greenhouse gas contributor.

The undergrounding of utilities would give a nicer view. Surely there is enough room for the ditch along the very broad swath to do the job. Leave the poplars, leave the rough grass, and let saplings grow and add some fir trees to help.

Stop paving and lighting and round-abouting this beautiful little town now verging on looking like Anywhere, USA - by the book.

Julie Jaman
QUIMPER PENINSULA

Don't cut down Port Townsend's poplars | Letter to the editor

Posted Wednesday, October 6, 2021 9:29 am

This is the best season to admire and appreciate the beauty of changing colors.

When I lived in Vermont people would pull over and just stare at the trees. We called them leaf peepers but here the subtle changes in the poplars, madronas, maples give us a daily treat for our eyes and lets us take in all this sacred land with water, sea and sky.

I marvel at this autumnal display with reverence.

We need to keep the trees standing in good health and not cut them down.

Trees give us life, oxygen, places for birds to rest and let us look at their resilience.

One could learn a lot from trees.

As a writer and musician the songs of trees speak to me each morning. Can't we keep our small community filled with those poplars that line San Juan and welcome us each season?

In the words of poet Wendell Berry:

"I part the out thrusting branches

and come in beneath

the blessed and the blessing trees

Though I am silent

there is singing around me..."

Nan Toby Tyrrell
PORT TOWNSEND

Officials should stop putting us through hell | Letter to the editor

Posted Wednesday, November 24, 2021 11:17 am

To our dear representatives, congratulations. You have proposed to destroy one of the things that makes Port Townsend unique.

The wide boulevard graced by the tall poplars cannot be replaced with a narrower road way and lollipop trees — or any other tree — without looking and feeling like some street in a relatively recent pop-up town on the east side.

Poplars are the official tree here. Look around.

They've been here longer than many non-native individuals that call Port Townsend their home and look down their noses at non-native vegetation.

Looking back, we've all been through hell the past two years. Why would you put our community through this? Are you mad?

The kids on my street are afraid of the wind because they think it will kill them. Now you are suggesting to further tear our community apart?

The reasons stated simply don't rise to the occasion.

There is no problem to fix here. Have you seen the condition of our roads? Plenty of work there.

Looking forward, every year is hotter than the prior. Drought and heatwaves more frequent. Etc.

Can you please just focus on community building activities instead of ones that put us through more hell?

I assure you I will vote for anyone other than whomever advances this idea. Maybe I'll run myself.

Andrea Hegland
PORT TOWNSEND

Done deal on tree removal, now show your homework | Letter to the editor

Posted Wednesday, November 24, 2021 11:25 am

Given how far along the process is now, I'm going to assume that the powers-that-be have done their due diligence in making sure that the clearly unpopular de-poplarization of Sims Way is an environmentally and economically sound decision.

Given that, I hope that they will make a serious effort to focus community attention on the benefits of the change.

Give us something to look forward to that will be better than what we're looking at fondly in our rear-view mirrors.

Matthew Miner
PORT TOWNSEND

Comments

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- **MargeS**

My first memory of Port Townsend is riding with my mother into Port Townsend and seeing the beautiful lagoon. (1950s) Unfortunately not everyone felt the same. The Port Commission received permission to dump 231,000 yards of dredged sand into Kah Tai Lagoon. There was a public outcry but by 1963 the Southern end of the lagoon was filled. The poplar trees that had been planted along side the highway promptly turned brown and died. PTL June 25, 1964 "Poplars dying along highway. Salt water pumped into Kah Tai Lagoon in dredging and filling operations is killing the tall poplar trees . . ."

No new development was allowed and the land began to recover, grasses, trees and shrubs and the poplars along the highway were replanted.

A little history:

PTL April 23, 1942 - Rotary poplars all doing fine. (planted 120 trees) Along Sims Way.

PTL Sep 13, 1945 - Oh, Save Our Trees is Chamber's plea. Lombardy poplars that line Sims Way near the Lagoon.

PTL Sep 4, 1947 - Will recommend tree removal. Poplars at intersections on Sims Way.

PTL Aug 29, 2001 - Planning ahead. Search begins for ferry traffic holding area needed in 2006. Story & Color photo of area between Haines Place and Benedict street where poplars would be cut to make room. By Patrick J. Sullivan.

