



Tree Ad Hoc Committee Meeting
Wednesday, March 2, 2016, 2:30 – 4:00 PM
280 Madison Ave N
Bainbridge Island, WA 98110
Planning Conference Room

AGENDA

1. Review and Approve Notes from February 17, 2016 Meeting
2. Continue Review Subdivision Design Standards ([BIMC 17.12](#)) related to Trees, Landscaping, & Open Space
3. Committee Purpose and Workplan

**Ad Hoc Tree Committee
Meeting Notes
February 17, 2016**

Committee Members in Attendance: Ron Peltier, Kol Medina, Sarah Blossom, Jon Quitslund
COBI Staff: Jennifer Sutton, Josh Machen
Public: Charles Schmid, Kelsey Loughlin, Jonathan Davis

The meeting began at 3:10 and ended before 5 p. m. Notes from the Nov. 10 meeting were discussed. Jon asked Sarah about what is said near the end of the notes regarding what she will propose to the Council, and she said that when the committee defines the scope of its work, she will propose formation of another committee to deal with related issues. With that proviso, the Notes were approved.

Jennifer distributed copies of a chart showing how the development permits and landscaping regulations are applied. Jennifer explained that there is a hierarchical order, with Critical Areas (BIMC 16.20) and the S M P (16.12) applicable to development on some parcels. There are four classes of land use permits (see BIMC 2.16): Site Plan Reviews & Conditional Use Permits (BIMC 18.15.010 pertains), Residential Subdivisions (BIMC 18.15.010 & 17.12.030 pertain), and Existing Development and Undeveloped Lots (BIMC 16.18 & 16.22 each may pertain).

Jon posed a hypothetical: a couple buy a small undeveloped lot for a single family residence. What permit do they need before hiring someone to clear the lot for building? Jennifer said that if they are removing less than 5000 board feet of timber, they don't need a permit. (The committee may want to look at that provision in the Land Clearing chapter, since 5000 board feet means one thing on a large lot, and something else on half an acre.)

Kelsey, who works at Browne Engineering, pointed out that clearing more than 7000 sq. ft. requires a drainage plan and a stormwater permit before clearing. Surface and stormwater management regulations are in Title 15, chapters 20 & 21. As L I D regulations are developed, they will be high in the hierarchy.

We discussed pros and cons of the Cluster Option. Jennifer distributed copies of BIMC 17.12 (Subdiv. Design Standards) and pertinent pages from 18.15.010. Jon observed that using the terms Open Space and Cluster as an either / or is problematic. Clustering is practical in a subdivision design whether or not houses are within 25 feet of each other. Kol proposed requiring the Open Space design if a parcel possesses open space features. Sarah questioned the policy of including a roadside buffer area in calculation of the 25% maximum of required open space.

We discussed the value of distinguishing, in the design standards, between high and low density zones: for example, limiting the size of the lot and building footprint in high density, and expanding the area left natural in low density. There was general agreement on this principle, with details still vague.

{Jennifer: Are there regulations in other jurisdictions that might help us?} The next meeting will be on March 2nd, 2:30 to 4 p. m.

TO: Jennifer Sutton, Josh Machen, and Joe Tovar; Sarah Blossom, Kol Medina, Ron Peltier, and Mack Pearl

FROM: Jon Quitslund

RE: BIMC 17.12, Subdivision Design Standards

Here are some comments on the chapter we have begun to discuss with specific reference to the 'Cluster' Option. Other aspects of the chapter should be considered, and in doing so we could either decide to eliminate the second option or retain it in some circumstances.

I believe that several problems arise from the assumption that subdivision standards should be the same, Island-wide, regardless of zoning classifications. The zone designation is not the only factor affecting the development potential of a piece of property; the extent to which undeveloped land is impacted by critical areas that restrict uses may be significant. The present and future design of the road network is another factor, as is availability of water and sewer. But broad areas of the Island, zoned R-0.4 or R-1, have been reserved deliberately for less dense development. In the areas zoned above R-2, we can expect more dense development and fewer opportunities to preserve forested conditions and open space, although significant trees and vegetated screens will still be valuable in that context. What do those differences mean for subdivision design?

