

## Public Comments for the January 26, 2022 Port Commission Meeting

**From:** PT Poplars <[poplaralliance@gmail.com](mailto:poplaralliance@gmail.com)>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 13, 2022 8:05 AM  
**To:** Carol Hasse; Pam Petranek; <mailto:> Pete Hanke  
**Cc:** Eron Berg; Matthew Klontz  
**Subject:** Public comment

Dear Port Commissioners,

As you know Julie Jaman had technical difficulties yesterday in an attempt to provide public comment. Other members of our group and I prepared a 3 minute comment that I was to deliver then I had family matters come up and wasn't able to deliver these to you "in person."  
So below I cut and paste these comments. Thank you

Andrea Fontenot Hegland  
The Poplar Alliance

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

There appear to be both big picture and detail issues with the Sims Way project proposal; both procedural and substantive.

We were told trees would be coming down about now, yet there remains a significant amount of confusion about the reason to cut the trees, for example, the trees don't appear to be as old or dangerous as we were lead to believe...trenching will probably not kill the trees as we've been instructed...and there appear to be serious issues between the boatyard operation and the lines themselves that have nothing to do with the poplars.

On the Kah Tai side, there are no powerlines. Why do the trees need to be removed? The City says it's cuz they are non-native but that's all the city approves and/or plants along roads, and the replacement tree shown in the concept drawing is non-native. All the trees on Water Street are non-native.

There is confusion about the scope of the project – the one and only concept drawing shows the trees on Kah Tai remaining.

It's not clear that there is in fact an emergency. It's not clear when the trees will be cut. We were told on Dec 15 that the agencies still don't know what permits will be required and that the project was still in the formative stages...but chainsaws would be coming out soon, although no one would say when.

As far as process, there are issues with excluding the public from such an important decision, and there are serious issues with skirting the State Environmental Policy Act requirement for a cumulative impact analysis.

There is a solution here that could meet the Port and PUD's needs that doesn't require cutting down these iconic trees. Underground the powerlines with guidance from a certified arborist to minimize impact to the poplars, and expand the boatyard 15'; angle park boats up to 60' on this row and longer in the 3 large openings between poplars. The poplars should be appropriately pruned, maintained and monitored to ensure that they do not become a danger tree. Thank you

**From:** R Jahnke <[rjahnke@att.net](mailto:rjahnke@att.net)>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 13, 2022 11:20:59 AM  
**To:** Pam Petranek; Carol Hasse; Pete Hanke  
**Cc:** Eron Berg  
**Subject:** Public Comment regarding Sims Way

Dear Port Commissioners,

I apologize for not being able to attend yesterday's meeting. I had intended to make a public comment. Below please find the comment that I had planned to make.

Change is hard. No one under the age of 70 can remember a time when Lombardy poplar trees did not frame the entrance to downtown Port Townsend. But make no mistake, retaining these trees for all these decades was a mistake.

The landscape architect who developed the planting plan for Kah Tai Lagoon Nature Park knew this and carefully planned that as other more appropriate trees were planted and took root, the poplars would be sequentially removed. Time has proven the landscape architect correct as many communities now restrict and a few outright ban the planting of Lombardy poplars. Unfortunately, this plan was not followed in practice or even in subsequent plans such as the City's Gateway Plan.

A local advocacy group has inaccurately noted the ecological value of these trees by misquoting their own sourced reference. In Akiva Silver's book, *Trees of Power*, the author states that hybrid poplars, the group to which Lombardy Poplars belong, support little wildlife. The author notes that because of their rapid growth, hybrid poplars are often used for making plywood, biofuels and paper. He notes specifically that in the Pacific Northwest large plantations are planted for these purposes, that these areas support little wildlife and are described as "voids of biodiversity." The local advocacy group inaccurately conflates hybrid and native poplars. If we are going to have additional public discussion about this effort, let's at least discuss the right tree. (To verify this comment, go to <https://www.chelseagreen.com/2020/poplar-the-homemaker/> and scroll down to the section on 'hybrid poplars')

But it is not just that. Walk along the asphalt path and look into Kah Tai Lagoon Nature Park and note how far and how many of these trees have invaded the park, shading decades of planting efforts by volunteers. Or walk along the lagoon trail and don't just look toward the lagoon but rather look south, into the woodland and note the groves of poplars that have invaded and the absence of other trees or even understory native shrubs in these locations. These poplars are invasive and are eroding the value of the nature park. It is because these trees are aggressively invasive that other municipalities restrict or prohibit their planting as noted above.

It is sad and extremely unfortunate that the original plans were not followed and that we have become attached to the look of these trees. But the current initiative and PIF funding provides the opportunity to fix the mistake of inaction.

Yes, change is hard. But for the future of the park and for the safety and economic vibrancy of our city, I encourage Port, PUD and City officials to carry out their plans. It will look different, but we and future generations will benefit and ultimately be grateful.

Thank you for your service.

Sincerely,

Rick Jahnke