PTL Aug 29, 2001 - Cartoon by Burdekin: I hear they want to cut these trees and put in ferry holding lanes. Good idea. Where else could they go. Sign: Park & Ride only 1 block, real close, lots of room . . . [This of course never happened]

Like the history of Kah Tai Lagoon, it's a wonder we have any of the lagoon left or the poplars.

Removing trees is another bad decision | Letter to the editor

Posted Friday, December 10, 2021 12:33 pm

Why are beautiful, healthy trees being pulled out? Because the boatyard wants a little more room! At public expense, of course!

Do you recall the huge Columbus Day storm many years ago? Blew windows out at the courthouse! The trees stood.

These poplars have been planted as an effective wind break for centuries! Who needs that more than PT?

Also who will care for small trees? They must be regularly watered or they will die. Like the shrubs planted in our three roundabouts. Nobody watered them!

I have been a resident of Port Townsend and Jefferson County 42-plus years. I don't like the new changes. That so-called park where the visitors' center used to be, is awful. I've never seen anyone walk or sit there. The one decent tree was destroyed! Why? It could have been left there.

I know they'll do what they want no matter what the residents want. But we must pay for and look at the results.

It is wrong.

Susan Wanner
IRONDALE

Please listen to the citizens - it's our town | Letter to the editor

Posted Friday, December 10, 2021 12:31 pm

It is very wrong for many reasons to remove the poplar trees on Sims Way.

Climate change is a most pressing issue. We should not be cutting down trees. We need them for carbon sequestration, pollution capture, and cooling effects.

In addition to their beauty and longevity, few trees can tolerate the poor soil like poplars. They protect us from extremes of temperature, noise, and pollution; serve as windbreaks, and create habitat for wildlife, increasing ecosystem benefits. Who doesn't like to stand in the shade of a big tree on a hot summer day?

In our recent windstorms it's mostly fir branches everywhere, not poplar branches. Look around town at all the wires going through trees. Are you going to cut them down also? Can you put up new wire with insulation to stop arching?

Did you know there are members of the Tree Advisory Board that admit to knowing little about plants? Don't let newbies ruin the iconic entrance to our town.

Listen to the citizens; it's our town.

Scott Spurgeon
PORT TOWNSEND

Let's avoid appearance of strip mall entryway to PT | Letter to the editor

Posted Wednesday, December 15, 2021 9:30 am

Port Townsend City Manager John Mauro will seek counsel from the Parks Board, again, and selected stakeholders concerning the Sims Way project right-of-way design - after the poplars are cut down.

In less than six months a few staff new to Jefferson County have planned a new look for the public's landscape unlike the overarching vision laid out in documents adopted after years of inclusive public process - the legacy.

Who are the stakeholders of the public landscape? KahTai Alliance and Friends of Kah and friends of friends - all the walkers, birders, photographers, biologists, naturalists, and homeowners with a view of Kah Tai, the Boat Haven and poplars are stakeholders.

A review of the last 50 years of local history e.g. Hayden vs. the State of Washington; numerous Olympic Environmental Council (OEC) SEPA appeals before the hearings examiner and State Hearings Board; the two clowns selling balloons at Rhody parades and the corn booth at the Wooden Boat Festival - projects of a few stakeholders that morphed into OEC. Monies from balloons and corn paid attorneys' fees for stakeholder's who defended and stewarded the natural functions of the lagoons, wetlands, buffers, trails and trees - essentials for all who choose to be here.

Years of volunteering on the Trails Coalition, the Comprehensive Plan, the Parks Plan and the Gateway Development Plan - all with an overarching vision of how to go forward with a sense of place and needs of commerce; it's what makes this seaport community so fabulous.

The poplar-lined flats sprinkled with a few madrones are a piece of the legacy: withstanding big winds; shimmering in breezes; filtering industrial lighting and water, dust and chemical fumes; sequestering CO2; and radiating color.

The poplars must be candidates for replanting after the chopping, ditching and fencing - and more industrial lighting.

Will the chosen stakeholders confirm the vision and the intention writ in all the documents, paintings, photos, boats, woodcraft, festivals, and music - rustic, sometimes smelly of pulp and

coffee, dashes of sophistication laced with a bit of funk. Much care must be taken to avoid a ROW landscape designed by a few staff, worthy of any strip mall.

