

**TOWN OF SULLIVAN'S ISLAND  
TREE COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

**April 28, 2025**

A regular meeting of the Town of Sullivan's Island Tree Commission was held at 4:00 p.m. at Town Hall. All requirements of the Freedom of Information Act have been satisfied. Present were Commission members Madeline McGee, Derek Wade, Mark Miller and Milton Langley.

Members of the public present:

Members of Council: No members of Council were present.

Staff members present: Charles Drayton, Director of Planning and Zoning, Christina Oxford, Permit and Planning Assistant, Pam Otto, and Rebecca Fanning, Director of Resilience & Natural Resource Management.

- I. **CALL TO ORDER:** Mr. Miller called the meeting to order and stated that the press and public were duly notified pursuant to State Law and a quorum of Commission Members was present. There were no known members of the media present.
- II. **APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FROM March 24, 2024:** Mr. Milton made a motion to grant approval of the March 24, 2024, Tree Commission Meeting Minutes. Mr. Glassburn seconded this motion. All were in favor. None opposed. Motion passed unanimously.

**III. TREE REMOVAL REQUESTS:**

**2857 JASPER BOULEVARD:** Cindy Cline, on behalf of the homeowners Stirling and Emily Morrison, requests to remove five (5) Category 1 trees: two (2) 19" holly trees, one (1) 19" laurel oak tree, and two (2) pine trees (16" DBH and 19" DBH). The request is being made in accordance with Zoning Ordinance, Section 21-162 B (Application for tree relocation, or removal and replacement). (PIN# 529-07-00-041)

Mr Drayton stated that this is a lot with considerable existing canopy cover; the level of tree removal will not reduce the canopy by a concerning amount, and the applicant intends to replant 2/3 of the DBH loss with all of the proposed removals. These removals will allow some of the live oak trees on-site to blow out into the areas where canopy would be removed, and the mitigation trees will further canopy coverage on this lot. Therefore, staff recommends approval of the tree removals with full mitigation as proposed by the applicant.

**No public comment was made.**

The Commission was in favor of the application as presented.

**Mr. Wade made a motion to grant approval for the application presented. Mr. Glassburn seconded this motion. All were in favor. None opposed. Motion passed.**

**2910 JASPER BOULEVARD:** Doyle Best, of Dillard Jones Builders on behalf of homeowner Lifestyle Development, LLC, requests to remove a Category 1, pecan tree (16.5/16/12" DBH). The request is being made in accordance with Zoning Ordinance, Section 21-162 B (Application for tree relocation, or removal and replacement). (PIN# 529-07-00-081) (Supporting Documents: 1, 2, 3)

Mr Drayton stated that the tree has codominant leaders, which refer to stems which arise from the same point on the trunk and are roughly equal to size. They may appear stable, but codominant limbs can create structural challenges, especially for Pecan trees, as they rely on strong central trunks for support. The union between the codominant limbs created a "V" shaped junction which has included bark and visible cracks. Mr Drayton continued that the bark has grown between the limbs and weakened their connection. As this tree continues to grow, limb size will increase and the stress can lead to spitting and breakage. There is a constant target, which will include construction activity. There was an attempt to compensate the central cavity with cement filling. This has caused further damage to the tree, and failure is imminent. Since there is no standard or reasonable arboriculture practice to correct the deficiencies of this tree, it is hazardous and should be removed.

Mr Drayton continued that the pecan tree is in decline, poses a potential risk, as per the arborist's report; it should be permitted for removals with no mitigation as a hazard tree.

Mr Doyle Best of Dillard Jones Builders presented his application to the Committee.

**No public comment was made.**

The Commission members were in favor of the application as presented.

