

**Ad Hoc Tree Committee
Meeting Notes
August 4, 2015**

Committee members in attendance: Mack Pearl, Jon Quitslund, Sarah Blossom

COBI Staff: Jennifer Sutton, Luke Carpenter

Public: Charles Schmid, Peter Perry

Notes from the June 30 and July 14 meetings were distributed, reviewed, and approved.

We welcomed Luke Carpenter (BIFD Assistant Chief and Fire Marshal) to the meeting. On account of the very hot and dry summer season and heightened fire danger, he was interested in sharing some information with the Committee. He brought with him a copy of the B I Community Wildfire Protection Plan, which is an element of the Department's Strategic Plan; it has been in place since 2011. Jennifer encouraged him to make it accessible on the BIFD website. He also left in Jennifer's hands a copy of a book, *Firewise Communities*, which covers exemplary communities in several states, including Washington.

Luke informed the committee of a Wild Land / Urban Interface Code, which could be referenced to guide development policies and inform citizens of measures to protect property and provide for their safety. We agreed that such policies and the need for greater public awareness should be referenced in the Comprehensive Plan.

There have been several recent fires, touched off accidentally or through carelessness: there was a serious fire in dry grass near Island Center Hall, and just last night near the water tower on the BIHS grounds, the Department responded to a fire probably started by careless smokers in a group of young people. Some time ago there was a fire on the beach at Pritchard Park.

Responding to a question from Charles, Luke confirmed that the Department does not have equipment to deal with a spreading fire in the tree canopy: equipment would have to be called in from off-Island. He said, however, that he has seen house fires that spread to nearby trees, and in that case the trees are dealt with before the house.

It is recommended that trees be 30 feet away from structures. Peter Perry, a landscape professional and a member of the Design Review Board, confirmed that mature trees too close to houses are a common problem.

Mack observed that a system capacity for fire flow is not present in all parts of the Island. Homes on private wells or small water systems need storage tanks to provide water for emergencies. In houses of a certain size, the Fire Code requires sprinkler systems if fire flow is not available.

Installation of fire hydrants is responsive to new development, and the developer is typically responsible for the cost. (Currently, development in Rolling Bay will require fire

flow provisions.) If, as is currently being discussed, residential and business-related development is supposed to occur in existing and emergent centers and 'nodes' in several parts of the Island, it may be necessary to provide for fire flow and hydrants in advance of new development.

Luke spoke of the effectiveness of the fireworks ban on Bainbridge on and around the 4th of July. Across Kitsap County there were over 60 wildland fires due to fireworks this year, and none on Bainbridge. Injuries were also prevented. Next year the Council may consider making the ban permanent.

The Committee turned attention to item 2 on the agenda, consulting three pages of tables from BIMC 18.15.010.D & E (Tables 3, 4, and 5) as modified in previous meetings. These tables provide the requirements for perimeter buffers and screens for various zoning districts and uses. Jennifer explained that, when completed, these regulations will be incorporated in an ordinance broader in scope than the one that will come to the Planning Commission (once again) at the meeting on August 13.

In spite of Jennifer's efforts to focus attention on specific items in the tables, discussion veered in other directions. Committee members wanted to discuss matters more basic than the width of buffer zones and the density of screening vegetation.

Around the Island, along with great variety in topography and the built environment, there is great inconsistency in the ways that perimeter areas – primarily roadsides – have been managed, at the time of development and over time by residents. Buffering and screening standards seem to promise a much greater uniformity than has been achieved. Mack asked, "What is the objective?"

Most of our discussion dealt with residential development, existing and anticipated. Generally speaking, when new development comes to a neighborhood with established homes, perimeter buffers should separate the new from the old, especially if the new development is conceptually different (e. g., clustered smaller lots in an area where large lots are the norm).

If the perimeter of a lot is forested or dense with native vegetation, reducing the existing buffer would require a permit, and a case must be made for any reduction.

Charles spoke of the 'performance standards' that are fundamental in the zoning code. Jon said that as we plan for the future, development and conservation have to go hand in hand.

Several questions were raised about the regulations governing residential subdivisions. Jennifer said that state law constrains what COBI can require: she will look into whether the Design Review Board or the Planning Commission can play a role in reviewing subdivision plans.

The next meeting is set for August 11, 9 a. m.

Notes Approved: September 1, 2015