

PLANNING BOARD MEETING MINUTES

August 15, 2022 4:00 PM

PRESENT: Tiffany Secka, Chair
Rachel Ciliberti, Member
Greg Premier, Member

EXCUSED: Bev Jackson, Vice Chair
Tom DeYampert, Member

STAFF PRESENT: Matthew McConnell, Assistant City Attorney
Brandon Berry, Planner II
Jennifer McMahon, Chief Operating Officer
Alex Rey, City Manager
Ginny Bodkin, Deputy City Clerk

Chair Secka called the meeting to order at 4:00 PM, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

1. **Changes to the Agenda** – There were none.
2. **Audience Comments** - There were no audience comments.
3. **Approval of Minutes a. 7/18/2022**

Motion: Member Premier moved, and Member Ciliberti seconded the approval of the minutes from the July 18, 2022 meeting as presented; the motion carried unanimously.

4. **Action Items** – There were no action items.
5. **Discussion Items**

a. Residential Landscape Requirements

Brandon Berry, Planner II began the continuation of last month's landscaping discussion with a review of a presentation, which is part of the meeting record. The presentation included photographs of a variety of recommended canopy and understory trees for the City, as well as the crown spread of some canopy palms and trees. A graphic was included that explained tree root radius. The presentation compared tree count requirements, tree preservation credits, native tree requirements, palm equivalence, and mature canopy spread expectation of St. Pete Beach and three other communities (Marco Island, Ft. Myers Beach and Madeira Beach). St. Pete Beach does not require native trees, the three other communities do.

Mr. Berry reviewed slides which detailed the City's current landscaping thresholds: St. Pete Beach only requires residential lots to come into full tree compliance when developed or substantially improved; all residential properties exceeding their non-vegetative groundcover thresholds must comply when receiving a practical difficulty or hardship variance or building an addition that exceeds 10% of the lot area; as an alternative to groundcover compliance, the homeowner may propose increased canopy. A slide depicting minimum landscape requirements was reviewed.

Following the presentation, the Board members were asked to consider and provide recommendations on the following:

Right of Way Plantings – City Manager Alex Rey provided comments to clarify what may be considered rights of way in the absence of sidewalks; for the most part, residents treat/consider the undefined rights of way as their own property. He also informed the members that the City is considering whether owners should be obligated to replace trees (maintain tree count) that have been lost to natural causes or neglect in accordance with the Certificate of Occupancy. There would likely be difficult conversations with properties that have become treeless over time.

Ms. McMahon explained that the City has begun creating a tree canopy GIS to identify where trees are throughout the City – and when planted/age/when trimmed. She shared that some other cities give away trees and recommend where to plant and follow up yearly.

Discussion followed on whether trees placed in a right of way should count toward the minimum required. The recommendation was 2-1 in favor of including them in the count – and there should be a certain percentage of native tree types required. Understory trees were not recommended considering visibility issues. Staff will bring a species list back for the Board to review.

Non-palm Tree Requirements – The Board discussed whether new or substantially improved properties should have a certain required percentage of trees to be non-palms. The recommendation was 2-1 in favor of requiring 1/3 of the trees to be non-palm.

Planting Thresholds – The Board considered whether trees should need to be planted on thresholds lower than substantial improvement (e.g. size of a home addition, value, percentage). The sentiment was that residents with fixed incomes may have affordability issues to be compliant (impervious surfaces may need to be removed). How would this be enforced and followed up on? The consensus recommendation of the Board was to focus only on new homes and substantial improvements.

Native Requirements – There is currently no requirement in the City. Following discussion, the Board's recommendation was for a requirement of 50%, with language addressing if there are none currently and then when an improvement occurs. The Board also recommended that the minimum mature canopy requirement not be increased (from the current 15 feet). Staff will research whether other communities differentiate between canopy size in residential and commercial properties.

Chair Secka asked staff for an update on impervious surface ratios. Ms. McMahon will bring in current requirements (including irrigation requirements) for review. Mr. Berry commented that currently canopy can be traded for ground cover.

The Chair also referenced the water conservation ordinance that was passed last fall. There is a large gap in funds collected vs. spent for water in the City budget. Options to improve that were discussed, including the regulation of sprinkler head types, requiring rain sensors, enforcing day/time for water and regulating water sprinkler pressure, particularly for new construction.

Ms. McMahon will bring the beach ordinance to the next meeting for consideration as portions of it include the Land Development Code.

6. Adjournment – Next meeting 9/19/2022. There being no further business, Chair Secka adjourned the meeting at 5:01 PM.

These minutes were approved at the September 19, 2022 Planning Board meeting.