

**TOWN OF SULLIVAN’S ISLAND
TREE COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
December 18, 2023**

A regular meeting of the Town of Sullivan’s Island Tree Commission was held at 5:00 p.m. at Town Hall. All requirements of the Freedom of Information Act have been satisfied. Present were Commission members Mark Miller, Madeleine McGee, Milton Langley and Derek Wade.

Members of the public present: Ms. Kate Campbell, Architect representing 1755 Atlantic Avenue.

Staff members present: Charles Drayton, Director of Planning and Zoning, and Jessi Gress, Licensing and Permit Technician.

- I. **CALL TO ORDER:** Mr. Langley 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 were present. There were no known members of media present.
- II. **APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FROM SEPTEMBER 25,2023:** Mr. Wade made a motion to grant approval of the September 25, 2023 Tree Commission Meeting Minutes. Mr. Miller seconded this motion. All were in favor. None opposed. Motion passed unanimously.
- III. **BOARD DISCUSSION AND APPROVAL OF CHAIR AND VICECHAIR:** Mr. Wade made a motion to grant Mr. Miller as Chair. Mr. Langley seconded this motion. All were in favor. None opposed. Motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Wade made a motion to grant Mr. Langley as vice-chair. Mr. Miller seconded this motion. All were in favor. None opposed. Motion passed unanimously.

IV. COMMISSIONERS INPUT AND COMMENTS:

V. TREE REMOVAL REQUESTS:

2850 Marshall Boulevard: Yardworks requested removal of a healthy, Category 1 water oak tree of 17” in diameter at breast height (DBH). This request is being made in accordance with Zoning Ordinance, Section 21-162 B (Application for tree relocation, or removal and replacement) (PIN #529-11-00-089).

The application regarding 2850 Marshall Boulevard was deferred from the agenda due to lack of applicant.

1655 Atlantic Avenue: Taylor Fehmel, of Remark Landscape Architecture, requests removal of two healthy live oak trees, one category 1, 23-inch DBH, double-stemmed tree, and one Category 2, 11-inch DBH tree. This request is being made in accordance with Zoning Ordinance Section 21-162 B (Application for tree relocation, or removal and replacement) (PIN# 523-12-00-007).

Mr. Drayton stated that the canopy of the live oak trees total 1938 square feet. The oaks represent 22.4% of the total canopy on the lot and removal will leave 29.3% canopy coverage. This is a healthy live oak tree, and it poses no substantial hazards. The applicant is expressing the desire to remove the tree to adjust the driveway location for better circulation on the lot. Staff recommends granting approval for the removal of this tree with full mitigation.

Town staff received a letter from the public regarding this application (Exhibit 1).

Ms. Fehmel presented his application to the Board. Ms. Fehmel stated that they are requesting to mitigate with two 16-inch caliber trees in lieu of the removal.

Ms. Kate Campbell, Architect for this project, stated that they went before the Design Review Board and if they do not remove these trees, the boulders on the lot have been approved to be moved but if they remove the trees, the boulders will stay. Ms. Campbell also stated that an arborist has reported that the trees are in the buildable area of the driveway which could cause the trees to decline if not removed. Ms. Campbell stated that the neighbors most effected by this plan, is in favor of the tree removal and driveway relocation.

The Board was in favor of the application present.

Mr. Wade made a motion to approve the application presented provided that the applicant mitigates accordingly. Ms. McGee seconded this motion. All were in favor. None opposed. Motion passed unanimously.

VI. SULLIVAN'S ISLAND TREE FUND:

2024 Town of Sullivan's Island Arbor Day Celebration – National Arbor Day is on April 26, 2024; the Town has traditionally gathered for a small celebration. Staff requests review and approval for the planned Arbor Day celebration on Friday, April 26, 2024, from 1:00pm – 4:00pm; the event is scheduled to be held in Stith Park (an alternative location may be implemented if Stith Park renovations are underway).

Mr. Drayton stated that the Arbor Day Celebration of 2024 will be on April 26, 2024 from 1pm to 4:30pm. Mr. Drayton reviewed the plan outline with the commission. The outline is as follows:

1. Scavenger hunt for t-shirts:

Mr Drayton explained that last year he played a trivia game that wasn't such a great idea. This year he would like to do a scavenger hunt where a sheet of paper is given listing types of leaves or plants are located and they would have to go find the item to receive the t-shirt.

