

NOTES FROM MEETING 8 OF LANDSCAPE ORDINANCE COMMITTEE

Present were : *Gerry Alfano, Judson Clinton, Deniece Conway, Vicki Foust, Keith Francies, Terri Jones, Steve Galanti, Joel Landau, Elizabeth Link, Shane Messer, Dabney Sanders, Judy Stalder.*

Facilitator Teresa Lockamy welcomed the group and went over the agenda, which included review of the group's working charter and the schedule of meetings, as well as review of previously discussed ordinance amendments.

First was the introduction of a new committee member, Dr. Vicki Foust. Dr. Foust will serve in the place of Deborah Brown, who had to step down from the committee earlier this year. Dr. Faust noted that she is currently chair of the Community Sustainability Council and has an academic background in business, environmental economics, and sustainability assessment. She worked on the LEED for Cities effort and the sustainability component of the Comp Plan. The group members then introduced themselves.

Ms. Lockamy then showed the charter that the group had agreed on at the beginning. The charter included a timeline which concluded at the end of the year, and the list of ordinance items to be addressed. Adding some items to the discussion that were not on the list, and the pause at the beginning of the pandemic lockdown have slowed the progress of the committee and the timeline will need to be renegotiated. Ms. Lockamy reviewed the charter for conducting business, including that the group would make decisions by majority consensus.

Joel Landau stated that other committees and councils in the City worked by majority vote rather than consensus. Ms. Lockamy noted that the group had agreed to operate under this method and the group could change that, but that the "majority consensus" model would include working to get consensus, but if it could not be reached, then the majority of the participants who agreed on a course of action could move that forward, with any dissension to be documented and presented to the Planning Director along with the proposed ordinance amendments.

Ms. Link then reviewed the proposed amendments that had previously been considered. The ordinance for distance between light poles and trees was reviewed. Keith Francies asked about specifying that the measurement be from stem of tree to light pole, and Ms. Link replied that that was how it was generally measured on the plan. Ms. Lockamy asked for any other input, and receiving none, asked for a show of hands to move the amendment forward. With majority of members raising their hands, the amendment moved forward.

Ms. Link then reviewed the changes proposed to the requirements for parking lot trees and islands, along with the soil amendment and de-compaction requirements for tree islands in parking lots. Ms. Stalder then commented that one of the TREBIC members had come up with a cost of \$55,000 per acre of development for the additional requirements, and she had asked some other members to also look at whether this would be a realistic cost. If this were to be the only costs from the ordinance changes it might be easier to consider whether they could support it but not knowing what the other costs might be they want to get more estimates and wait until the end when they could know all costs to vote on any of the changes.

Ms. Stalder also expressed concern that the requirement for de-compaction would delay construction. Mr. Clinton said that the soil preparation is already required for the landscape beds and that usually happens so that it should not delay the construction process. Ms. Stalder said that they could support the de-compaction requirements if they don't delay, but wanted to table the other requirements until the end. After further discussion Ms. Lockamy proposed that the concern about cost be captured, and as the committee moves forward, cost be used as a filter for all of the revisions, and revisit the total costs at the end to see if Ms. Stalder can support them. Ms. Stalder agreed that this would work for her.

Mr. Clinton then brought up the costs of *not* implementing the changes, including economic benefits, available grants, etc., and Ms. Stalder said that she would welcome the information of any cost mitigation that would come along with the changes. After further discussion it was agreed that Mr. Clinton would share information regarding those costs, and Mr. Clinton invited other members to contribute any relevant information as well. Then Ms. Lockamy asked for a show of support and the majority of members raised their hands.

The next agenda item was the soil de-compaction requirements for the parking lot tree islands. Ms. Link reviewed the de-compaction and soil amendment requirements that had previously been proposed and discussed. Ms. Stalder then asked if these were the same de-compaction requirements that he had earlier said would not delay construction, and he agreed that they were. With no other questions or comments Ms. Lockamy asked for a show of support. A majority of the participants supported the amendment and changes to the landscape manual.

The next agenda item was a discussion of possible requirements for tree preservation and/or landscaping within single-family developments. Ms. Link went over a summary of the requirements for this from the six other largest cities in North Carolina, which had been sent to the group earlier. She then asked Mr. Clinton to present information he had on gathering data on what sort of tree canopy is being lost or saved, in terms of quality of the trees and of the open space. Mr. Landau then asked for a definition of single-family development and was informed that while the definition could be a single lot or a large subdivision the thought was to have it apply to larger developments rather than infill.

Ms. Sanders commented that it would make sense to delineate the larger tracts for tree preservation rather than single lots or small development of a few lots.

Ms. Link then stated that the sort of information that is being solicited from the group would be ideas about the tracts to be subject to regulation, as well as any incentives to be offered in exchange for tree preservation.

Ms. Foust suggested that while the trees saved have functional value, they also have an aesthetic value, over the value that small newly planted trees would have. Suggested making it a priority because it ties in both with the goals of the new Comprehensive Plan as well as the LEED for Cities goals.

Ms. Stalder stated that the aesthetic, economic, and environmental benefits of trees is recognized by most builders but that the efficiency of clear-cutting is needed for building houses that most people can afford. She stated that a study by National Homebuilders Assoc. determined that every \$1,000 added to

the cost of a house prices 160,000 people out of buying the house. Some people can afford trees and some people can't, so we need to find a way to facilitate tree save & maintain affordability. She noted that if you can't afford to buy a house then the increases in value don't do you any good.

Mr. Clinton then shared his screen, and noted that the information shared by MS. Stalder is the sort of information that we need to document, and pointed out the need to document tree loss as well so that we can quantify it and come up with better parameters for tree save.

Ms. Lockamy asked Ms. Link if there were any direction she would like to give for moving forward. Ms. Link replied that she would like to hear ideas from the group about what the group would like to see in a tree preservation ordinance. Ms. Stalder suggested bringing in Stanley Wilson from Neighborhood Development to speak to what is important to their mission of housing affordability and what we cannot or should not do. She noted that in order for affordable housing to be available, people in affordable housing need to be able to move up and achieve that next step up to better housing and not have the next step be unaffordable.

Ms. Sanders noted that the long-term benefits accrue to the home owners and should also be taken into consideration, and questioned how to quantify it. Ms. Stalder suggested that there be grants or incentives for tree planting.

The group then discussed future meetings and agreed that the next 2 meetings would be on October 5 and October 19, and then would have meetings on November 2 and December 7, and at the next meeting would renegotiate the timeline for 2021 and map out what we want to achieve.

Ms. Lockamy noted that Terri Jones had announced that she is leaving the City and thanked her for her work with the committee. With that the meeting was ended.