

**TOWN OF SULLIVAN'S ISLAND
TREE COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
June 22, 2026**

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 Mark Miller, Milton Langley, Madeleine McGee and Derek Wade.

Members of the public present: Christine Lloyd of 2907 I'On Avenue, Patrick Marr of 3010 Marshall Blvd, Gerald Benoit

Members of Council:

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

A. 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.

B. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FROM May 26, 2025: Mr. Langley made a motion to grant approval of the May 26, 2025, Tree Commission Meeting Minutes. Mr. Wade seconded this motion. All were in favor. None opposed. Motion passed unanimously.

C. PUBLIC COMMENT AND CORRESPONDENCE

D. TREE REMOVAL REQUESTS:

1. 2907 I'on Avenue: Shanna Harris, on behalf of Christine Lloyd, property owner, requests the removal of a Category I tree, a 22.5" Loblolly Pine (*Pinus taeda*). The request is being made in accordance with Zoning Ordinance, Section 21-162 B (Application for tree relocation, or removal and replacement). (PIN# 529-12-00-047) (Supporting Documentation: 1)

Ms. Fanning stated this 22.5" Loblolly Pine is located within the side setback with landscape edging running along both sides within a few feet of its trunk. The arborist's letter notes the indications of decline, including its thinning canopy and dead limbs. The letter also notes the close proximity of the tree to the two homes on either side and describes the tree as high risk. This lot has higher than average canopy coverage close to 40% and will continue to enjoy above average canopy coverage at 39% if the pine is approved for removal. Staff recommends allowing this tree removal request with the full mitigation rate assessed for pine trees.

The homeowner, Christine Lloyd stated she would like the tree removed before hurricane season begins.

Mr. Wade made a motion to accept Staff's recommendation and allow removal of the tree. Mr. Langley seconded the motion. All were in favor. None opposed. Motion passed.

2. 1702 I'on Avenue: Gerald J. Benoit, on behalf of Inne and Mark Moore, property owners, requests the removal of a Category I tree, a 23.5" Laurel Oak (*Quercus laurifolia*). The request is being made in accordance with Zoning Ordinance, Section 21-162 B (Application for tree relocation, or removal and replacement). (PIN# 523-12-00-065) (Supporting Documentation: 1, 2)

Ms. Fanning stated this 23.5" Laurel Oak is situated close to the property line in the side yard next to a pool house and pool that were permitted in 2017. Some of the lower limbs have been removed on the side of the trunk facing the pool. High in the tree, some tip dieback is evident on the codominant leaders leaning away from the property. The arborist's letter notes that the risk of this tree's failure is "possible" with a "medium" chance of occurring, which would result in "significant" damage. The principal building is outside of the fall zone. Staff recommends allowing the removal of this oak tree with consideration for partial mitigation.

Mr. Benoit presented the application to the Commission.

There was no public comment.

The Commission questioned whether the construction of the pool house could have contributed to the stress of the tree. There was also a question of what trees would be planted for mitigation of the tree. Mr. Benoit stated the homeowner plans on planting one Live Oak at 6" DBH, two Southern Magnolias at 6" DBH each, and two 12' tall fringe trees.

Ms. McGee made a motion to support the staff's recommendation. Mr. Langley seconded the motion. All were in favor. None opposed. Motion passed.

3. 3016, 3020 and 3024 Brownell

Correspondence:

1. Babak Bryan, Town Resident, requests applications be denied or deny removal for largest trees and require replacement plantings for any trees approved for removal.
2. David Smoley, Town Resident, opposed to tree removals.
3. Jennifer and Eddie Lehner, Town Residents, opposed to tree removals
4. Julie and Coenraad van der Poel, Town Residents, expressed concern over tree removals.
5. Kathy Craig Heller, Town Resident, opposed to tree removals.
6. Kathy Smoley, Town Resident, opposed to tree removals.

7. Kelly Murphy, Town Resident, opposed to tree removals.
8. Linda Perkis, Town Resident, opposed to tree removals.
9. Stacy Bryan, Town Resident, opposed to tree removals.

Ms. Fanning requested that the following three applications be treated as one item. The Commission questioned whether the application should be considered, as the proposed development is still under the review of the Design Review Board and Board of Zoning Appeals. The Commission agreed to hear the application early in the board and commission review process.