Julie Jaman
QUIMPER PENINSULA

Many are still upset over removing poplars | Letter to the editor

Posted Wednesday, December 22, 2021 10:25 am

To clear cut Sims Way catapults Port Townsend into an environmental, emotional deficit.

Those beautiful mature poplars are the lungs of your children. It's apparent from all the critical response against tree removal many of the people of Port Townsend remain upset and don't appreciate having their town made into what they don't want.

There is no need to expand the boatyard into Sims Way because 20 or more acres, give or take, of 90 percent vacant land is waiting to be developed in the port's own boat yard.

Unseen at first glance this acreage is easily viewed at the boat yard's far west entrance. Beyond the gate is all that viable land. Use it. If we don't pay attention now, we all pay later. Never rule out possibilities. Right next to the port's gated 20 acres exist 20 more privately owned acres. Why not, the city of Port Townsend, buy that 20 acres and trade it to the port for Sims Way frontage and it's win-win for all.

Inflated fear and special interests put aside, these ideas would work for the good for all, but only if all concerned work for that good.

For a better world we need to make it better, and that's just what HJ Carroll did when he planted those poplar trees. They have welcomed people into Port Townsend ever since. Thank you, HJ Carroll for your boldness and insight.

A tree with strong roots laughs at storms, but the very strongest of humans can easily fall to the bullet, any tree, likewise falls from the chainsaw.

Make a better world for room to move and trees to breathe.

Karta John Miller

PORT TOWNSEND

Still committed to a positive response | Letter to the editor

Posted Wednesday, March 2, 2022 1:53 pm

Right on Julie Jaman and Andrea Hegland for your noble heart posters protesting not only the poplar trees removal, but just as sad, the alienation of the people of Port Townsend — the very people that display caring the most.

They called this a “Heart Breaker!”

As a belated Valentine for all caring people, don't let this get the best of you. It could make you insidiously sick in mind, body and soul!

I'm not saying give up. Not at all. For myself I've had to re-wire my relationship with this entire bummer process. I'll do whatever I can, but refuse to go into deficit with frustration or resentment. This does not make things “right,” but puts me in the space of some detachment from the constant drama, and trauma. When our actions are not involved with the negative, so much more we are in harmony.

Creating a fair and better world as we improve ourselves, we enhance the entire planet.

Peace Out.

Karta John Miller
PORT TOWNSEND

Trees project reeks of political expediency | Letter to the editor

Posted Wednesday, March 2, 2022 1:54 pm

I had the good fortune to grow up in Port Townsend and the better fortune to accompany my Great Uncle Jack (H.J. Carroll) on daily walks around the Fort Worden lighthouse.

He recounted many stories of the development of Port Townsend over the decades and the many hurdles he'd overcome to establish various businesses within the town and state. He proudly shared stories of planting poplar trees along Sims Way, Kah Tai, and the golf course. He'd even replanted the Kah Tai poplars after a dredging project in the late '60s killed the trees around the lagoon.

I always took a measure of pride driving down the S-curve and knowing my great uncle had played a major role in this unique, beautiful landscape that wouldn't be confused with any other town in the country.

I understand current local officials intend to overhaul the landscaping of said entryway to PT. The plan to relocate utilities underground to deconflict with the trees makes good sense.

The plan to exterminate the poplar trees on both sides of Sims Way doesn't make any sense. This is a community that prides itself on environmental stewardship. Destroying healthy foliage that serves as an essential backbone of the local ecosystem reeks of political expediency that I would never have expected of the vocally pro-environment culture that has forever defined Port Townsend.

I suggest proceeding with the utility relocation, tending some needed ongoing care to the poplars on both sides of the highway, and preserving the unique entryway that has long welcomed people home to Port Townsend.

Chad White
CASTLE ROCK

PT resident asks: Who's in charge here? | Letter to the editor

Posted Thursday, March 3, 2022 10:33 am

As the setting sun on Washington Street shines directly into my eyes, temporarily hindering my sight, I search for my sunglasses before my car reaches the concrete-rimmed potholes recently created, no doubt at great expense by the powers that govern our cherished city of Port Townsend. Which powers I am a little foggy about as I am not one to follow local politics as I should.

But even to my not-very knowledgeable-self I realize that this street is not large enough for two unsightly "roundabouts" and a fierce set of iron stakes on either side of the road. I wonder to myself, "Who in the world thought this was a good idea for driving safely?"

