



# CITY OF NEWPORT BEACH

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September 21, 2011

The Honorable Gary Monahan  
Mayor of Costa Mesa  
77 Fair Drive  
Costa Mesa, California 92626

Dear Mayor Monahan:

Yesterday afternoon I had to make a very difficult decision following receipt of the report from a fourth arborist who has looked at the Blue Gum Eucalyptus trees in the Irvine Avenue median. Collectively, these arborists have noted significant and immediate concerns about the stability of the "hedgerow" that these closely-planted trees create and maintain. These arborists believe that we cannot just remove the largest, oldest trees out without impacting the smaller ones – the roots and canopies are too closely intertwined and together support the hedgerow.

Cognizant of our City's obligations under the 2002 Agreement with Costa Mesa, it was with that information and the consensus recommendation of other arborists that I directed our Police staff to work with Costa Mesa PD to close the traffic lane closest to the median and our Municipal Operations staff to marshal forces for a removal of all 104 of these trees today. I regret that I was unable to communicate this information more formally to you, your colleagues, and your residents before than this morning. I do apologize for that. To me, the issue is urgent.

This has been a heartbreaking week for us all, starting with the death of Ms. Miller. And then to know that this beautiful and iconic row of trees would have to come down causes even more grief. I have driven by these trees since 1988, and many in both of our communities have grown up alongside them.

I want to further state a bit more about the process we have followed and will follow moving forward:

- This was a careful decision implemented with the utmost urgency. Over the past five days, multiple arborists reviewed the status of the 104 median trees. Two were our on-staff arborists, another is from West Coast Arborists (our contracted tree maintenance

firm), and we also retained an independent third-party arborist unaffiliated with the City or WCA. All four are very qualified to evaluate the median trees.

- Upon receipt of this independent opinion, we moved into action late yesterday afternoon, notifying the schools, our Mariner's Library staff, and the immediate neighborhood via Nixle, OC Alert, and other mechanisms. We also contacted the media to inform them about road closures anticipated for yesterday evening and today.
- Today's removal includes all of the trees. Unfortunately, the arborists did not believe that the smaller trees will remain stable and viable with the hedgerow altered.
- We are not planning to remove all Eucalyptus trees in Newport Beach, because not all are similarly situated in hedgerows, nor are all of them as aged as some of the Irvine Avenue median trees.
- We will be studying each one of our Eucalyptus in the days ahead. We have roughly 430 of them, including the 104 we share with you in the Irvine Avenue median.

Please know that the City of Newport Beach is fully committed to working with your Council, your Public Works staff, the Costa Mesa community, and our own community in selecting and then replacing the Irvine Avenue median trees with an appropriate and robust replacement street tree as soon as possible. That is a beautiful stretch of land between our communities, and it should remain so. It will certainly look different as nothing can replicate the Blue Gum hedgerow – but without future concerns as to the public's safety.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have questions about this action. If other Costa Mesa residents have any questions or concerns, we are happy to respond to them (949-644-3000). Again, this has been a very tough decision and a very sad week.

Sincerely,



DAVE KIFF  
City Manager

cc: Members of the Newport Beach City Council  
Mr. Thomas Hatch, Costa Mesa CEO  
Mr. Peter Naghavi, Director of Public Works, Costa Mesa  
Mr. Aaron Harp, Newport Beach City Attorney