

**TOWN OF SULLIVAN'S ISLAND
TREE COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
June 23, 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 Donivan Glassburn, Derek Wade, Madeleine McGee and Milton Langley.

Members of the public present: Jose Biascoechea homeowner of 2830 and 2850 Jasper Blvd.

Members of Council: No members of Council were present.

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

CALL TO ORDER: Mr. Glassburn 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.

- I. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FROM , May 27, 2025: Mr. Wade made a motion to grant approval of the May 27, 2025, Tree Commission Meeting Minutes. Mr. Langley seconded this motion. All were in favor. None opposed. Motion passed unanimously.**

II. TREE REMOVAL REQUESTS:

1914 CENTRAL AVENUE : Gerald Benoit on behalf of homeowner John Hooff requests the removal of five (5) Category I trees, including three Laurel Oaks (20, 24, & 16" DBH), a River Birch (19" DBH), and a Pecan (18.5" DBH). The request is being made in accordance with Zoning Ordinance, Section 21-162 B (Application for tree relocation, or removal and replacement). (PIN# 529-05-00-059)

Ms. Fanning stated that the property has high canopy coverage at 88%. The proposed coverage would be 70%. Three of these trees are completely healthy and in good condition. The exceptions include the 19" River Birch which has died and the 24" Laurel Oak, which the arborist notes show signs of decline. All of these trees are located within the buildable area of this lot. Ms. Fanning stated the staff recommends full mitigation for the 20" Laurel Oak, 18.5" Pecan, and 16" Laurel Oak; no mitigation for the 19" River Birch; and consideration of partial mitigation for the 24" Laurel Oak.

No public comment was made.

Mr Benoit presented his application to the Commission.

The Commission members supported the application as presented.

Ms. McGee made a motion to support the Staff Recommendation. Mr. Wade seconded this motion. All were in favor. None opposed. Motion passed.

2618 MYRTLE AVENUE : Gerald Benoit on behalf of homeowners Barry and Kelly Luchtel requests the removal of one (1) Category I Pecan (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# 529-06-00-049)

Ms Fanning stated the canopy coverage on the lot is 50%. The proposed canopy coverage would be 40%. Ms Fanning continued this is a healthy pecan tree and poses no hazards or threats requiring its removal. The tree is, however, located within the buildable area alongside the house. The approved addition/renovation plans route the driveway along that side of the house where the tree is located, and involves the planting of magnolias and live oaks along the new drive. For these reasons staff recommends approval of the tree's removal with full fees and mitigation.

No public comment was made.

Arborist Gerald Benoit and Katie Duncan, landscape designer at Three Rivers Design LLC, presented the application to the Commission.

The Commission suggested planting another pecan tree to replace this tree but otherwise supported the application as presented.

Mr Wade made a motion to follow the staff recommendation to grant approval for removal. Ms. McGee seconded the motion. All were in favor. None opposed. Motion passed.

III. PUBLIC COMMENT:

Jose Biascoechea of 2830 and 2850 Jasper Blvd voiced his concern about the removal of trees that are set to be removed adjacent to his property for drainage. He would like to adjust the location of the drainage pipe in order to preserve the trees. This issue is a part of the storm water drainage infrastructure improvement plans that have been adopted by Town Council. The size of the Town easement limits the placement of the large pipe. Other alternatives were considered but were deemed infeasible. The Commissioners suggested that Mr. Biascoechea should speak to Town Council regarding the tree removals associated with the Town's stormwater improvements.

IV. DISCUSSION OF TOWN OF MOUNT PLEASANT TREE PRESERVATION ORDINANCE UPDATE:

Mount Pleasant has updated their tree ordinance. Some highlights of the changes are that they adjusted their Tree Protection Zones and are requiring fencing from a 6-inch radius per 1 inch DBH to 1 foot radius per 1 inch DBH which is consistent with TOSI guidelines. Also, if you clear a lot for new construction, you cannot pay a fee in lieu of replanting trees completely. Instead, Mount Pleasant requires at least one replacement tree of at least 2.5 inches DBH to be planted on site which is more restrictive than the Town of Sullivan's Island that requires replacement trees be 2 inches and allows full mitigation fees in lieu of planting. Also, trees greater than 16 inches DBH requested for removal require commission approval which is consistent with TOSI. Additionally, at least 160 inches per acre must be retained or planted when a large tract of land is cleared which is not applicable to TOSI.

The Commission discussed investigating the impact of adopting a similar requirement of replanting at least one tree on Sullivan's Island and how that would affect the canopy on Sullivan's Island.

Ms. McGee made a motion to ask staff to look into the ramifications of adjusting our policies to match the requirement of replacing at least one tree. Mr. Langley seconded the motion. All were in favor. None opposed. The motion passed.

Mount Pleasant is also requiring pine removals to have a permit which is consistent with the Town of Sullivan's Island. Additionally, there is a change to ANSI Standards so that now it is up to the arborist's discretion what percentage of a tree's canopy can be removed per season. Before the change, less than 25% of canopy pruning was advised. This affects the Town of Sullivan's Island.

V. UPDATE ON ARBOR DAY 2025 BUDGET

In 2025, the Arbor Day budget was exceeded by \$200.00. This year, more money was spent on plants with an entire demonstration garden planted and the trees that were given away to Arbor Day participants were larger and healthier. Also, T-shirts were given to a whole class from Sullivan's Island Elementary School in addition to volunteers.

Emergency Tree Funds were used to add edging to an ailing magnolia tree in Stith Park to keep the mowers from compacting the soil on the tree's shallow roots. This tree was donated by the Harrell Family in memory of an Islander who passed away some years ago.

VI. DISCUSSION OF NATIVE PLANT WEEK OCTOBER 2025

Native plant week is scheduled for the third week in October. This year, the Kiawah Conservancy will be hosting the main event, the Beneath the Oaks event on October 15th with New York landscape architect, Rebecca McMackin. Native plant week festivities will be hosted by the Audubon Society.

Ms. McGee made a motion to propose to Town Council that they use Tree Funds to sponsor this event and buy tickets for Staff, Council and Tree Commission members to attend. Mr. Wade seconded the motion. All were in favor. None opposed. The motion passed unanimously.

VII. TOWN TREE REPLACEMENT LIST

Ms. Fanning stated the Town of Sullivan's Island has a funding opportunity through the South Carolina Forestry Commission. They are offering technical support to help make the Town Tree Replacement List more attractive and user friendly. Design changes can also be made to help communicate information about co-benefits of tree planting like air pollution mitigation and habitat improvements as well as information about the Sullivan's Island ecosystem and the different zones of the Island and their habitat considerations. Finally, the funds could be used to help develop lists that are good native plant replacements for commonly used invasive species. This could be a value to many landscape architects who do a lot of design work on the Island. The information would be available online as well as available in print at Town Hall. Ms. Fanning suggested using tree funds to support a 20% match on the grant opportunity provided by the Forestry Commission.

Mr. Donivon made a motion to use Tree Funds to match the funds provided by the Forestry Commission for graphic design and printing of informational materials. Mr. Langley seconded the motion. All approved. None opposed. The motion passed.

VIII. ADJOURN: Ms. McGee made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 4:46 p.m. Mr. Wade seconded this motion. All were in favor. None opposed. Motion passed unanimously.



Mark Miller, Chairman



Date