2. Tree giveaway: Native species to South Carolina/Charleston:

Mr. wade asked how big plants would be used at the tree giveaway. Mr. Drayton responded by stating cheap and small. Ms. McGee asked if the town could go to Dominion Energy to get the trees. Ms. McGee stated that they give them to other communities. Mr. Drayton stated that he would ask if that is a possibility. Mr. Wade asked how many trees would be purchased. Mr. Drayton stated 50-100 and about 75 were given away. Mr. Drayton stated that red oaks and a

spruce were given last year. Mr. Wade suggested getting fewer but bigger trees so they can grow and thrive better over time such as live oaks or eastern red cedars. Mr. Drayton stated he would like to get eastern red cedars. Mr. Wade suggested reaching out to a local nursery that would be willing to donate or finding a local sponsor. Mr. Miller stated that asking Dominion Energy to donate is a great idea.

3. Plant Nat's tree at the parade grounds:

Mr. Drayton stated that he has spoken with Chief Stith about locations to plan Mr. Robbs tree and lay his dedication placard. Mr. Drayton stated that they would like to plant it in the park, but he believes the park renovation plan will begin around this time, so he suggested possibly planting it down at Station 17 where the historic mark was just placed. Over time the tree would grow out providing shade for those to come and view the historical marker. Mr. Drayton stated that the tree would need to be placed somewhere where there would be easy access to irrigation for the tree to be maintained. Mr. Miller thought this location was a great idea. Ms. McGee asked if there were any other locations. Mr. Drayton stated this is the only location he is presenting at this time. Mr. Langley suggested planting it across the street by the tennis courts. Mr. Drayton was unsure if there were water lines in that area to allow for irrigation. Mr. Langley asked what kind of tree would be planted. Mr. Drayton stated it would be a little gem magnolia.

4. 1st Annual "Arborist Talks" session:

Ms. McGee asked if all these items will be conducted in the proposed time frame. Mr. Drayton confirmed. Mr. Drayton stated that he would ask Mr. Marshall Badeaux to discuss what an arborist does and possibly provide a demonstration on how to properly trim a tree for about 30-40 minutes. Mr. Wade felt that 30-40 minutes maybe too long to do this talk. Mr. Drayton stated that the conversation would be more so for adults and limit it to roughly 15 people and have them sign up ahead of time. Mr. Wade asked where this conversation would take place. Mr. Drayton responded by staying in Stith Park. Mr. Wade asked if there would be any audio or visual presentation. Mr. Drayton stated not there would not. Mr. Wade stated that the Arborist could cut a shrub of some sort as part of their demonstration. Mr. Drayton stated that he probably would not be able to make an actual cut of sorts because it is a safety and liability issue within the town. Mr. McGee stated that Earth Day is also that week and suggested that all the educational talks should be conducted during the April Tree Commission meeting. Ms. McGee felt having the event be apart of the actual meeting could allow for different public outreach in comparison to doing it in Stith Park. Mr. Wade highly suggested having the arborist arrange the cutting of a tree or shrub to accurately show the proper way to do the trimming. Mr. Langley asked if there was a tree or plant in the park that the arborist could cut. Mr. Drayton suggested that maybe a property owner would suggest using their property to allow for the trimming demonstration to be conducted on their property. Mr. Langley suggested keeping it on public property, which is why he suggested cutting a tree in the park to keep here at Town hall. Ms. McGee felt that there is a need on this island to inform residents of how to maintain and keep up with their properties in general. Ms. McGee believes that the Tree Commission fits within a broader scope of work with resilient landscapes and environments that contribute, and she does not feel that this message has not been related to the neighbors and property owners of this island. Mr. Miller stated that he feels that is a day or two of the

