



City of Palo Alto

City Council Staff Report

(ID # 10824)

Report Type: Consent Calendar

Meeting Date: 1/13/2020

Summary Title: Peers Park Improvement Ordinance

Title: Adoption of a Park Improvement Ordinance for Installation of Electric Utility Equipment at Peers Park as Recommended by the Parks and Recreation Commission

From: City Manager

Lead Department: Utilities

RECOMMENDATION

Staff and the Parks and Recreation Commission recommend that the City Council adopt a Park Improvement Ordinance for the installation of above and below-ground electric utility equipment at the existing Peers Park water pump station (Attachment A).

BACKGROUND

Caltrain is electrifying its trains to improve air quality, reduce noise, and increase ridership. In order for Caltrain to complete its electrification project, overhead utilities currently crossing the railroad must be either a minimum height of 40 feet or placed underground. City of Palo Alto Utilities (CPAU) has two overhead electric lines above the railroad crossings near Peers Park (between Rinconada and Tennyson). By combining the two overhead lines into one and placing the new line underground (“the Project”), CPAU can meet Caltrain’s requirement and improve the aesthetics of the area simultaneously.

On November 12, 2019, Staff presented the scope and impact of the Project, both during and after the completion, to the Park and Recreation Commission (PRC). At the end of the presentation, the PRC recommended that the Council approve the Park Improvement Ordinance (Attachment B).

DISCUSSION

Two CPAU overhead electric lines cross the railroad near Peers Park, both of which are connected to wooden utility poles on each end. Neither pole meets Caltrain’s 40 feet height requirement. As part of the Project, the poles and overhead cables will be removed and replaced with 1 new pad-mounted switch (53” tall x 63” wide x 62” deep), 5 new underground vaults (1 that is 5’ x 10’, 2 that are 4’6” x 8’6” and 2 that are 30” x 48”), and new underground conduits connecting these vaults. These new facilities are shown in detail in Exhibit A to the

Park Improvement Ordinance (Attachment A). The only visible addition will be the pad-mounted switch, which will be placed within the paved area at the park where the existing CPAU water pump station is located. The remainder of the equipment, vaults and conduits, will be beneath the surface.

Park Impacts During Construction

CPAU will use a horizontal drilling method, also known as the “bore method,” to minimize construction impacts at the park. The bore method will require three bore pits (two 5’x 5’ pits for conduit that will run underground in the park, and one 6’x 12’ pit for the conduit that will cross beneath the railroad) connected by a channel and conduit casing.

After the channel is established, the casing will be assembled and pulled into the channel simultaneously, to prevent the channel from collapsing. In the early portion of this deployment, which is estimated to take 1 to 2 days, the casing will sit above ground. This process will be repeated for the installation of the conduits into the installed casing. Utilities will fence off the area surrounding the bore pits, leaving the rest of the park open for use.

Timeline and length of Construction

Pending permit issuance, CPAU plans to start construction in February 2020. The Project will take approximately 4-6 weeks.

Traffic and Parking Impacts

No street closures will be needed in the Peers Park area. Construction worker vehicles will utilize street parking during the day.

Park Impacts After Construction

Other than the pad-mounted switch, everything else installed as part of this Project will be placed underground. The pad-mounted switch will be located directly in front of the existing CPAU water pump station near the train tracks, which is about 200 feet from the dog park. Once the Project is in place, CPAU will access the pad-mounted switch for maintenance approximately once per year. The cables that will be installed in the underground conduits are designed to last approximately 40 years. Thus, no CPAU access to these conduits will be required under normal operating conditions. The two underground vaults which will be inside the dog park do not require ventilation and will have mulch placed on top of their covers, which will permit full access to the area by park goers. The other three vaults will be placed beneath the paved area and will not limit park access.

Impact to CPAU’s Electric System

By reducing the number of overhead electric line crossings from two to zero, CPAU will eliminate the risk of overhead faults and increase system reliability. Installing the pad-mounted switch will also increase the resiliency, security and flexibility of CPAU’s electric distribution system.

