

**TOWN OF SULLIVAN'S ISLAND
TREE COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
October 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, Madelein McGee, 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, Building 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. **APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FROM September 22, 2025:** Mr. Langley made a motion to grant approval of the September 22, 2025, Tree Commission Meeting Minutes. Ms. McGee seconded this motion. All were in favor. None opposed. Motion passed unanimously.
- III. **COMMISSION DISCUSSION AND APPROVAL OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR:**
Ms. McGee made a motion to continue with Mark Miller as Chair and Milton Langley continue as Vice Chair. Mr. Wade seconded the motion. All were in favor. None opposed. Motion passed unanimously.
- IV. **APPROVAL OF MEETING CALENDAR FOR 2026:**
Ms. McGee suggested changing the date of the December meeting from December 21st to December 14th. Mr. Wade made a motion to approve the calendar as amended. Mr. Miller seconded the motion. All were in favor. None opposed. Motion passed unanimously.
- V. **TREE REMOVAL REQUESTS:**

~~REMOVED AT APPLICANT'S REQUEST- 3109 I'ON AVENUE- Gerald J. Benoit, on behalf of Dan Messina, property owner, requests the removal of two Category I trees, a 19" DBH pecan tree and a 16" DBH slash pine tree. The request is being made in accordance with Zoning Ordinance, Section 21-162 B (Application for tree relocation, or removal and replacement). (PIN# 529-12-00-094)~~

2314 MYRTLE AVENUE (APPLICATION): Arnett Custom Homes, on behalf of Michael and Jessica Beckerman, property owners, requests the removal of a Category I laurel oak tree (33" DBH). The request is being made in accordance with Zoning Ordinance, Section 21-162 B (Application for tree relocation, or removal and replacement). (PIN# 529-06-00-066)

Mr. Drayton stated the canopy coverage on the lot is currently at 60% with this tree representing 8% bringing the proposed canopy coverage down to 52%. The neighbor liked the screening brought by the tree. The homeowner is planning on replacing the screening with mitigation.

Mr. Drayton stated that this laurel oak is in decline, whether due to construction or natural causes. The applicant has proposed to mitigate with three (3) live oaks, and staff concurs with this partial mitigation, recommending limiting the minimum size of the replacement oaks to five (5) inches DBH and requesting that 15 inches worth of mitigation funds be held in the Tree Fund until the project reaches final inspections.

No public comment was made.

The Commission questioned the age of the tree. The Commission members agreed on the condition of the tree and were in favor of the application presented.

Mr. Wade made a motion to adopt the staff recommendation and approve the tree to be removed with the staff-recommended mitigation. Ms. McGee seconded this motion. All were in favor. None opposed. Motion passed unanimously.

VI. CONSIDERATION FOR STAFFING CHANGES TO THE TREE COMMISSION: Mr. Drayton stated that he would be stepping back from being the main point of contact for the Tree Commission. Mr. Drayton would still attend the meetings and be present to oversee and answer questions about the Town ordinance. Town Naturalist, Rebecca Fanning, would be leading the meetings and be the primary point of contact for the Tree Commission beginning in 2026. The Commission thanked Mr. Drayton for his help with the Tree Commission and welcomed Ms. Fanning to the new position.

VII. UPDATES FROM TOWN STAFF:

1. NATIVE PLANT WEEK AND BENEATH THE OAKS SYMPOSIUM RECAP

Ms. Fanning stated the Sullivan's Island Town Council was a sponsor of the Beneath the Oaks Symposium. The keynote speaker, Rebecca McMackin's, presentation is available [online](#). The week was filled with presentations and nature walks including a butterfly walk on Sullivan's Island led by Friends of the Fort and Sullivan's Island Town

Naturalist, Rebecca Fanning. Next year's keynote speaker, Preston Montague, will be installing a native plant installation at Magnolia Plantation and Gardens. Next Year's event is scheduled for Thursday, October 15th, 2026. Ms. McGee recommended that Sullivan's Island be a sponsor of the event next year and that members of the Tree Commission attend.

2. ASIAN LONG-HORNED BEETLE

Ms. Fanning stated that Asian Long-Horned Beetles were first spotted in South Carolina in Ravenel several years ago and have now been found in Mount Pleasant. Clemson University and the Department of Agriculture have built a lab in Ravenel and are working on research and establishing a quarantine zone to stop the spread of the beetle. South Carolina is the southernmost area where the beetle has been found. They can be transported through the sale of firewood which gives them an opportunity to travel over to Sullivan's Island. Maple is a favorite food of beetles which can be found in mixed hardwood bags of firewood. Ms. Fanning is going to monitor the maritime forest where it would be likely to appear rather than on the trees on the streets. Ms. Fanning recommended only using oak firewood.

3. EMERGENCY TREE REMOVALS- STITH PARK

Ms. Fanning stated that two willow oaks in Stith Park were found to be in decline. The trees were close to the Tot Lot which would have been in the fall zone had any of the limbs dropped. Because of this hazard, the willows were removed during tree work that was taking place in the park. It was unclear what caused the decline. There are plans to replace the trees when the Stith Park improvements move forward. Specific trees and locations have not yet been decided on.

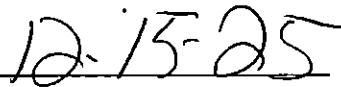
Ms. McGee inquired about planting additional palmetto trees at Battery Thompson. Ms. Fanning stated that in 2026 there will be a palmetto planting project and that this location could be considered. Ms. McGee also asked if the Tree Commission could ask Town Council to consider adding the removal of invasive plants on beach paths and Town property as a part of routine maintenance. Ms. Fanning suggested we could study the invasive species and could prioritize removal based on the time of the year. Mr. Wade suggested that there are residents who could help with the removal. Mr. Miller suggested making the topic an agenda item at a future meeting. Mr. Miller asked Staff to draft a memo to present at the next Tree Commission meeting for possibly sending to Town Council to consider.

Ms. McGee stated that Monarch butterflies are a charismatic pollinator that help people understand the importance of nature. She suggested having the Town pursue becoming a Monarch City to help the Monarch recover. Ms. McGee asked Staff to look into the requirements for Sullivan's Island to become a Monarch City.

VIII. ADJOURN: Ms. McGee made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 4:53 p.m. Mr. Langley seconded this motion. All were in favor. None opposed. Motion passed unanimously.



Mark Miller, Chairman



Date