



Huntersville Planning Board
Tree/Canopy Save Subcommittee
Minutes

May 16, 2019
5:00 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.

Large Conference Room
Town Center – 3rd Floor
105 Gilead Road, Huntersville

Attendance: Commissioner Boone, Planning Board Members: Frank Gammon, Jennifer Davis, Catherine Graffy, Staff Members: Brad Priest, Meredith Nesbitt

A. Comments from Audience (5 minutes per person allocation)

- Kim Aichele (9511 Cennetta Circle)
 - Expressed concern that citizens of Huntersville are losing their trees.
 - Thanked committee and was encouraged by the formation of this this group
 - Asked for a focus to be put on planting native trees and encouraging a greater diversity of planting (discourage monoculture), reduce the amount of tree mitigation seek to have development save the required amount of tree preservation, asked for a staff arborist to be considered.

B. Approval of Minutes

- C. Graffy made a motion to approve minutes from the May 8 meeting. D. Boone seconded. Motion carried.

C. Other Business

1. General Comments:

- D. Boone asked staff if Jack (Planning Director) had any feedback on the last meeting. Brad provided the following feedback:
 - Staff would encourage the committee to stay focused on the task of reviewing tree mitigation. This committee was formed after the Planning Board saw an increase in tree mitigation request. The focus should be to review and proposed changes to the tree preservation/mitigation requirements.
 - Staff would caution and has concern with redlining all of Article 7 because it could shift the focus away from tree mitigation. Broadening the focus can cause the sub-committee to lose site of the intent to review tree mitigation.
 - Sub-committee then agreed to narrow the focus of redlining Article 7 to only Article 7.0 through Article 7.4, Article 7.7, and Article 7.9.
- F. Gammon has contacts with foresters and biologist through the Carolina Tread Trail. He will ask contacts to review the Town's Tree and Shrub list and possibly come to a committee meeting to speak/answer questions.

2. Discuss the review/redline of Article 7:

- Members began by picking up discussion from the end of the May 8 meeting. Where did the

specimen tree definition come from? How did the Town establish the a minimum of 24" DBH was a specimen tree? If we change the definition to be 12" DBH what would that do to the current tree preservation requirements?

- Staff explained that the current definition was adopted in 2003 when the Town did a major re-write of the Zoning Ordinance. There was no a specific reference for the definition from the files for the 2003. Staff will continue to research.
 - If the goal in changing the definition of specimen tree is to increase the amount of tree preservation there are a few ways to approach this:
 1. Increase the amount of required tree preservation (the percentages per zoning district of required tree save).
 2. Change mitigation (for specimen tree mitigation change the percentage of caliper that must be mitigated; for canopy tree mitigation and planting onsite only give 1,000 sq.ft. of credit for the large maturing trees planted – there are numerous ways to change or modify mitigation).
 3. Change the definition of specimen tree
 - The difference between these options will be difficult to quantify
- Members also want to explore the replanting criteria. A large maturing hardwood tree should not be mitigated with a crape myrtle.
- Article 7.0 Purpose and Intent:
- Members agreed the following should be added to the list in Article 7.0:
 - Quality of life for residence and wild life
 - Contribution to air quality
- Article 7.1 Applicability:
- F. Gammon asked if the Town tracked parcels that have a timbering plan/in the forestry program – if this is tracked we can have an understanding of where large stands of trees will be cut through town trough the timbering process. Staff indicated that this information was available in the tax records and staff can access/verify on a parcel/parcel bases. Staff will look into options to map these parcels and work with County GIS staff to export this data.
 - J. Davis asked if properties cutting trees for timbering (under the forestry program) were required to maintain a buffer (not cut down all the trees along the property boundary). Staff answered, no from a Town Standard they are not required to maintain a buffer. There may be some State requirements.
 - Clarification regarding the February 17, 2003 date in this section. Staff indicated that during the major 2003 re-write a large portion of this article was added. This date is to provide a bench mark, we cannot hold projects approved before an ordinance requirement was put into place to then be subject to new requirements.
 - No changes to this section were suggested.
- Article 7.2 General Regulations
- 7.2.1 references *American Standards for Nursery Stock*. Suggested to add a reference to the newest version of this publication. Staff to research this reference and the appropriate way to reference and point to newest standards.
 - 7.2.1 references trees and shrubs shall be locally adapted to the area. This language

raised concern because invasive species can adapt to the area and non-native species can over time become locally adapted. Question lead into Article 7.2.9 discussion.

- 7.2.9 references nuisance and noxious plants. Is there a Town approved list of nuisance and noxious trees and shrubs? Staff indicated that there is not a list nuisance and noxious plants can be subjective. For example a tree with a lot of shedding or litter next to a BMP can be a nuisance because the leaves block/clog the BMP function but in another location on site the same tree provides sufficient canopy and is not a nuisance. Staff should have the ability to make this determination on site-by-site basis. No change or list is recommended.
- The committee also discussed and clarification was provided for Article 7.2.6 and the following terms/concepts:
 - Monoculture – should be avoided because it causes problems with plant disease
 - Over planting – does not promote healthy tree growth
 - Zoning Administrator is the Planning Director and is/can be delegated to staff
- 7.2.10 confusion was resided round this language especially the second sentence in this section. Staff will review this language and provide more insight and suggestions to clarify or remove language.
- 7.2.12 references a minimum tree size at the time of planting. Staff clarified that the smaller the tree is when planting the easier it can be established and thrive. This is an industry standard and only a minimum requirement. The Ordinance allows for larger trees to be planting if appropriate. No change was suggested. Another questions as raised if this is the section that native species of plantings should be encourage? Staff recommended that using native trees should be referenced or required in Article 7.2.1.
- Article 7.3 Maintenance of Required Landscaping
 - No comments or changes

3. Remainder of meeting time was used for comments/summary/wrap up of the meeting:

- D. Boone asked if the Town should have a canopy goal. Pointed to Charlotte as an example (50% canopy goal by 2050). Staff suggested that this could be included in the Community Plan update that is starting this year.
- Discussion of a staff arborist and having the developer be required to retain an arborist for a project of a specific size. No requirements for formally recommended at this time.
- Taking non-native trees off the approved tree/shrub list could be a way to encourage planting native trees.
- Next Steps/Task to be Completed:
 - Continue to work through Article 7 and Article 12
 - Frank Gammon to provide feedback from contacts at the Carolina Tread Trail on Town's Tree and Shrub List.
 - Brad to look into mapping parcels in the forestry program, research American Standards of Nursey Stock reference, and review Article 7.2.10

Meeting was adjourned at 6:30