

## **Notes from Meeting 5 of the Landscape Committee**

### **Virtual Meeting July 20, 2020**

*Participating were: Gerry Alfano, Judson Clinton, Debby Davis, Keith Francies, Steve Galanti, Allan Hill, Terri Jones, Juliana Kohler, 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.*

Facilitator Teresa Lockamy welcomed the group, and summarized the items would be discussed in the meeting. She then introduced Keith Francies to present a summary of his findings in a survey of tree islands in various parking lots. Mr. Francies' Powerpoint showing pictures and commentary of his survey had been previously shared with the group.

Mr. Francies listed the parking lots that he had visited, including Friendly Center and Shops at Friendly, several stores on W. Market St., the Earth Fare Shopping Center, Merrill Lynch, etc. He described his methodology, including measuring islands sizes, tree diameters, and probing soil. Most common species were Willow Oak, Red & Pin Oak, Red Maple, Lacebark Elm, Zelkova & Crepe Myrtle. Recommended Bald Cypress and Black Tupelo should be used more often as they are hardy trees that do well in that environment, and recommended that use of additional species be encouraged. Found that, in general, when found 2 of same species growing in different size beds, the larger the planting area, the better the tree was doing. However, in same size bed, 2 different species might have large differences in health and size. He showed samples of successful preservation of existing trees in parking lots, and examples of successful parking lot medians and islands, with the conclusion that larger planting spaces create larger and healthier trees. Also showed examples of more recent construction that contained examples of poor soil in the islands and the trees in poor health. Concluded that larger islands with good soil could accommodate larger trees, and that tree species should be matched to soil area.

Ms. Lockamy then asked Elizabeth Link to present the proposed language for the ordinance amendments. Ms. Link first discussed Section 30-10-2.6, regarding the number of required parking spaces per tree, the minimum size requirement for islands, and maximum distance of parking spaces from a tree. Changes to decrease the number of parking spaces per tree and increase island size to 300 s.f. were proposed.

Tim Knowles pointed out that the dimension proposed is actually one foot larger than the standard parking space size and that it would be a lot easier to provide a 275 s.f. island that fit within the footprint of 2 parking spaces.

Judy Stalder commented that she had run this by some of her members. The reaction she had received was that while increasing the island size might produce healthier trees, this also increased the size parcel needed for development, and that there needed to be an incentive or trade-off somewhere, in the direction of reducing parking spaces. Ms. Stalder said that she would like to see any changes to the ordinance for parking lot trees adopted concurrently with a change in the minimum number of spaces

required. During further discussion Ms. Stalder asked if Friendly Center parking areas were developed according to the ordinance or developer's decision. Kimberly Barb noted that she had worked on both old and new parts of Friendly Center, and that the old part was built before the current ordinance. The islands and medians were designed to promote pedestrian safety in the parking lots and would be larger than what was required by ordinance. It was also noted that most of the cities we had looked at Ms. Stalder then asked that we look at the ordinances of other cities to see how many parking spaces that they require in general, so that we can understand how they relate to the parking lot tree requirements. Ms. Barb noted that the increase in size would be 15% to 17%, and that maybe we should consider reducing the parking requirements by this percentage. Mr. Knowles noted that just as important as increasing the island size was making requirements for soil volume and quality. The group continued discussion of this change before moving on to the next section, Table 10-4.

During discussion of the table several questions were raised and answered but no objections to the table were raised.

The group then moved to discussion of Section 30-10-2.4, requirements for soil amendments. After Ms. Link presented the proposed changes to the wording, Mr. Francies noted that this was probably the most important part, since the island size doesn't matter if the soil is compacted and rocky. Mr. Knowles suggested that the requirements be more specific, including decompaction of soil and augering the hole, and that the requirements be included in the grading specifications or incorporated earlier than in the landscaping requirements. Ms. Lockamy asked if there were specific language that he could suggest and he said that he and Ms. Barb could put something together. Mr. Reaves and Ms. Barb both commented that soil quality is key and that amendments and decompaction are the most important part of achieving a large healthy tree.

Ms. Stalder noted that this is something that should be part of plan review, and that enforcement must not hold up construction. The group agreed that the language was needed but that it needed more crafting. Mr. Francies asked Ms. Link to provide the group with the soil preparation requirements of other cities.

The group then discussed the memorandum to the Planning Director, recommending that the Zoning Commission take up a review of the parking requirements to see if they need to be reduced. Mr. Landau commented that he liked the idea of lowering the minimum requirement, but had some doubts about setting maximum quantities. Mr. Knowles commented that we should include the specific percentage or number of spaces the group would like to see reduced, and suggested the 15%-17% discussed earlier. After further discussion, the group agreed to review the revised language again at the next meeting.