RESOURCE IMPACT

The estimated cost of this Project is approximately \$620,000. Funding is available in the FY 2020 capital improvement Project (EL-17007), Facility Relocation for Caltrain Modernization Project. This is only a portion of the overall work necessary for relocation of electric facilities to meet Caltrain's requirements. Most of the construction work will be performed by contractors and staff will seek Council's approval for these contracts in Summer 2020.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Since 1965, the City of Palo Alto Utilities (CPAU) has administered an ongoing program to convert overhead utility lines, including electric, telephone and cable TV facilities to underground. This Project is consistent with this policy. This Project is also consistent with the existing, Council-approved, 2018 Utilities Strategic Plan, under the strategic objective for establishing a proactive infrastructure replacement program to support reliability and resiliency.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Staff presented the scope and impact of the Project to the PRC on November 12, 2019. The Commission unanimously recommended the Council approve the Park Improvement Ordinance.

Two weeks prior to Project start, CPAU will post signs at Peers Park, informing the park goers about the timing of this Project.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Council's adoption of this Park Improvement Ordinance is exempt from California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review under California CEQA Guidelines, Section 15301 (minor alteration of existing facilities) and Section 15061(b)(3) (no potential for significant environmental impacts).

Attachments:

- Attachment A: Draft Park Improvement Ordinance
- Attachment B: Linked to conserve paper:
Excerpt PRC Minutes

NOT YET ADOPTED

ORDINANCE NO. _____

Ordinance of the Council of the City of Palo Alto Approving and Adopting a Plan for Utilities Improvements at Peers Park

The Council of the City of Palo Alto does ORDAIN as follows:

SECTION 1. Findings. The City Council finds and declares that:

(a) Article VIII of the Charter of the City of Palo Alto and section 22.08.005 of the Palo Alto Municipal Code require that, before any substantial building, construction, reconstruction or development is commenced or approved, upon or with respect to any land held by the City for park purposes, the Council shall first cause to be prepared and by ordinance approve and adopt a plan therefor.

(b) Peers Park (the "Park") is dedicated to park purposes. (See Municipal Code section 22.08.200).

(c) The City intends to authorize installation of a pad-mount utility switch in front of the existing water pump station, as well as underground conduits and vaults at Peers Park. ("the Project").

(d) The construction of the underground conduits, boxes, vaults and pad-mount switch will take up 4-6 weeks.

(e) The plan of improvements shall generally include the following, and are more fully described in Exhibit A:

(1) 1 pad-mounted switch (53" tall x 63" wide x 62" deep);

(2) 5 new underground vaults:

- i. 1: 5' x 10';
- ii. 2: 4'6"x 8'6";
- iii. 2: 30" x 48";

(3) Underground conduits connecting the vaults, which will be installed by a horizontal drilling method, also called the bore method, to minimize the impacts to the park during construction.

(4) Once construction is complete, the only visible change at the park will be the pad-mounted switch, which will sit on top of a paved area near the train tracks, where the existing CPAU water pump station is located. The footprint of the paved area will not change. The pad-mounted switch will be located directly in front of the existing CPAU water pump station, which is about 200 feet from the dog park.

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(5) Since all the vaults and boxes will be buried underground, the only visible parts will be the lids. The 2 underground vaults which will be inside the dog park do not require ventilation and will have mulch placed on top of their covers, which will permit full access to the area by park goers. The other 3 vaults will be placed beneath the paved area and will not limit park access.

(6) No tree removal is required for this Project.

(7) During construction, workers will utilize street parking during the day. All temporary pits will be covered by construction plywood, fenced off and surrounded by safety cones.

(f) The Council desires to approve the plan for improvements for the Project described above.

SECTION 2. The Council hereby approves the plan for the construction of improvements in the Park described in this Ordinance.

SECTION 3. The City Council finds that this ordinance falls under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) exemptions found in Title 14 California Code of Regulations Section 15301 (Existing Facilities) and Section 15302 (Replacement or Reconstruction).

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NOT YET ADOPTED

SECTION 4. This ordinance shall be effective on the thirty-first day after the date of its adoption.

