



**SPECIAL STORMWATER COMMITTEE MEETING**  
**Friday, February 25, 2022 at 12:30 P.M.-**  
**- Surfside Beach Civic Center -**

**MINUTES**

**CALL TO ORDER.** Chr Hellyer called the meeting to order at 12:40 pm. The meeting included the Council members Ron Mask, Hoke Petree and Laura Colbert; Director John Adair, Department of Public Works; Director Sabrina Adair, Director, and Code Enforcement Officer Carlton Kuhlmeier with the Planning, Building, and Zoning Department; and Councilmember Stamey.

**1. INTRODUCTION TO SPEAKER, Brad Brown, Arborist, All American Climbers, LLC - Chr Hellyer.** Mr. Brown hails from Rhode Island and grew up in New Hampshire. He started his arborist trade at 14 years of age. He is the owner/operator of the All-American Climbers, LLC since 2007 (12 years) in Myrtle Beach. Mr. Brown's company offers brush removal, stump grinding, tree bracing, tree health evaluations and tree maintenance. Mr. Brown has on several occasions helped the Town of Surfside Beach with tree work.

**2. DISCUSSION - Proposed Considerations for revising the existing Tree Ordinance.** Chr Hellyer began the discussion with an overview of the existing tree ordinance to date, the Council's request on evaluating the existing tree ordinance, SWC's proposed recommendations with Administrator Shanahan and the summary of the 10/2021 recommendations presented to the council. The discussion with Mr. Brown covered the basic need to craft the ordinance, the town's canopy, educate the residents and businesses, and look to "best practices" for tree preservation and protection, among other things. The following are the subject-matter points.

**COMMON PRACTICES:**

- Most homeowners expect that they can remove trees at will.
  - Tree maintenance usually includes thinning and pruning to reduce breakages.
  - Big-ticket item-cost homeowners invest in is for root barrier systems.
- Homeowner insurance policies may be in contrast to tree preservation measures; drawing on the question of whether to remove or not. Some homeowners want to save or preserve their large trees, but insurance wants them cut down to reduce liabilities.
- Homeowners generally want tree removal to allow enlarging their house, or to avoid the expenses associated with clean-up and maintenance.
- Most homeowners do not know what is a tree canopy, driplines, or types of root systems associated with trees on their property.

**EDUCATION:**

- Surfside Beach needs to increasingly & continuously communicate the many significant values of trees to our citizens & businesses.

- 45 • A comprehensive list of the specific and quantifiable benefits to the town, its  
46 residents and visitors of having a healthy tree canopy should be developed for  
47 use in all our communications.  
48
- 49 • We need to better promote Surfside Beach's "Tree City USA" status and  
50 benefits.  
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- 52 • We should seek effective methods and/or forums for training our citizens  
53 about healthy tree canopy benefits.  
54
  - 55 ○ Clemson's Extension Center, speakers from local nurseries, and  
56 arborist lectures with the staff arborist are encouraged specifically for  
57 Surfside Beach.
  - 58
  - 59 ○ All town employees should be educated on healthy tree canopy  
60 benefits when opportunities arise to interact with visitors and citizens.  
61
- 62 • The biology of tree systems can help with decision-making in tree  
63 maintenance.
- 64 • Defining canopy language is important. Knowing if more than a third of a tree's  
65 foliage is removed, it can cause death.
- 66 • Know what to do after a major storm has passed. Knowing how to identify  
67 injury to tree roots, and if is covered by insurance.

68 PUBLIC'S INVOLVEMENT IN TREE PROTECTION:

- 69 • Suggest a Hotline for callers to report tree removal to ensure compliance.  
70 Calls go to code enforcement and/or police.
- 71 • **Require a tree removal permit must be displayed to ensure compliance.**
- 72 • Town pays for tree medallions for specimens and/or plaques on or next to  
73 every heritage tree to create pride of ownership.

74 TREE SURVEY & INVENTORY: TREE ARBORIST'S DUTIES.

- 75 • The Town should consider reasonable Town costs for a Consulting Arborist  
76 **to be budgeted for the first few years of the revised tree ordinance.**
  - 77 ○ Tree canopy issues will be a new language/definition imparted into  
78 the ordinance text. It will take time to establish recognition of its  
79 **importance.**
  - 80 ○ Arborist professionally research and resolved tree canopy questions  
81 and issues to establish clear precedents for town tree policies.

82

- 83                   ○ A staff arborist becomes the ‘change agent’ for the Town’s ordinance,  
84                   **education, outreach and best practices.**
- 85                   ○ Arborist’s tree decisions are usually covered by insurance. Part-time  
86                   services may be adequate.
- 87                   • The Town needs a reliable survey of its trees denoting, but not limited to the  
88                   common name, genus & species, Diameter at Breast Height (D.B.H.) and health  
89                   **of each tree surveyed.**
- 90                   ○ The D.B.H. needs to be decided on the size of trees. (All, 6" or 8" and  
91                   **above?)**
- 92                   ○ Survey should standardize the designation for the Town's "landmark"  
93                   and "heritage" trees that include understandable definitions.
- 94                   ○ Survey should identify those trees that are in need of removal.
- 95                   ○ Conducting a Survey involves a lot of time; requires professional(s),  
96                   **and may need to be done in stages.**
- 97                                    ▪ Possibly soliciting CCU civil engineering students to assist for  
98                                    grade credit.
- 99                                    ▪ Should determine how much information is needed; should be  
100                                  over a certain caliber and of certain species.
- 101                   • Consider a program for the replacement of undesirable trees and of aging or  
102                   unhealthy trees.
- 103                   ○ This program would allow for the removal of trees but require  
104                   replacement tree planting from the recommended list.
- 105                   ○ The replacement size requirement should not be cost-prohibitive but  
106                   should ensure that our town canopy stays healthy and, hopefully, growing.
- 107                   • Create a Town Booklet that lists the trees that are beneficial to the Town’s  
108                   canopy and also lists those that are generally undesirable due to such things as,  
109                   but not limited to, short tree life, high maintenance requirements, and  
110                   susceptibility to disease and insects.
- 111                   ○ List mature tree heights, canopy size, proper soils for healthy growth,  
112                   leaf characteristics and other facts that help homeowners with choices  
113                   **choosing new or replacement trees.**
- 114                                    ▪ Bradford trees are or will no longer be sold in SC; considered an  
115                                    evasive species.
- 116                                    ▪ Palmetto (palm) trees should not be considered a tree  
117                                    replacement; they are solely ornamental.

