

City of Lake Forest Park - Planning Commission
Regular Meeting Notes: May 10, 2016
17425 Ballinger Way NE –Forest Room

Planning Commissioners present: Chair Jon Lebo; Vice Chair Semra Riddle; Richard Saunders; Doug Gochanour; Joel Paisner

Staff and others present: Steve Bennett, Planning Director; Jake Tracy, Planning Technician; Mike Woodbury, LFP City Arborist; Mike Dee, resident

Planning Commissioners absent : Connie Holloway; Ray Holmdahl

Call to order: 7:00PM

Approval of Meeting Agenda:

Cmr. Paisner moved to approve the meeting agenda. The motion was seconded by Cmr. Saunders and passed unanimously.

Approval of Meeting Notes:

April 12, 2016

Cmr. Gochanour moved to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by Cmr. Saunders and passed unanimously.

Public Comment

Mike Dee stated that he appreciates that the agenda was published well ahead of time, and that he is concerned about the lack of notice for the Civil Service Commission. He also stated that he would like to see notice to citizens for longer periods of time and to people further than 300 feet from the property. Additionally, he stated that he is happy to see that the part-time planning position will be upgraded to full-time. He went on to state that he is concerned about the large number of SEPA exemptions and DNS designations that the City issues, and that he would like to see better information on how determinations are made.

Old Business:

Tree Regulations Update

Steve Bennett gave an overview the discussion summary document from the April 25th Planning Commission and City Council Joint Session. Cmr. Saunders stated that his summary of the Council's guidance covered four main points: 1) When in doubt, favor trees and the canopy, 2) Fix the holes in the regulations, 3) Make the regulations simpler, and 4) Don't reinvent the wheel. Commissioners concurred that Steve Bennett's and Cmr. Saunders' summaries accurately depicted the meeting with council.

Commissioners discussed the topic of nuisance trees. Mike Woodbury explained that nuisance trees are ones that cause damage to property, such as foundations or driveways, and that in some cases the nuisance can be mitigated through measures other than tree removal. Cmr. Saunders commented that in sensitive areas the regulations are so strict that homeowners are doing the work without a permit because they think they wouldn't be able to get a permit. Commissioners discussed whether it should be allowable to remove nuisance trees in sensitive areas. Chair Lebo asked commissioners if staff should do research on relaxing the sensitive area regulations for nuisance trees and it was agreed that they should.

Steve Bennett posed the question of how the City can value existing canopy over new canopy. A number of ideas were discussed, including giving more value to landmark trees by requiring

replacement to happen in 15 years rather than 30, or a higher replacement fee. The commissioners agreed that the staff should look into these and other options.

Commissioners then discussed hazard trees in the right-of-way (ROW). Mike Woodbury stated that a grant request for a ROW tree inventory had previously been declined due to its close timing to another grant, but that a new grant application would likely be funded. Such an inventory would give the City an idea of where the highest-risk ROW trees are located. Commissioner Paisner raised a concern that, if there was an inventory of high risk trees, there would be liability on part of City. There was agreement that would be necessary to send letters to property owners saying that they need to deal with these high-risk trees. There was consensus that staff should bring back recommendations regarding the inventory and liability.

Next, there was discussion about streamlining the process for invasive tree species. It was noted that only a few trees are listed on the King County List of Noxious Weeds, but others could be potentially added. Mike Woodbury stated that a streamlined process for invasives would be good. Commissioners discussed whether replacement requirements would be necessary for invasives. Generally it was felt that it was more important to maintain forest health by removing invasives than to maintain canopy coverage. Cmr. Riddle stated that the City could subsidize replacement of invasives to encourage their removal. Staff was asked to come back with code language regarding this issue.

Discussion then turned to whether or not residents below the canopy coverage goal should be required to attain that goal. There was not agreement on whether this should be required or how it would be achieved. Cmr. Paisner suggested a stepped cost for additional percentages of tree removal if a property owner was below the goal. The commissioners asked staff to come back with recommendations regarding this issue.

The commissioners also discussed a 5-year restriction for tree removal when development activity had taken place. The commissioners agreed that this was a good idea, and suggested including major development of government-owned property and major clearing and grading in this definition.

Finally, Steve Bennett discussed the removal of trees on the Burke-Gilman Trail during its redevelopment. He explained that in this project, 400% more trees were removed than initially expected. Commissioners agreed that the City needs to make King County do a more thorough initial assessment next time, and work more closely with the City Arborist, but that there is probably not a good regulatory mechanism to address this.

New Business:

None.

Reports/Communications/Announcements :

Jake Tracy gave a presentation on Lake Forest Park Permit Activity in 2015 and the first quarter of 2016. Permit numbers and stated that fee intake was at an all-time high in 2015, and 2016 is expected to surpass 2015 levels.

Agenda for Next Meeting: Update to tree regulations LFPMC 16.14 and 16.16.

Adjournment: 9:07 PM

APPROVED:

Jon Lebo, Chair