

## Notes from Meeting 4 of the Landscape Ordinance Committee – July 6, 2020

Participating in the virtual meeting were Gerry Alfano, Judson Clinton, Jason Combs, Deniece Conway, Debby Davis, Keith Francies, Steve Galanti, Sarah Healy, Allan Hill, Terri Jones, Asheley Kotis, Tim Knowles, Christina Larson, Joel Landau, Elizabeth Link, Shane Messer, Nick Piornack, Mark Reaves, Anna Reaves, Dabney Sanders, Walker Sanders, Jeff Sovich, Virginia Spillman, Judy Stalder, Juhann Waller, Steve Windham

Facilitator Teresa Lockamy began the meeting by reminding the committee of the group charter for the meetings, and then went over the Zoom meeting protocols for the group. Ms. Lockamy then requested that the sub-committee to review the Approved Plants List report on progress that had been made.

Christina Larson reported that she had reviewed the list for invasive plants and had made the recommendation that several plants be removed from the list. Steve Windham had also submitted a list of native plants that could be added.

Ms. Lockamy asked if it was possible that the group could provide a revised list by the next meeting. Ms. Larson replied that they should be able to supply the list by July 17<sup>th</sup> so that it can be available for the next meeting.

Ms. Lockamy then requested a status report from the sub-committee to review the status of trees in existing parking lots. Tim Knowles reported that he had looked at some parking lots in shopping centers and office parks. He shared his screen to show pictures of trees in various states of health that he had taken in the parking lots. He noted that willow oaks generally did well in parking lots, and that Chinese Elms did well in some places but not others. He also noted that the size of the area that the tree was planted in didn't always correspond to the health of the tree – some trees in small areas were doing OK, while others were struggling, and he found a tree in a larger area that was also not doing well. He remarked that this may be due to the quality of the soil provided in the planting island.

In further discussion, Judson Clinton noted that trees are often planted too deep, and poor maintenance practices such as piling mulch too deep around the trees may also contribute to poor growth and disease. Keith Francies stated that he had seen maple trees doing well in parking lots, and reiterated that soil quality and maintenance issues are frequently the cause of problems. Elizabeth Link described a previous instance where trees were dying in a certain parking lot, and lab tests found that maintenance crews were applying weed-killer to the islands, which was being taken up by the trees and killing them.

It was suggested that we develop a list of trees that do well in the parking lot environmental conditions, to include with the Approved Plant List, and the group agreed that this would be a good idea. The sub-committee to review the Approved Plant List agreed to add this to their task.

Ms. Lockamy then asked if there were further comment or questions, and there being none, introduced Ms. Link to present the next item on the agenda, regarding the size and soil volume of parking lot islands.

Ms. Link presented a table showing the ordinance requirements for tree island size and minimum dimensions from the 7 largest (by population) cities in North Carolina. The slide also contained some possible dimensions of the islands of various sizes to show how they could work into a parking lot. She then presented a graph showing maximum possible tree sizes based on available soil volume, and discussed how this related to the potential size of trees in parking lots based on the size of the parking lot volume. She also presented the City's ordinance regarding the allowances for using existing trees within or adjacent to the parking lot for credit for the parking lot tree requirements.

The group then had a discussion regarding various possibilities for island dimension requirements and configuration, for both single trees and for multiple trees in large islands or medians, and whether Greensboro's requirements are adequate for healthy long-term growth. Tim Knowles shared his screen again to show additional pictures from existing parking lots, and suggested that we might need larger soil volume to get good trees, whether above-ground or below ground. Judy Stalder stated that the development environment is different here than in some other cities, and pointed out the need to balance economic development with ordinance requirements. Mark Reaves commented that soil quality within the parking lot islands is very important to the health of the trees, one that he had seen could be highly variable, and suggested that we include requirements for soil amendment and quality in parking lot islands in the ordinance. The group agreed that this should be included in the amendments. Dabney Sanders stated that, regardless of our size, we need to take steps to make the city visually attractive and appealing, as that is an element that can attract business to the area.

Judson Clinton suggested that classifications be developed for different types and sizes of parking lots for the purpose of setting different requirements for each class. He also requested that Virginia Spillman address stormwater issues with parking lot trees and islands, and Ms. Spillman said she would do so at a future meeting.

The group went on to discuss the size of various types of parking lots and how larger islands could increase the parcel size required for development. It was suggested that it is time to amend the requirements for number of parking spaces required, in view of societal changes such as ride-sharing and the probable increase in people working remotely due to COVID-19. Ms. Link stated that such a change was out of the scope of what the committee could do, as that would fall into the area of Zoning. Ms. Sanders suggested that we could at least make a recommendation to the Zoning Commission that this issue be examined by them. Steve Galanti agreed that that would be an appropriate action for the committee.

After further discussion of the issues surrounding parking lot island dimensions, it was agreed that staff would craft wording for an amendment to the ordinance that would address island size and soil volume and amendment requirements, and bring it to the group for discussion at the next meeting, scheduled for July 20 at 3 pm. The meeting was then adjourned.