**Mr. Glassburn made a motion to go along with the staff recommendation to remove the tree and grant approval for the removal of the tree with no mitigation fees. Ms. McGee seconded this motion. Three in favor. Mr Wade opposed. Motion passed.**

**2814 BROOKS STREET:** Luke Morrison, homeowner, requests to remove a Category 1, live oak tree (16"/19" DBH). The request is being made in accordance with Zoning Ordinance, Section 21-162 B (Application for tree relocation, or removal and replacement). (PIN# 529-07-00-046) (Supporting Documents: 1, 2)

Mr Drayton stated that this is a large lot with canopy covering nearly 60% of the property. The applicant is proposing to remove a live oak tree the Commission considered a year ago, but took the staff recommendation to retain, requesting that the applicant move the proposed garage location over to avoid the tree. As construction has progressed the foundation for the garage has been poured as originally proposed, and the tree is in the way of the garage. The tree exhibits some deficiencies but is a healthy specimen. The applicant claims to have exhausted possibilities for a different garage location and so staff recommends removal of the tree be allowed with full mitigation.

Mr Morrison presented his application to the Commission.

**No public comment was made.**

The Commission had concerns that the slab was poured and the applicant was hoping to get approval to remove the tree after the slab was poured. Mr Morrison stated that they explored other locations for the garage but that moving the garage would require mitigation of other, healthier trees. They were hoping they would be able to pour the garage and not disturb the tree but were unable to. He also quoted from a snippet from an arborist that the tree poses a risk of splitting and poses a risk to the neighbor's parking and garage. The Commission agreed that the driveway has to work and be comfortable getting into and out of the home. The Commission opined about the lack of beauty the subject tree exhibited and encouraged a natural layout of trees for mitigation so that are not too densely planted.

**Ms. McGee made a motion for approval. Mr Wade seconded the motion. All approved. None opposed. Motion passed.**

**3012 JASPER BOULEVARD:** Max Wurthmann, applicant on behalf of homeowner 3012 Jasper, LLC, requests to remove a Category 1, laurel oak tree (21" DBH). The request is being made in accordance with Zoning Ordinance, Section 21-162 B (Application for tree relocation, or removal and replacement). (PIN# 529-08-00-042)

Mr Drayton stated this is a fire damaged tree that is located near the footprint of the existing home and within the footprint of the proposed location for the new home rebuild. Prior to the fire, the tree exhibited several markers of decline and is now further damaged by the fire. Mr Drayton stated that staff recommends the tree be permitted for removal as a hazard tree with no requirements for mitigation.

**No public comment was made.**

The Board expressed concerns regarding the canopy coverage of the lot which would decrease from 31% to 22% after the tree removals. It was noted that all the trees that are marked for removal are fire damaged. The Commission encouraged the Applicant to meet 30% canopy coverage on the lot. The Board wished the Applicant good luck in putting the property back together.

**Ms. McGee made a motion for approval. Mr Glassburn seconded the motion. All approved. None opposed. Motion passed.**

#### **IV. UPDATES FROM TOWN STAFF:**

##### **1. FINAL APPROVAL OF THE TOWN TREE REPLACEMENT LIST**

Rebecca Fanning gave an update on the Town Tree Replacement List. Ms. Fanning stated that the Town's Tree Replacement List provides guidance for mitigating tree removals in accordance with §21-164 Tree replacement plan. Ms Fanning also stated that while the list offers many species suitable to a barrier island environment, some updates

need to be considered to address concerns involving invasive species, as well as vulnerability of a few of those trees to disease and pests. Additional information, such as salt tolerance and ecosystem services would be useful to include in this update, as well.

Ms Fanning stated that at the March 24<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Tree Commission, Staff was given approval to remove the non-native species from the Town Tree Replacement List, as well as certain vulnerable native species, and to hire a consultant to create an engaging design for the Replacement List update.

Ms. Fanning stated the following trees are not native to North America and are currently listed as approved species for replacement. While some of these trees may not be invasive in our region yet or ever, nevertheless they detract from the Island's biodiversity.

