

NOTES FROM MEETING 12 OF LANDSCAPE ORDINANCE COMMITTEE – FEBRUARY 1, 2021

Present were : *Gerry Alfano, Kimberly Barb, Judson Clinton, Deniece Conway, Debby Davis, Sarah Healy, Steve Galanti, Tim Knowles, Joel Landau, Christina Larson, Elizabeth Link, Anna Reaves, Mark Reaves, Dabney Sanders, Walker Sanders, Judy Stalder, Virginia Spillman, Zach Strickland, Juhann Waller.*

Facilitator Teresa Lockamy opened the meeting with greetings for the attendees. She noted that a report from Deniece Conway of the Transportation Dept. was the 2nd item on the agenda, but that Ms. Conway had not yet entered the meeting, so that the meeting would begin with the third item, a review of ordinances of other cities regarding landscaping or tree conservation in downtowns and urban areas. Ms. Lockamy introduced Elizabeth Link to present the information.

Ms. Link presented a summary of her research into other cities' ordinances, which included a compilation of relevant ordinance requirements from Greenville, SC; Winston-Salem and Durham. Ms. Link covered the major elements of the ordinances, which had been sent out to the participants for review prior to the meeting, and concluded that the main elements common to all three cities were the planting of street trees along property frontages, some sort of screening for parking lots, landscape buffers on property edges adjacent to residential uses, and trees in parking lots.

During discussion that followed, Sarah Healy asked about the status of plans being developed by the City for downtown streetscape and whether there would be co-ordination between them and the ordinance. Deniece Conway from Transportation stated that the plans for streetscape on Greene St., Davie St., Bellmeade St. and Church St. were all in the final stages of plan development and some would be beginning construction later in 2021.

Ms. Link noted that the ordinance would only apply to new development, and not to any new development that took place in areas where the street trees had already been installed, and that in areas where there was a streetscape plan but construction had not started, we should consider requiring fee-in-lieu to pay for the construction by the City. Mark Reaves suggested looking at the streetscape master plans and incorporating their criteria for tree root zones and spacing into any ordinance that we develop.

Other items that were brought up in discussion were the possibility of requiring a permit for removal of existing trees in the CB district, even if not associated with construction, or requiring that trees be planted to replace trees taken out; and the potential problems with sidewalk width and accommodating trees in tree wells or curb bump-outs.

Ms. Link then presented the Urban Landscaping requirements of the City of Greensboro's website, which provide options for landscaping in tight urban areas, and suggested that these might provide a model for some of a new ordinance for CB.

In discussion that followed, Tim Knowles brought up the issue of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) and noted that some of the Urban Landscaping requirements didn't fit

well with CPTED. It was agreed that this should be a consideration in any height requirements or limitations that were developed for parking lot screening.

It was also agreed that Tree Preservation would be difficult and while incentives that encourage tree preservation should be offered, the focus should be on planting new trees with adequate soil volume to achieve a good size rather than saving existing ones,

Judson Clinton remarked again on the difficulty of getting people to save existing trees, and suggested that replacement trees be required. Anna Reaves noted that we should be careful about saving any old trees (noting existing Bradford pears as street trees) and that we should be concerned about whether we are restricting development with regulations. She also noted the problems with underground utilities when installing street trees, and reiterated that we should concentrate more on having good soil volumes for large street trees. During further discussion Mr. Clinton noted that there should be an element of education in the use of trees in drawing business and attracting customers.

Deniece Conway then spoke about the process that she is using to develop reduced parking ratios for the development ordinance, using a new Institute of Transportation Engineers parking manual and matching the parking ratios for uses given there to the uses in our current ordinance. Also in consideration are possible requirements for bicycle parking.

Mr. Knowles then stated that he had for years tried to convince property owners that trees are a desirable commodity, but that they are more concerned about the visibility of buildings, while tenants might prefer to have some trees. He thought that we should do a survey of downtown tenants as to what they are looking for and how they perceive the trees. Sarah Healy volunteered that if we came up with a survey she could send it to the Downtown Residents Association listserve, which includes both residents and business tenants in the downtown area. It was agreed that this was a step to be taken.

Ms. Link then asked for comments about how an ordinance could be worded for street trees requirement. Mr. Reaves suggested that the street frontage should be considered holistically with distance between trees and the soil volume required. Also that small parcels might be problematic if there was not enough room to provide the required street trees. Mr. Knowles noted that there could be road diets along some of the one way streets that would allow for street trees. Mr. Francies suggested that we take a look at the streetscape plans that are already being developed to gain ideas for tree placement and numbers. It was agreed that this should be done.

After further discussion it was agreed that Ms. Link would develop some basic ordinance wording for street trees and parking lot buffers before the next meeting. At that point the meeting was adjourned.