

Parkway Debacle - Part 2

Last night I went to the South Pasadena city council meeting to plead for the parkway. As former Horticulture Outreach person for a botanic garden, I have done a fair bit of public speaking. Talking to over 300 pesticide applicators attending a continuing education class doesn't give me any problem - no nerves at all. Yet getting up in front of five city council members, all of whom I know, makes me jittery. Maybe it is the three minute time limit – which always goes by super fast. Maybe it is mike that makes me feel like I'm speaking in a fish bowl. Whatever it is, when I'm done I have no idea of what I said.

To prepare for this I wrote a short blurb and printed it out in size 18 font. I practiced it twice, finishing well before the three minute limit. Yet, when I was up there, the red light went on way too early. Do you think the timer is rigged? While leaving the chambers – maybe I get nervous because I'm in the “chambers” – several people looked up and said - good job. All I could think was, I shouldn't have read it.

So here's what I said, or think I said. (Please don't watch the tape, it is just too embarrassing.)

On April 1st I received a letter from the city informing me that my parkway landscaping was out of compliance with the city ordinance for parkway improvements. Plants must be: “grass, low lying ground cover plants less than 12 inches in height.”

My parkway is landscaped with low-water use, CA native plants that are mostly 2 – 3 ft tall, though many are lower. This area is watered approximately 3-4 times per year. It is well-maintained and has been recognized by the NWF as a certified backyard habitat, and featured on the TPF Garden Tour last year and this year. It was also selected as one of four TPF gardens to be shown on KTLA on April 1, though the interview wasn't aired.

South Pasadena has made great efforts to encourage environmental responsibility among its citizens – Clean Air Car Show, Tree City status, waste recovery facility (Athens). When one enters So. Pas, the trees that make up our well-developed urban canopy are immediately apparent – and the Natural Resource Commission works hard to preserve it. When entering the city the great expanses of lawn are also very apparent. In fact the brilliance of the green – which reminds me of the Emerald City in Oz - all year around bespeaks a total disregard for water conservation. The front page of the Pasadena Star-News today headlines with MWD approves water rationing. To quote Tim Brick “Today is really a historic day... It represents the end of an era of cheap water.”

The city's landscape ordinance favors lawns and it needs to change. There is no efficient way to water these parkway strips. [\(Show pictures\)](#) The 12 inch height regulation favors water-hungry landscaping and results in excessive urban runoff that eventually pollutes our water ways and beaches. I'd like to ask the city to grant a reprieve on my parkway until it has time to re-consider this ordinance. [\(Show pictures\)](#)

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Water usage bill averages less than \$20/month.
Parkway is watered approximately 4 times per year.

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Finally, when I am outside working on my garden, or just cutting flowers, many pedestrians stop to chat and tell me how much they enjoy the garden. It would be a real shame if I had to take it out. Thank you for hearing me.

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(The pictures that were put up were shown when I started to speak and were nothing but a distraction. Three minutes goes by real, real fast.)