What is the future of undeveloped and underdeveloped properties in the R-0.4 and R-1 zones? I would like to see regulations that push or point development toward what, in the long term (not only the short-term profit calculation), can be recognized as "highest and best use."

The Growth Management Act was established to counter the "sprawl" tendency of development in rural and suburban areas, and to protect forested and agricultural acreage and critical areas. The update of the Land Use and Environmental elements in the Comprehensive Plan takes some big steps in response to the G M A and public concern about growth and environmental impacts. We should be concerned to implement those goals and policies as promptly as we can.

Full implementation of an Island-wide conservation plan will be complicated, and will take time. Subdivision design standards may make the difference between success and failure in the implementation of such a plan.

What, in general, constitutes "highest and best use" of acreage in the R-0.4 and R-1 zones? It's hard to make valid general statements – conditions on the ground are so variable. If the property being subdivided is forested, or has been in use for agriculture, those conditions and uses should be respected and continued, along with development: not to do so would seem to be at odds with LID principles. And this is especially important where a long subdivision is proposed. (It could be argued that anything more than three lots in R-0.4 involves a lot of land, and most of it would best be left in the state it was in before subdivision: three conforming lots would need 7.5 acres.)

What do we mean by "less dense development"? In practice, it can mean fewer people, in houses on large lots, set far apart from each other. But if the houses are very large, and the

grounds and outbuildings around them are extensive, infrastructure costs and environmental impacts will be high: that's a recipe for sprawl, and for a form of freedom that comes at a high price. I think the best use of any undeveloped land on the Island should involve low impact design principles and a conservation strate.

Several problems arise from the terms "open space" and "cluster" as used in the chapter. For one thing, open space subdivisions are likely to involve some clustering of houses, even in the less dense zones. And as for open space, if it is not acceptable with a high perimeter to area ratio (see Table 17.12.030-1), I can't see why perimeter landscape buffers should be included in the open space calculation. (If the buffer is wider than required and contains mature trees and natural vegetation, not plantings, the area beyond what's required might deserve inclusion.)

The whole description of Amount of Open Space Required (17.12.030.A.4) needs to be examined. The general rule is that the City can't require more than 25% of any subdivision to consist of designated open space, although critical areas within the subdivision may add up to more than 25% of the acreage. (But the existence of such a critical area means that other open space, such as a pasture or meadow, may not be preserved: it won't need to be.)

I think the committee needs to review the "Analysis of Open Space Report" dated July 15, 2003 and amended April 30, 2004. The years since those dates have brought development, and the general public's interest in open space 'features,' to a different place. Just as the Comprehensive Plan needs updating, so does the analysis of open space. I don't see how the 25% rule, in all zones, is consistent with an Island-wide conservation plan. (Of course, if a subdivision lacks open space features sufficient to meet the 25% limit, that's no problem – but that's my point!)

The last details in the Open Space Option regulations pertain to a required Open Space Management Plan. How much is required in this? Is it taken seriously by most developers, and subsequently by property owners, over the course of time?

Moving on to the 'Cluster' Option: the objectives for the Open Space Option are spelled out in 17.12.030.A.1, a. through h., but there is no comparable list in subsection B.1. Only this: "The purpose of clustering is to facilitate the efficient use of land by reducing disturbed areas, impervious surfaces, utility extensions and roadways." Maybe that kind of efficiency should be required of all new development. I believe that the Cluster option sometimes fails to achieve that purpose.

It seems to me that the main attraction of this option is that no open space features need to be designated. Since there's no penalty if open space features don't exist on a property being subdivided, I don't see good rationale for the second option. What is most valuable in 17.12.030.B are the lot sizes for different zoning districts in subsection 2 (Homesite Area): maybe these are pertinent to all subdivisions. The requirement that homesites in a cluster shall be no more than 25 feet apart seems arbitrary. Also, I wonder if any "open areas large enough to accommodate crop agriculture" have actually been created by clustering.