

Ad Hoc Tree Committee
Meeting Notes
September 29, 2015

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

COBI Staff: Jennifer Sutton

Public: Charles Schmid

We began with a review of notes from the previous meeting. Jon will make some changes before sending a .docx file to Jennifer for the record. Jennifer found the summary of Josh Machen's explanation at the previous meeting to be accurate.

Jon said that at some point – not before we deal with the old business on the agenda – he would like to have a discussion of the current regulations for open space in subdivisions. An effective Island-wide conservation strategy, as envisioned in the Comp Plan update, makes it imperative that we find ways to combine development with conservation of natural resources (the 'green infrastructure' of trees, brush, undisturbed soil; fields, streams and wetlands; greenways, wildlife habitat).

Responding to comments about the way outbuildings and additions expand the footprint of a house, Jennifer mentioned that the code establishes lot coverage standards that limit expansion.

We talked briefly about the "view blocking" issue that had been on the previous meeting's agenda, and agreed that the issue should be put to the side.

The "cluster" option in subdivision design standards, touched upon in previous meetings, came up again. Do we want to recommend eliminating this alternative? We decided "Yes." The next step will be to draft some language to follow through.

Jennifer observed that the cluster design is chosen only about 5% of the time. {One motive for allowing this alternative was to "create open areas large enough to accommodate crop agriculture." How has that worked out?}

We looked at the perimeter landscape requirements in Table 18.15.010-4. What perimeter buffers are appropriate? In many situations a buffer would be appropriate, and the contiguous open space may extend to the edge of the subdivision lot line, but where should it be required?

We looked at Figure 4-2, a map from the Island Wide Transportation Plan showing primary and secondary Arterial roads and "Collector" roads (distinguished from local access roads). On Mack's recommendation, we eliminated Collector roads from the table showing where buffers are required.

In subsequent discussion, Charles observed that the updated Comp Plan refers to “scenic” roads, and that effect can be achieved in many ways. Jennifer pointed to a reference in the table to the aim of ‘reflecting neighboring development patterns.’ We agreed that this was important – perhaps a determining factor in the design of new development.

It was noted that in addition to trees, people may want sunny space for a garden, and/or hours of sun for a solar cell array.

Discussion moved quickly toward replacing buffer requirements with a tree unit requirement. It should be not too demanding. Retention of existing healthy trees and native vegetation is most important. In some cases the trees will be on a perimeter, but not necessarily.

Jennifer described a hypothetical case: a 5 acre subdivision in R-1. If the Committee decides to recommend requiring tree units for subdivisions, but not to allow trees in open space to count toward that requirement. Most open space dedicated through subdivisions is treed or forested. This recommendation would increase the number of trees on new single-family lots.

In existing residential development, the tree unit requirement will determine whether or not trees can be removed (diseased and hazard trees, presumably, would be exceptions).

We settled on a requirement for new development of 30 tree units per acre, but not more than are present prior to the development. The committee requested that Jennifer discuss this recommendation with the current planners.

It was decided that the next meeting would be on Oct. 27th.

Notes Approved: October 27th