

**TOWN OF SULLIVAN'S ISLAND
TREE COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
May 27, 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 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, 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. **Mr Drayton requested to defer agenda items E, F and G to the June meeting. All agreed.**
- III. **APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FROM , April 28, 2025:** Mr. Wade made a motion to grant approval of the April 28, 2025, Tree Commission Meeting Minutes. Mr. Langley seconded this motion. All were in favor. None opposed. Motion passed unanimously.

IV. TREE REMOVAL REQUESTS:

1018 OSCEOLA AVENUE: Carter Helms, applicant on behalf of the homeowner Robert Aebersold, requests to remove two (2) Category 1 Live Oak trees (20" DBH and 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# 523-06-00-002)

Mr Drayton stated that removing the trees would reduce the lot coverage from 18.7% to 12.7%. He stated this property is going before the Board of Zoning Appeals on June 12th with a request to raise the property grade by more than 12 inches. Mr Drayton stated staff recommends deferral of Tree Commission decision until BZA's decision is reached; if the fill dirt proposed to the BZA is not approved, then staff does not feel the trees should be removed, and if the fill in is approved, staff would ask the Tree Commission to explore all options for saving the trees before allowing their removal.

No public comment was made.

The Commission members had concerns about the treatments that had been given to the trees and the current condition of the trees. The Commission would like to see the trees continue to recover. The Commission members were in favor of deferring their decision until the BZA decision is made about the grading of the property.

Mr. Wade made a motion to defer a decision on the application until the BZA has made their decision about grading the property. Mr. Langley seconded this motion. All were in favor. None opposed. Motion passed.

1102 OSCEOLA AVENUE: Savatree, applicant on behalf of homeowners Jason & Kristen Thompkins, requests to remove a Category 1 Sugarberry Tree (25" DBH). The request is being made in accordance with Zoning Ordinance, Section 21-162 B (Application for tree relocation, or removal and replacement). (PIN# 523-07-00-070)

Mr Drayton stated the current lot coverage is 29.37% and would be reduced to 27.5% upon removal of the tree. Mr. Drayton stated that the majority of this 25" Sugarberry's canopy shades the neighboring lot, and the affected homeowner has submitted a letter of support for the tree's removal. Mr Drayton stated the arborist's assessment deems the tree to be in poor health, is an imminent hazard and should be removed as soon as possible to avoid risk of failure or spread of disease. Given the support of the neighboring property owner and the arborist's failing grade, Staff recommends approval of the request for removal as a hazard specimen with no mitigation required.

No public comment was made.

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

Mr. Wade made a motion to follow the staff recommendation for removal of the tree. Mr. Langley seconded this motion. All were in favor. None opposed. Motion passed.

2620 ATLANTIC AVENUE: Harbor Contracting, applicant on behalf of homeowner Christina Stuhr, requests to remove two (2) Category 1 trees: an Eastern Red Cedar (16" DBH) and Sugarberry (16" DBH). The request is being made in accordance with Zoning Ordinance, Section 21-162 B (Application for tree relocation, or removal and replacement). (PIN# 529-10-00-076)

Mr. Drayton stated there is damage to the trunk of the cedar and that it has been split and continues to grow. He stated that arborist Ary Fun found that the 16" Sugarberry has been heavily pruned by the power company so that one of the limbs is now hazardous and hangs over the road but it is showing signs of health. Additionally, the tree is growing in an area infested with invasive vines, which have covered and weighed down the canopy, hindering canopy growth and compromising the trunk's structure. Mr Fun found that the Eastern red cedar has significant damage on the west side of the trunk with a major leader having broken off, causing the tree to grow in a deformed manner. He added that the area is also covered in

invasive vines and shrubs that have encroached upon large sections of the tree, causing weight-related damage to limbs and the entire structure. Due to these factors, Mr Fun recommended both trees be removed. Mr Drayton stated that the central 18/18" Sugarberry is not included in the arborist's letter and appears in good condition, despite utility pruning. Mr Drayton stated the current lot coverage is 40% and would be reduced by 3 ½ % with the removal of these trees and another 5 ½ % with the removal of other staff level removals to 31 ½%. The homeowners are proposing the planting of 8 each 4" live oak trees as mitigation for the removal of the three trees. Staff recommends full mitigation for the 18/18" Sugarberry, no mitigation for the 16" Sugarberry, and partial mitigation for the 16" Cedar and feels that the applicant's mitigation plan would sufficiently mitigate for the proposed removals.

No public comment was made.

The Commission thought the 18" Hackberry is healthy and does not present a hazard and should not be taken down. The limbs of the tree drape over the road which adds to the streetscape of the neighborhood. The Commission agreed the 16" Hackberry tree is not in good shape and should be removed. The Cedar could use a good pruning but does not need to come down; however, the Commission was okay with its removal.

Mr. Wade made a motion to approve the removal of the of the 16" Hackberry tree and the Cedar with no mitigation for either tree but to hold onto the 18" Hackberry. Mr. Langley seconded the motion. All approved. None opposed. Motion passed.

V. ADJOURN: Mr. Miller made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 4:36 p.m. Mr. Langley seconded this motion. All were in favor. None opposed. Motion passed unanimously.


Milton Langley, Vice Chairman


Date