118                   o Prepare a "list of recommended trees" that grow well in our Town's  
119                   environment, maximizes property values, create human health benefits  
120                   and provide strong stormwater retention capability.

121                   • Tag legacy trees throughout the Town to bring recognition; such as the oaks  
122                   that are a part of the Ark Plantation, survived a major hurricane/storm, existed  
123                   during WW1, etc.

124                   • Plaques paid for by the town are placed on or next to every Heritage Tree in  
125                   town. Owners of these trees should love this.

126   OUTREACH.

127                   • The SWC recommends conducting a public survey on [surfsidebeach.org](http://surfsidebeach.org)  
128                   asking residents if they care about trees. We need to know how they feel about  
129                   the importance of trees. The revision of the tree ordinance needs their feedback.

130                   • Tree canopy health values should be integrated into our ongoing Town  
131                   Arbor Day celebrations.

132  
133   ORDINANCE CHANGES.

134                   • SWC is chartered to prepare a new tree canopy protection ordinance that  
135                   supports changes intended to preserve and upgrade the Town's long-term tree  
136                   canopy health.

137                   o We need to decide whether to rewrite the tree protection ordinance  
138                   currently in Zoning Chapter 17, Div. 2 - which includes 17-720 thru 17-  
139                   250, or create a new ordinance outside of the zoning/Chapter 17.

140                   • Consider removing any tree planting requirement for R-3 lots and instead  
141                   "recommend" that Palmetto trees for of decorative value only for these small lots.

142                   • The number of trees "per lot" can be changed to per acre.

143                   o Current 60" diameter per acre.

144                   o Replanting measure is calibrated in "inch."

145                   o Squat to measure can change to breast height.

146                   o Footprint is the "plant-able" area.

147                   • Update the ordinance's tree trimming language to continue prohibiting "tree  
148                   topping" (such as that which occurs with crepe myrtles), and clearly restrict  
149                   tree trimming to no more than the bottom 1/3 of a tree's foliage and not  
150                   trimming more frequently than every 3-5 years.

151                   o We should also add language suggesting that trimming only be done  
152                   from **November through March when the tree is dormant.**  
153  
154

- 155 • Need to reassess and improve the tree ordinance language that prohibits a  
156 property owner from removing a tree or root where such action could make the  
157 town liable for subsequent injury or damages caused by that tree.
- 158 ○ Use of a registered Arborist for such decisions may be one improvement  
159 to this process.
- 160 • Create recommended trees to plant for the R1 zone; such as those with non-  
161 evasive surface roots (e.g., Drake elm-also called Chinese elm or lacebark elm is  
162 a quick-growing elm tree that naturally develops a dense, rounded, umbrella-  
163 shaped canopy.)
- 164 • The current ordinance does not prevent you from having to plant a tree.
- 165 • List of valued trees as desirable needs for stormwater management.
- 166 • The existing ordinance does not state when replanting a new protected tree  
167 must occur.
- 168 ○ It could be one year later, or when the season is better.
- 169 ○ A bond could be required to ensure another is planted as needed.
- 170 ○ Bonds can be used for construction projects to assure trees are planted  
171 at times recommended for success.
- 172 ○ Code enforcement officers can follow up more efficiently.
- 173 • Requiring the tree permit be displayed both on the contractor's vehicle and on  
174 the home owner's house.
- 175 ○ This will improve awareness of when trees can/cannot be removed.
- 176 ○ Saturday/Sunday tree removals can be closely monitored.
- 177 • Remove the confusion with fines in Chapter 17.
- 178 ○ All fines collected should go into a tree mitigation fund and not the  
179 general fund.
- 180 ○ It should become a separate line item on the Town's budget.
- 181 • Residents not wanting trees on their property pay an "impact fee" which is used  
182 to plant trees on public property.
- 183 ○ It should become a separate budget line item under the Tree Mitigation  
184 Fund.

185 MISCELLANEOUS.

- 186 • Identify alternative green spaces that are currently without trees, and create  
187 gardens for rainwater management.

188 **3. BUSINESS. Follow-up with the Tree Ordinance discussion:** Mr. Mask suggests  
189 the tree ordinance discussion be gathered and shared with all the meeting participants

190

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191 for presentation to Administrator Shanahan and Councilmember Stamey. Dir. Sabrina  
192 Adair and Code Enforcement Officer Kuhlmeier suggest scheduling a meeting to go  
193 over the building and zoning language in Chapters 14 & 17 relevant to tree preservation  
194 and protection.

195  
196 **4. PUBLIC COMMENTS.** No public comments are provided.

197  
198 **ADJOURNMENT.** Chr Hellyer moved to adjourn the meeting at 2:10 pm. The SWC  
199 wishes to thank Mr. Brown for providing his insights, experiences and remarks as it  
200 relates to the Tree Ordinance. All voted in favor. motion carried.