

**PARTIAL MINUTES OF THE
ZONING COMMISSION
February 15, 2021**

ORDINANCE TEXT AMENDMENT: Zoning, Planning, and Development text amendment.

Amending sub-section (A) and Section 30-10-4.1, Plant materials of the Land Development Ordinance to require a Plant Species and Genus mix among newly installed canopy trees, understory trees, and shrubs. Mr. Kirkman advised Elizabeth Link from Planning staff would be doing the presentation on this item. Mr. Kirkman advised the Zoning Commissions role is to make a recommendation on the proposed text amendment. The recommendation can be to accept the amendment as presented, to recommend approval of the amendment with some level of change, or to recommend denial of the amendment.

Elizabeth Link, Planner and Landscape Architect for the City of Greensboro, stated since the beginning of 2020, she has worked with a group of stakeholders to craft revisions to the City Landscape Ordinance that was last revised in 2010. The stakeholder group is comprised of citizens, developers, engineers, community organizations, landscape architects, arborists, and city staff from Planning, Transportation, and Water Resources departments.

The city's current ordinance requires landscaping buffers be placed around the perimeter of property while it is being developed or expanded. The buffers include 10-foot-wide street yards with canopy trees and shrubs, side and rear buffers with canopy and understory trees and shrubs. The width of the side and rear yards varies from 15 to 45 feet, depending on the proposed use and the adjacent property use and have a planting rate that increases as the width increases. Ms. Link shared a development plan with landscape buffers on two sides, right and bottom and a plant list. Types of trees and shrubs were depicted for planting. Large species of trees in close proximity with no other species, can have insect or fungus land on that species and then be able to rapidly build a large population that infests all trees or shrubs. The plant can eventually be killed and damaged and move on to the next property. A slide was shown depicting the scale on a red maple tree. Maple trees are one of the most overused species. They host a tiny insect called gloomy scales, about 16th of inch long. The black on the bark is a combination of bug poop and the bacteria that grows in it. They attach themselves to the red maple and grow an armor so that other things cannot get to them and then they suck the sap out of the tree which eventually weakens and kills it. Location of trees that are surrounded by pavement are hotter. Heat and confined root space placing more stress on trees, making them more susceptible to infestation by disease or insects. Plants are killed or damaged and the disease or insects can easily spread to other areas. A study was done on maple trees that discovered those in proximity of parking lots had larger populations of scale than similar trees in lawns. The scale actually had a longer breeding season because of the heat. Adding that to the close proximity of maples and there is a perfect situation for spreading infestation. A recent appearance is the Crepe Myrtle bark scale and is a similar insect that does similar damage to crepe myrtles that are frequently overused in landscaping. The Emerald Ash borer is an Asian bug that arrived via wooden pallets used to ship materials from China. It bores into the bark of Ash trees, lays eggs in the Ash trees in the areas where there is water and nutrients for the leaves. When the eggs hatch, the larva eats that layer and eventually kills the tree. Recent pests have been discovered in Zalora trees, Boxwoods, and other plants.

Ms. Link noted the group looked at ordinances from similar sized cities in North Carolina that already have these types of requirements. The wording of the ordinance currently devised was depicted. The current ordinance recognizes three categories of plants in required landscaping; canopy trees, understory trees, and shrubs. There is a table for each group. The bigger the development, the more is provided of each of those type of trees. There should be four different species. Ms. Link stated they are looking at the total number and then saying minimal numbers

required and the maximum percent of each species allowed. Genus and species are the scientific ways. Quercus is the Genus that Oaks are under. There are a number of different species, Willow Oaks, Red Oaks, White Oaks, etc. Those are all different species within the Genus Quercus for Oak. If there are less than 20 trees, two species of Oaks cannot be planted. A footnote was referred to stating “at least 40% of the required canopy trees shall be made of species”. There has been a lot of interest in native species. Research indicates these species are better at supporting birds, bees, butterflies, and other wildlife than many of the non-native plants used. For development it has been found that getting rid of the native things essential to wildlife should be replaced as there has been a large decline in birds. It was felt 40% would be an achievable goal, given availability, nursing, and suitability of the native plants in general for the open planning situations that would be occurring.

Chair Holston asked if there were questions from the Commissioners. Seeing none, Chair Holston inquired if there was anyone else to speak in favor or in opposition to the text amendment. Seeing none, Chair Holston closed the public hearing and advised there was a motion. Mr. Engle moved to support the ordinance change as presented; seconded by Mr. Rosa. The Commission voted 7-0. (Ayes: Chair Holston, Collins, Bryson, Rosa, Engle, Alford, and O'Connor. Nays: 0). Chair Holston stated this was a favorable recommendation and subject to a public hearing at the March 16, 2021 City Council meeting.