events and felt that they could investigate that later. Mr. Wade feels that the arborist talk would be beneficial and talking with neighbors about their properties planting, ecosystems, trimming and any other sort of discussion should be investigated and should be part of an educational component to the Tree Commission. Mr. Drayton suggested that the April 2024 Tree Commission Meeting be a kickoff for some sort of educational series to talk and inform the residents about the resilient landscape, ecosystem and any other sort of educational aspects the Commission wants to include. Ms. McGee asked when the town was going to be filling the Naturalist position. Mr. Drayton stated that he knows the town has received applications but doesn't believe anyone has qualified and is unsure as to when the position will be filled. Mr. Wade asked how Mr. Drayton feels doing an educational series might work. Mr. Drayton responded by stating that they could bring in someone like Ms. Fehmel who presented earlier during the meeting, to meet with property owners to talk about how they can make their property more resilient and what could benefit their landscape plans. Mr. Wade stated that it sounds like an idea worth exploring. Mr. Drayton stated that this is just some ideas, but the Commission could investigate the idea more in depth to determine speakers, times, places, etc.

5. Jeff Jackson nature walk in maritime forest:

Mr. McGee felt that April might be a little warm to do a nature walk. Mr. Drayton stated that the walk was conducted last year with no issue. Mr. Wade asked where they would start. Mr. Drayton stated probably around station 18.5. Mr. Drayton stated that this is contingent on Mr. Jackson wanting to do the walk for us, if not we can ask someone else to do so. Mr. Miller was in favor.

6. Band on the bandstand:

Mr. Drayton stated that he spoke with a local musician who would be willing to play a set during the event. Mr. Drayton stated that Stateless Actor is the name of Peter Coish's band. Ms. McGee stated that maybe they should bring in the Island Club to see if they have any suggestions. Mr. Drayton stated that they could inform them of the events to get them to help with getting the word out. Ms. McGee stated that they could ask the land trust or even Fort Moultrie if they would be able to assist. Ms. McGee asked if Mr. Drayton was asking the Commission members to grant a certain amount of money from the tree fund to give to the Arbor Day event. Mr. Drayton confirmed. Ms. McGee asked how much he spent last year. Mr. Drayton responded by stating roughly \$2,000.00. Ms. McGee suggested granting around \$5,000.00 for the event since Mr. Drayton intends to make this bigger than last year to allow him more room to provide more activities, larger plants, etc. Ms. McGee asked how much money was in the tree fund. Mr. Drayton stated that there is roughly \$240,000. Ms. McGee stated that since there is so much money in the fund, we should allow \$5,000.00 to contribute to educational events and trees and activities for Arbor Day.

Ms. McGee also suggested that the Commission grants approval to donate another \$5,000.00 to allow for the plants Mr. Wade has mentioned. Mr. Wade suggested that the town allow for plantings potentially around the lift stations. Mr. Wade asked whose blessing they would need to get to plant around the lift stations. Mr. Wade stated that they would need to get Greg Gress, Water and Sewer Department Head, and Town Council for approval. Ms. McGee stated

that they would need to go to Council first to get approval for the funds then decide the locations. Mr. Wade stated that there aren't many public spaces on the Island that don't involve the DOT and getting an encroachment permit. Mr. Drayton stated that is correct, so they are pretty much looking at Town properties for planting. Mr. Wade said so if they were looking to plant a row of oaks along Jasper Blvd, there would have to be some hoops needed to jump through to make that happen. Mr. Drayton confirmed. Mr. Wade stated that it may be easier to get Mr. Gress' approval to plant some trees around the lift stations. Mr. Langley stated that he knows some of the residents around the lift stations who would love to have trees around them. Mr. Miller asked the Members to put that in the form of a motion as a recommendation by the Tree Commission. Ms. McGee stated in terms of other places there is the library, the pump station, the brick buildings that just went through renovations, Stith Park, and the African American Cemetery. Mr. Drayton stated that the pump stations are in the DOT right-of-way. Mr. Wade stated that he gets Ms. McGees' point regarding the other locations but would suggest that Mr. Langley and himself meet with Greg Gress to see the likelihood of getting some trees around the lift stations. Mr. Langley suggested asking Ms. Gress, who is currently present. Mr. Wade asked for a comment. Ms. Gress made no comment.