Deodar Cedar (*Cedrus deodar*) | Cryptomeria (*Cryptomeria japonica*) | Dawn Redwood (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*) | Ginko (*Ginko biloba*) | Katsura (*Cercidiphyllum japonicum*) | White Poplar (*Populus alba*) | Zelkova (*Zelkova serrata*) | Crape Myrtle (*Lagerstroemia indica*) | Crape Myrtle (*Lagerstroemia fauriei*) | Lacebark Elm (*Ulmus parvifolia*) | Golden Raintree (*Koelreuteria paniculata*) | European Hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*) | Black Pine (*Pinus thunbergi*) | Loquat (*Eriobotrya japonica*) | Hedge Maple (*Acer campestre*) | Plaintree Maple (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) | Trident Maple (*Acer buergerianum*) | Chinese Oak (*Wuercus myrsinifolia*) | Windmill Palm (*Trachycarpus fortunei*) | Persion Parrotia (*Parrotia persica*) | Japanese Snowbell (*Styrax japonicus*) | Tall Stewartia (*Stewartia monadelph*) Chastetree (*Vitex agnus-castus*) | Cutleaf Chastetree (*Vitex negundo*) | Japanese Dogwood (*Cornus officinalis*) | Chinese Fringetree (*Chionanthus retusus*) | Amur Maple (*Acer ginnala*) | Star Magnolia (*Magnolia stellata*) | Chinese Redbud (*Cercis chinensis*)

Ms. Fanning continued few of the trees on the Replacement List are under attack from the invasive Asian Longhorn Beetle, which is not on the Island yet. We should not increase the density of Maples (*Acer spp.*) on the Island at this time, affecting two of the trees on the replacement list. Similarly, Red Bay (*Persea borbonia*) is also suffering in our region from an invasive beetle, which carries the laurel wilt disease. Finally, Hackberry (*Celtis laevigata*) is facing a few threats from the invasive Woolly aphid to a yet unidentified disease and should not be planted as a replacement tree.

Ms. Fanning stated that even without the non-native species, the list contains some 50+ tree species. A few additional species have been included in the working update to the Replacement Tree List:

Devil's Walkingstick (*Aralia spinosa*) | Bull Pine (*Pinus elliotii*) | Carolina Willow (*Salix caroliniana*)

Devil's Walkingstick is currently listed in the Tree Replacement List by scientific mis-name of the Toothache Tree (*Zanthoxylum clava-hercules*) and so was given its own entry. In the case of the willow and pine, other species from those genus are included on the list (Loblolly and Longleaf Pine, Black Willow), but Bull Pine and Carolina Willow are the more native to Sullivan's species.



The Commission supported further reducing the tree replacement list to remove trees that do not exist on adjacent barrier islands and are not as likely to thrive on the island. The Commission asked Ms. Fanning to update the list as she sees fit. The Commission also recommended that having the list does not mean someone cannot plant a tree that is not on the list but that they would have to ask for permission.

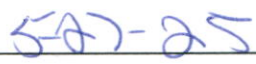
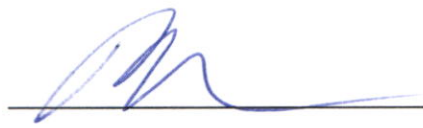
## **2. ARBOR DAY CELEBRATION 2025 RECAP:**

Mr. Drayton gave an update on the Arbor Day Celebration that was held on April 25, 2025 at Stith Park. The event included more than 90 tree and plant giveaways, poetry readings, cyanotype crafts, nature walks, arborist talks and live music. Fourth grade students from Sullivan's Island Elementary School attended the celebration. Mr. Drayton read a poem from one of the students. Mr. Drayton and Ms. Fanning planted a salt water tolerant demonstration garden at the old dump that was showcased throughout the day on the nature tours. The town canopy coverage map was presented. Mr. Drayton stated that adding 1% of canopy cover would involve planting 10,000 trees.

## **3. 1743 Atlantic Oak Tree Update**

Mr Drayton stated that Urban Forestry Works has been working to help the tree. They have been considering selective pruning to help guide the tree's growth and concentrate its efforts on recovery.

**V. ADJOURN: Mr. Wade made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 5:07 p.m. Mr. Glassburn seconded this motion. All were in favor. None opposed. Motion passed unanimously.**

  
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Mark Miller, Chairman                      Date