While we are distracted by the hardships of living through a terrible pandemic, a great many other strange and questionable plans are in the works. And those in power charged with making decisions for the rest of us may not be stopping for community guidance. For example, plans are in the hopper for cutting down the stately poplar trees that have lined both sides of Sims Way for decades.

If not "native trees," they have earned their right to be a traditional part of Port Townsend, so long have they enchanted us with their golden fall leaves, vacuumed the air along our major thoroughfare, and hidden the sometimes messy workings of the shipyard.

Unfortunately, someone with the "power" has decided to not ask for community input.

Unfair, I think!

Every time we drive down Sims what will we see instead? For a few extra feet of shipyard a decision has been made. A poor choice that will influence our lives. I very much doubt it will be a splendid walkway promised to replace the trees. After the expense of cutting down a great many mature trees, if the lesson of the “roundabouts” has taught us anything, it is likely we can expect to see a stump and weed pathway lining Sims instead.

And a few more feet given in great expense to the shipyard. Which, of course, is the point.

So many reasonable ideas on paper never come to fruition in reality.

Too much is being neglected along the Sims Way for reasons never clear. Of this I cite the formally lovely street divider opposite the winery so brilliantly landscaped and then not watered during the dry season. Most of it now dead. The fabulous sculpture outside the Visitors Center, half landscaped and half unsightly weeds.

I request that our community leaders open up the decision — making and allowing our residents to voice an opinion. To allow a vote for decisions that will affect all our lives is only fair. After all, what is there to be afraid of?

Arlene Sudol
PORT TOWNSEND

Comments

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- **jkrida**

Very well said Arlene. Thank you

They say tree cutting promotes tourism | Letter to the editor

Posted Wednesday, March 9, 2022 10:40 am

The Valentine caper, what became the purloined poplar heart petitions, had, in just a few hours, garnered numerous names and comments, to retain the architectural and historic 150-plus poplars along Sims Way.

But it turns out no amount of public comment to any electeds can bring a change to this ill-conceived project unless it is abandoned and resubmitted. And here is why. This plan was conceived in August 2021 by the city, the port and PUD staff. In September 2021 the city staff presented a \$100,000 Public Infrastructure Development (PID) grant proposal to the city council, which approved it.

The three agencies then went to the county in October 2021 combining their PID grant requests totaling \$2 million in “free” county infrastructure tax money; the county committee granted them \$1 million. But that money was based on and limited by conditions outlined in the scope the staff had written - the removal of all the poplars.

This week PUD manager Streett indicated the utility lines could be undergrounded without removing the poplars, but the PUD would lose its share of the PID grant if it did not follow the original grant conditions, removing the poplars; same for the city. The port would retain its share for the expansion - no trees involved.

What we just learned is that part of the rationale for the original \$1 million grant was to promote tourism. Really.

Removing the poplars and putting in a sidewalk was, said County Administrator McCauly, considered an economic benefit by the granting authority - a way to promote tourism.

We’re not making this up.

What we know as the historic seaport with its iconic poplar-lined entrance of the last 100 years has been determined not to be tourist-friendly.

To access the PID funds and retain the poplars, the agencies must submit a new proposal to the county demonstrating support for jobs and the economy, leaving the poplars in place - a truly beautiful gateway for the future.

Julie Jaman

Poplar Alliance

Olympic Environmental Council

Friends of Kah Tai

PORT TOWNSEND

City hall should listen to the people who care | Letter to the editor

Posted Wednesday, March 9, 2022 10:37 am

First from the perspective of a tourist, and subsequently from that of a local resident, Port Townsend’s charm attracts people because of its history, art, and beauty. Beauty of its Sound coastline, its brick buildings of yore, its exclusive and quaint downtown shops, its vibrant outdoor market, its marina, its coffee shops, bakeries, and restaurants.

The beauty of this town welcomes you as you drive in, down a main street lined on both sides with gorgeous poplar trees.

The same trees that are now in the cross hairs of destruction. Our town and our planet need every one of those trees, and there are always alternatives to devastation.

Trees may be trimmed instead of chopped down, and business expansion can certainly take a different direction.

Whether poplars are native to this region or not, they belong along both sides of Sims Road. City of Port Townsend: Please listen to those of us who care about this town and beg you to save the poplars along both sides of Sims Way!

Brenda Barcelo
CHIMACUM