3016 Brownell Avenue: Gerald J. Benoit, on behalf of David Curd, trustee, requests the removal of five Category I trees, which includes three Bull Pines (*Pinus elliottii*) at 17", 19", and 28" DBH, as well as two Oaks, a 36" Live Oak (*Quercus virginiana*) and a 20" Laurel Oak (*Quercus laurifolia*). The request is being made in accordance with Zoning Ordinance, Section 21-162 B (Application for tree relocation, or removal and replacement). (PIN# 529-12-00-091) (Supporting Documentation: 1)

3020 Brownell Avenue: Gerald J. Benoit, on behalf of David Curd, trustee, requests the removal of three Category I trees, which includes a 17" Bull Pine (*Pinus elliottii*) and two Live Oaks (*Quercus virginiana*) measuring 22" and 53" DBH. The request is being made in accordance with Zoning Ordinance, Section 21-162 B (Application for tree relocation, or removal and replacement). (PIN# 529-12-00-118) (Supporting Documentation: 1)

3024 Brownell Avenue: Gerald J. Benoit, on behalf of David Curd, trustee, requests the removal of one Category I tree, an 18" Live Oak (*Quercus virginiana*). The request is being made in accordance with Zoning Ordinance, Section 21-162 B (Application for tree relocation, or removal and replacement). (PIN# 529-12-00-119) (Supporting Documentation: 1)

Ms. Fanning stated the trees on these three lots have a relatively open understory of deep shade and an attractively rounded outer canopy layer indicative of a fully developed forest community. Three of the nine trees are over 25" DBH with higher protection value per the Tree Commission bylaws. The survey that was submitted had several inaccuracies that were corrected for the Tree Commission review. The current canopy coverage on 3016 Brownell Ave is 73% but would be reduced to 34% with the proposed removals. The canopy coverage on the 3020 Brownell Ave lot is currently at 52% and will be reduced to 32% after the proposed removals. The canopy coverage on the 3024 Brownell lot is currently at 51% and would be reduced to 24% with the proposed removals. Combined, the total existing canopy coverage is 59% of the area and the proposed coverage would be reduced to 30%. Staff recommends deferment of any determination on the trees until such a time as the Design Review Board has given preliminary approval to a site plan for the development of these lots. Ms. Fanning continued, the Tree Commission by-laws give higher protection value to trees

25" DBH and greater and also whether or not a tree is in the buildable area of the lot which has not yet been determined with this site.

Patrick Marr, contract purchaser of the lots, presented the application to the Commission.

Public Comment:

Babak Bryan of 3013 Brownell Avenue read the from the Town Ordinance §21-163A.(3) which says "An application for removal and/or relocation of Category I or II Trees or Sabal Palmettos will not be accepted without a Building Permit application on file with the Building Official." He would like to see the permit application to understand what is being done. The proposed variances have not been approved by the BZA and the DRB has not approved plans. He considers it premature to ask for trees to be removed until it is determined what will be done on the lots.

Karen Byko of 2862 Middle Street agreed that it is too soon to approve tree removals until we know what the site plan will be and whether the tree removals will be necessary.

The Commission stated the Tree Commission is here to protect trees on the Island and there is no reason to remove trees right now. They also questioned the determination by the arborist that the trees are in fair condition. The trees have been observed and are in fine, healthy condition. The Commission encouraged the architects to work to design a structure that works around the Live Oak trees. The Commission asked Staff to look at the possibility of having Conceptual Approval as a step for properties with tree canopy coverage above 50%. There was concern for what would happen at the back of the lot and what trees would possibly be removed and how that would impact the lot coverage.

Susan Heller of 2913 Brownell Avenue asked who actually owns the property and who is requesting the trees be removed.

Mr. Wade made a motion to defer this until some later date. Mr. Langley amended the motion to clarify the application will be deferred until they get a tentative approval of the site plan from the DRB. Mr. Langley seconded the motion. All were in favor. None opposed. The application is deferred.

Mr. Miller recused himself from the discussion of 2804 Marshall Boulevard.