INTRODUCED:

PASSED:

AYES:

NOES:

ABSENT:

ABSTENTIONS:

ATTEST:

City Clerk

Mayor

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

APPROVED:

Assistant City Attorney

City Manager

Director of Community Services

Director of Public Works

Director of Administrative Services

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Exhibit A
Plan Drawings and Specifications

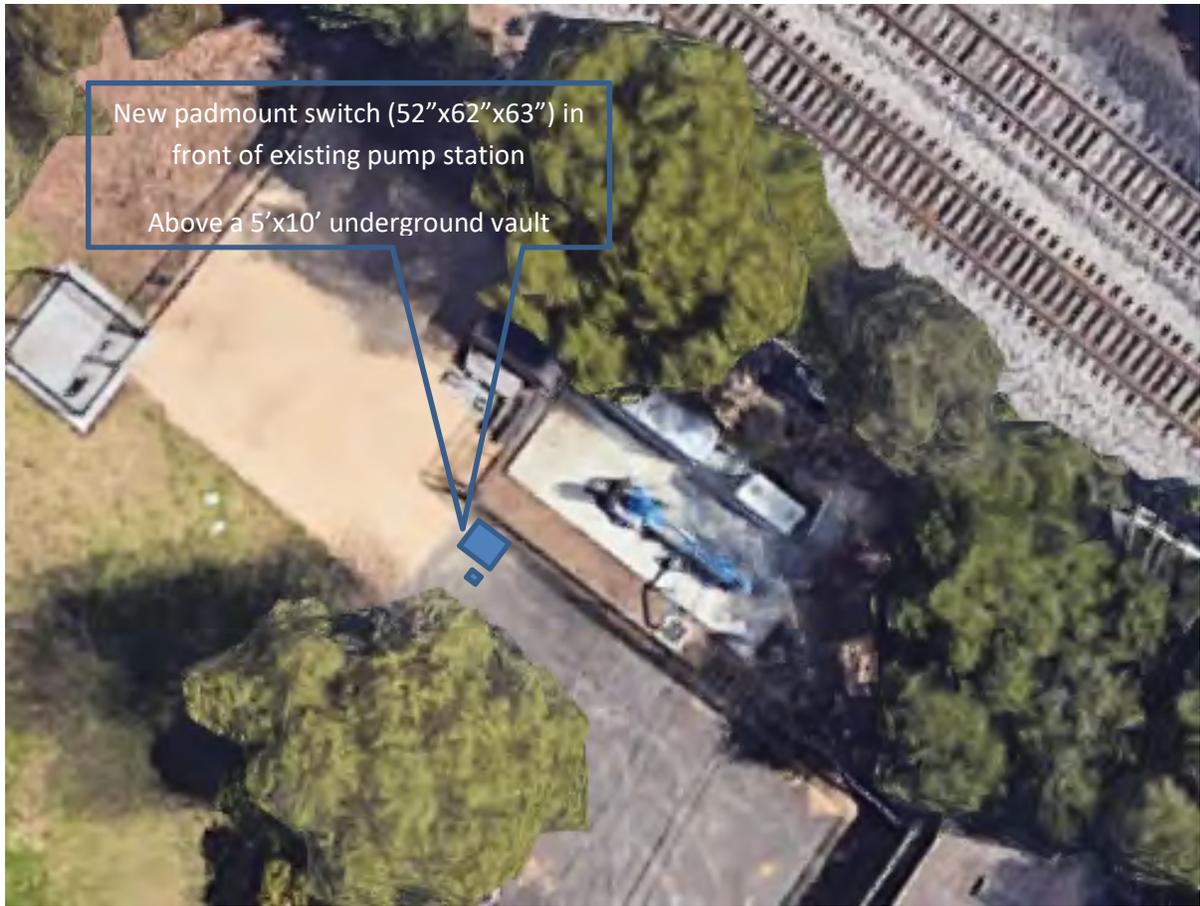
(See following pages)

Diagram and Map of New and Existing Utilities Equipment at the Peers Park Water Pump Station

Exhibit A

1. Install an above ground (pad-mount) utility switch (53"x63"x62") in front of an existing water pump station at Peers Park.
2. Install 5 underground vaults and boxes.
3. Beside the open trench method, conduits shall be installed by the bore method to minimize the disruption to the park.





New padmount switch (52"x62"x63") in
front of existing pump station
Above a 5'x10' underground vault



