

## NOTES FROM MEETING 9 OF LANDSCAPE ORDINANCE COMMITTEE – OCTOBER 5, 2020

Present were : *Gerry Alfano, Judson Clinton, Vicki Foust, Sarah Healy, Keith Francies, Terri Jones, Steve Galanti, Tim Knowles, Joel Landau, Christina Larson, Elizabeth Link, Shane Messer, Anna Reaves, Mark Reaves, Walker Sanders, Marlene Sanford, Tori Small, Judy Stalder, Juhann Waller.*

Facilitator Teresa Lockamy welcomed the committee members and reviewed workplan and timeline. The original timeline had the meetings concluding in December, but because things had taken longer, suggested that the meetings continue into the spring to be able to conclude the original agenda. The group raised no objections to continuing and agreed to the proposed schedule of meetings.

Ms. Lockamy noted that there had been discussion of TREBIC providing information regarding costs for development of the previously approved parking ordinance, and that the information would be sent to the group when acquired. She announced that Stanley Wilson, Director of Housing and Community for the City of Greensboro, who had been the first item on the agenda, would not be able to attend the meeting.

Elizabeth Link then went over the proposed ordinance amendment to require tree preservation for single-family housing, which had been provided to the committee before the meeting. Tim Knowles asked whether the requirements were the same as for other types of development. Ms. Link explained the ways in which the requirements differed from the ordinance requirements for other types of development.

Joel Landau commented that the exemption for tracts 2 acres or less seemed large, that it should be an acre. He suggested that instead of jumping from 5% to 10% of the parcel size that the calculation should be 10% of anything over 5 acres. He asked for explanation of the 3,000 s.f. exemption, which Ms. Link explained was generally intended for expansions of use.

Ms. Stalder then noted that the cost of installing or saving trees added to the price that consumers would have to pay for the house, and would price some people out of the market. Suggested that there should be incentives or grants to help builders or homeowners plant trees. Noted that a goal of the new Comprehensive Plan is to provide more affordable housing. Quoted some statistics regarding the rising costs of housing and noted that “regulation” would add to the cost.

Mr. Knowles stated that he has been hearing that the land in Greensboro is getting more expensive, so that developers are going out into the county. Noted that developers are going out to the county to find affordable housing, and that he is against adding the tree preservation requirement.

Gerry Galfano noted that some of the comments seemed to indicate that trees are only important if you can afford them, and that she feels that we need to find a way to provide trees for low-income people as well.

Marlene Sanford noted that most developers here are focusing on entry-level housing since costs are going up so much. She then listed a number of reasons why the costs are going up due to regulation. Offered to provide a presentation about how the costs of construction break down. Noted that most

developers planted 2 trees in the lots, and that most people plant trees and landscaping after they buy the house. Insisted that we are not experiencing tree loss, and asked if there is any empirical data that shows that that we are really losing trees and need to do the tree preservation.

Judson Clinton noted that some of the information that Ms. Sanford had put out was questionable, and asked the group if they could provide any data.

Ms. Link noted that one of the reasons for requiring tree preservation would be to document the trees removed and the trees saved, and so get an idea of tree coverage lost on these developments.

Keith Francies noted that the wording of the ordinance seemed incomplete to him – that there should be a target percentage, possibly adding the option of doing a combination. Noted that there are lower to middle income housing subdivisions that have been around for many years, in which trees weren't planted in the beginning and still don't have trees planted. Suggested that there may be other ways such as tax credits or grants to meet affordability without doing away with trees. Noted that a number of other cities have somehow been able to require tree conservation or landscaping on entry-level single family. Believes street trees should be a requirement, not an option. For fee-in-lieu, feels that developers will make money off of the \$500 – should be more. Asked what is the definition of affordable housing in terms of selling price.

Mark Reaves commented that we may want to consider allowing smaller tree than the 2" caliper so that it's not so expensive.

Walker Sanders suggested that we may want to not have a blanket requirement – need conversation around incentives - in Greensboro we have at least 20,000 at-risk households & few developers that are building affordable housing. Need incentives to build quality housing that is affordable. Can tell when drive through low-income neighborhoods because don't have trees or sidewalks. What are models from around the country that we can use to offset costs. We show our values through the regulation.

Tim Knowles said he loves trees, but starter homes are needed. Thinks we need grants or tax credits to make housing affordable, maybe GSO Beautiful plants trees. Suggested ordinance should have provisions to keep from impacting the cost of entry-level.

Ms. Sanford suggested City create a fund to plant trees in low-income neighborhoods. Questioned why Neighborwoods would plant trees in Sunset Hills.

Ms. Stalder noted that sidewalks are now required in all developments, and add about \$1,500 to cost of a house. Mr. Walker noted that this is something else that the City should consider providing without putting cost on the developer of putting in sidewalk.

Ms. Stalder said that we should look at getting grants or other funding to help with tree planting. Also said that we need to look at data that shows that we are actually losing tree canopy. So need to establish a starting point. Noted that just because other cities have this type of ordinance doesn't mean it's the best way to start.

Ms. Lockamy reiterated that Ms. Sanford had offered to coordinate a presentation from local developers of affordable housing about costs, if requested. Noted that there had been the following questions which staff may need to address:

What is definition of affordable housing?

What are models of other areas across the country that have incentivized quality affordable housing?

Any empirical data about tree canopy loss that necessitates ordinance?

Questions about grants from Neighborwoods & Nussbaum fund

With no other questions or comments, the meeting was adjourned.