

Westside neighbors' years-old battle over trees ends in removal

Trees
By **HEATHER BOERNER**
SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

Janette Sargent-Hamill's two Monterey Cypress trees are coming down this week — six years after a 30-foot limb fell on their Westside Santa Cruz home.

The battle to remove the trees has wound its way through more than a half-dozen city meetings and more than a dozen years. But it ended as it began: with Sargent-Hamill and her husband worrying about the precarious trees stretching over their home on Laguna Avenue, and with neighbor Gillian Greensite standing in front of the house in horror at the prospect of the removal. Tuesday, she shook her head as a crane moved logs from the tree stump to a nearby flatbed truck.

"This is a very sad day, indeed," said Greensite, who opposed the removal of the Hamills' trees and many other trees in the neighborhood.

"Look at these trees coming down. They aren't hollow and rotten at all."

In fact, Greensite was so agitated about the tree removal that the police had to come to the neighborhood and convince her to stay a safe distance from the felled trees.

Because the trees are old enough, they're considered heritage trees and can't be removed without the city's approval. April 10, the Hamills finally got that approval at a City Council meeting. The trees are expected to be down today.

Greensite and Sargent-Hamill tangled last at the April 10 City Council meeting.

During the three-hour-long discussion, Sargent-Hamill said she was being "punished for living around the corner from" Greensite and Greensite shot back that the experts, who were hired by the Hamills, hadn't proven that the problem couldn't be solved by cabling and pruning.

Contact Heather Boerner at
hboerner@santa-cruz.com.



Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel photos

TOP: A worker is hoisted into the heights of the remaining cypress trees at 145 Laguna to begin the removal process Tuesday afternoon.

RIGHT: Andrea Merkel, who opposes the removal of the trees at the Hamills' property, watches as the 100-year-old trees are cut down.