4. 2804 Marshall Boulevard: Mark Miller, trustee on behalf of the Blaine C. & Geraldine B. Miller Living Trust, requests the removal of one Category I tree, a 23.5" Easter Red Cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*). The request is being made in accordance with Zoning Ordinance, Section 21-162 B (Application for tree relocation, or removal and replacement). (PIN# 529-11-00-058) (Supporting Documentation: 1)

Ms. Fanning stated this tree may or may not come in the way of relocating a cottage that has important sentimental value to the Miller family. Some pruning may make it possible for the

tree to remain in place, and that is the applicant's preference. Staff recommends approving this removal request with the condition that the approval for tree removal does not transfer to the new owner if the cottage relocation is successful without necessitating the juniper removal.

Mr. Miller presented the application to the Commission.

Public Comment:

Karen Byko of 2862 Middle St asked if it would be possible to move the "Shack Toe" when the new owners remove the current house.

The Commission is sympathetic to Mr. Miller wanting to take the shack with him. They expressed that the cedar should be able to be removed in order to remove the shack with replanting another cedar or paying into the Tree Fund

Ms. McGee made a motion to approve. Mr. Langley seconded the motion. All were in favor. None opposed. The motion passed.

E. Approval for memos to Council to remove hazardous trees from the right of way.

Ms. Fanning stated trees have died that are in the DOT right of way. A tree located adjacent to 1112 Middle St in the right of way has died and has a limb that hangs over Middle St. There is also a Cherry Laurel tree located adjacent to 1914 Middle St in the DOT right of way that has died and also has a limb that leans over the street. Ms. Fanning has asked if it is acceptable to draft a memo to Town Council for them to look at in July to use Tree Funds for the removals if they approve the trees for removal. The Commission asked if more trees could be planted in their place. Ms. Fanning stated trees are not planted in the right of way due to the location of utilities. The Commission asked if the Town has other money that could be used to remove the trees since the Tree Commission has plans to remove invasive trees in the Maritime Forest which will use a lot of the Tree Fund money. The Commission asked how other trees on the Island have been removed. Ms. Fanning stated Tree Funds were used to remove the Willow Trees in Stith Park that were a hazard. The Commission was in favor but said this should not set precedent and there should be more thoughtful planning about how tree removals are handled in the future, both the process and the funding.

Mr. Langley made a motion to look at options before the spending is approved at this time. If the Town deems it is a hazard then they should take it down. Ms. Fanning stated she will see what opportunities there are to remove the trees within the existing operating budget and so no motion is needed.

F. STAFF UPDATES

1. ASLA Award for Sullivan's Island Native Tree Guide

The Town's consultant, Surculus, LLC, received an award for the design of the Sullivan's Island Native Tree Guide by the American Society of Landscape Architects.

2. Invasive Species Removal Program

Ms. Fanning stated there was a preservation program capital request from a year ago that's coming to an end and so there was an opportunity to remove invasive species at Battery Gadsden. Chinese Privet, Mulberries, Bradford Pears, Crape Myrtles, China Berries will be removed with the remainder of the funds. Replanting may be possible once the plants are removed.

Ms. Fanning stated Town Council voted to approve the third reading of the budget including the capital request for the preservation program under which the invasive removal program in a one-acre popcorn grove at St.16 will take place. Once the Popcorn Trees are removed, the Willow Trees and other native plants in the area will have the opportunity to grow up and shade out the smaller Popcorn Trees. The shoots will not be able to produce seed for 3 years.

Ms. Fanning stated the work at the Station 24 boardwalk is almost complete and so she will be getting quotes to have the Elaeagnus removed.

3. Palmetto Planting Plan

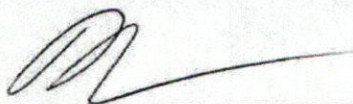
The 12 palm trees have been planted at Breach Inlet in time for Carolina Day. There is a maintenance contract in place to water the trees because of the high winds and dry, hot conditions.

Some of the palmettos that were removed two years ago were used to construct the Palmetto Fort exhibit. This is an SC 250 Organization project and they will be stewards of the site and are responsible for the maintenance. The land behind the fort would be a good location for the palmetto planting project.

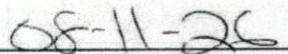
4. Illegal Tree Removal

Ms. Fanning stated a tree that was going to come before the Tree Commission was removed prematurely, and so they paid full mitigation for the removal.

IV.ADJOURN: Mr. Miller adjourned the meeting at 5:25 p.m.



Mark Miller, Chairman



Date