Ms. McGee made a motion to grant the approval of using a total of \$10,000.00 from the tree fund to allow \$5,000.00 to be used for all educational purposes related to Arbor Day and any other event needed and \$5,000.00 towards planting native trees on town property. Mr. Wade seconded this motion. All were in favor. None opposed. Motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Wade asked Mr. Drayton if he had any records around those lift stations that show the town property, DOT rights-of-way, and residential properties. Mr. Drayton pulled up the GIS map of the pump station on Back Street and showed the property lines around the lift station. Mr. Wade stated that he has spoken to the property owner at 1802 Back Street and states when he looks out his window all he sees is the lift station and would suggest that the Commission really investigate planting trees to help with the eyesores. Mr. Wade understands that the water department needs access to the lift stations, but it would be nice to possibly plant a cedar tree to help soften the view. Mr. Drayton stated that they would need to get Greg involved to see if this was a possibility and to come out and mark the water lines to make sure that no infrastructure is damaged or blocked. Ms. McGee stated that it looks like there wouldn't be irrigation installed here so the town would have to pay to maintain these trees.

Ms. McGee informed Charles that she sent over her point of contact with Dominion and felt talking with them at the Council meeting on 12/19/2023 would be beneficial. If Dominion Energy needs to trim trees on Sullivan's Island to help with the impediment of the power lines, they should help donate some trees.

Ms. McGee asked if there was a role the Tree Commission should be playing in the renovation project with Stith Park. Mr. Drayton stated that ultimately yes. Right now, they are currently working on the actual plan and after they will be working on the landscapes and beautification of the park. When this step comes, he doesn't see why the Tree Commission couldn't play a role in the design elements. Mr. Wade asked who the landscape designer was. Mr. Drayton

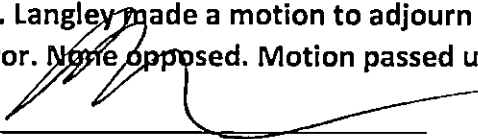
stated that he doesn't believe they are in that state yet, but Thomas and Hutton are doing the site plane design. Ms. McGee asked if it would be effective for the Commission to come to one of their meetings to discuss the park or should they come to one of our meetings. Mr. Drayton stated that they could get Thomas and Hutton to come to one of their meetings to discuss the proposed plans. Mr. Wade stated that the Commission can broaden their mission into really anything they want to get into that has to do with the horticulture on this island and they have the right to do so. Ms. McGee asked Mr. Miller how he felt about putting the Commissions overall objectives and purpose on the next meeting agenda. Mr. Miller and Mr. Drayton confirmed. Ms. McGee asked when the next meeting would be regarding the park. Mr. Drayton stated that all of the public surets have been completed so the next opportunity would be to get Thomas and Hutton to come to a Tree Commission meeting. Mr. Drayton stated that it may not be an appropriate time to meet with them yet, but he would get all the details and let the Commission know on the next steps.

7. "vendor" tables

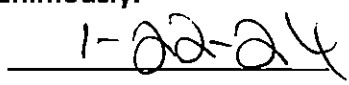
- a. Town with literature and refreshments (t-shirt scavenger hunt)
- b. South Carolina Forestry Commission
- c. Living Shorelines info table hosted by Charleston Waterkeeper and Surculus

Mr. Drayton stated that he would like to have a table and a vendor come and discuss living shorelines such as Surclus or Charleston Waterkeeper. Ms. McGee asked if they were for profit. Ms. McGee suggested using a nonprofit organization.

VII. ADJOURN: Mr. Langley made a motion to adjourn at 6:07 pm. Mr. Miller seconded this motion. All were in favor. None opposed. Motion passed unanimously.



Mark Miller, Chairman



Date

Exhibit 1

Dear Charles,

We are writing today to voice our support for our next door neighbors at 1655 Atlantic Avenue, the Grahams, in their efforts to remove a struggling tree at the front of their property.

We believe that removing that tree and subsequently replacing it with a much more robust, healthier tree, further away from the current location, will create a more hospitable environment for the existing healthy live oak to flourish.

Additionally, this change will provide both neighbors with greater privacy, enhance the public right of way, and aesthetically benefit the entire street.

Please consider this note as a strong sign of support for the Graham's application, from the most affected neighbors and property.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Sarah & Jason Aryeh

jalaaequities@gmail.com



Town of Sullivan's Island
Tree Commission
Sign in Sheet
December 18, 2023

Print Name

Address

Email

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