

Tree Protection Board Minutes

Monday, May 9, 2022

Members Present:

David Morris
Peter Wallace
Danny Burbage
Faye Campbell

Staff Present:

Becca Zimmerman, Planner II
Bill Salisbury, Arborist
Pamela Wike, Planner I
Tim Macholl, Zoning Administrator (present for 403 N. Gum St.)

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 am. Mr. Wallace asked for consideration of the April 11, 2022 meeting minutes. Mr. Burbage made a motion for approval of the minutes as presented, and Mr. Morris made the second. The motion carried.

Old Business

1. 400 Makemie Way – Removal of 50 Pine trees, 35 Oak trees, and 43 Other trees

Ronnie Caldwell and Pastor Mike Lawson of Great Commission Baptist Church as well as trustee Robbie Robins came forward to speak in regards to their request. The applicant has requested the removal of 128 trees to clear land for the construction of a soccer field. Mr. Caldwell explained the request to the board, hoping to clear the area as safety precaution for players. Mr. Salisbury discussed healthy grand pines on the property, seeking to keep the trees outside the perimeter of the field. Mr. Caldwell reiterated concerns for player safety. Mr. Wallace discussed saving trees, especially near the sidewalk along Makemie Way. Mr. Caldwell mentioned the opportunity to potentially plant shrubs or bushes around the field in the future. Another representative came to speak, mentioning that the project had gone through the DRB process. The DRB recommendation was to save as many trees as possible. The representative explained that for any sort of sports-related activity to occur on the field, all of the demarcated trees would need to be removed. Mr. Wallace discussed leaving peripheral trees along the roadway and rear-side of the field's perimeter. The representative discussed the necessity of maintaining a drainage swale on that rear-perimeter section of the field, as recommended by Public Works, which would require the removal of trees in that area. Mr. Wallace inquired as to which direction water would drain, the applicant indicated that it would drain southbound along the perimeter of the field. Ms. Webster commented on the fact that trees are useful for drainage as they consume significant amounts of water. The representative responded by stating that there are numerous ponds, storage areas, and pipelines around the field that were designed to guide drainage for the site. The

representative followed up by claiming that these drainage systems were a suitable alternative to the trees and would cause minimal drainage issues. Mr. Wallace asked about the size of the field, to which the representative responded it was about one acre. Mr. Wallace stated that for commercial developments, including fields such as the one under discussion, there is a requirement that at least 20 trees per acre be preserved. The representative assured Mr. Wallace that this minimum was met by the unused space near the field. The representative expressed concerns regarding moving the drainage swale, as this would shrink the size of the field. Mr. Wallace asked the applicant if there was any consideration of saving a cluster of pines located in the area of one of the proposed soccer goals and along the street. The representative expressed safety concerns with leaving trees at the perimeter of the field. He also mentioned that the field had been minimized as much as they could, to 340 by 135 feet and approximately 160 feet from the property line. Mr. Burbage inquired as to whether the plan was to construct the recreational field first and then the church itself. The applicant responded by stating that the first phase would include the field and the park, the church would be part of the second phase. Mr. Burbage asked if any thought had been given to moving the field to an area that had already been cleared and constructing the buildings in and around the trees left on the site. The representative stated that this would require moving the proposed building, parking lot, and ponds. Mr. Burbage reiterated that it would be ideal to avoid removing all the trees and that, while it would take the work of a good designer, it would be beneficial to the overall site. The representative stated that the site had been laid out based on the Town's DRB process as well as with input from homeowners across the street. Mr. Wallace inquired as to whether the applicant had received DRB approval, the representative confirmed they had. Ms. Webster further discussed the possibility of flipping the plans to preserve trees. The representative stated that different options had been considered and this was the one they landed on with the DRB. Mr. Wallace asked that the applicant consider any possibility to save a few clusters of trees, the applicant confirmed that they would consider it. Ms. Webster stated that having trees in the parking lot would be advantageous as people would prefer to park near trees for shade. The representative stated that the plans would be analyzed again to look at saving as many trees as they can. Mr. Wallace motioned for approval with the understanding that the applicant would seek to save as many trees as possible. Mr. Burbage seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

New Business

1. 321 Amaryllis Avenue – Removal of one Oak tree – NOT ADDRESSED (UNPAID)

2. 403 N. Gum Street – Removal of one Oak tree

Wes Reynolds, the contractor contracted by the owner to construct a building on the lot, came to the podium to speak. He stated the owner's request to remove the oak tree from the property, additionally stating that the project has been approved by DRB. Mr. Reynolds went on to express concerns for the tree and its root system, as well as its proximity to two existing buildings. The tree's branches hang over three nearby buildings. Mr. Reynolds stated that all of these factors

lead to concerns of potential property damage. Mr. Reynolds then discussed his plan to replace the tree with two crape myrtles in the backyard area of the proposed construction. Mr. Salisbury commented on the water oak, stating it was healthy and had no issues. Mr. Salisbury went on to state that while the tree could use some maintenance, it was in great shape otherwise, particularly for its size and age. Mr. Wallace inquired as to whether the proposed plan had received DRB approval and met impervious surface requirements. Mr. Reynolds stated that they had gone before the Board of Zoning Appeals. Ms. Zimmerman stated that she would look into the outcome of the BZA decision. Mr. Reynolds then stated the building had received approval. Mr. Wallace commented on the fact that the tree had caused no issues to the previous construction on the property. Mr. Wallace inquired as to whether there had been issues with the tree's impact on the foundation of the property. The owner stated that the root system displaced a wooden joist near the crawlspace right before she purchased it. Mr. Morris asked about the location of the proposed building. Mr. Reynolds stated that it would be located about 18 feet from the water oak. Mr. Macholl confirmed at this point that the proposed construction received final DRB approval at the April 21st meeting. He went on to state that the DRB approval did not address the trees on the property. Additionally, the DRB did not address impervious surface requirements for the building as the proposed construction was well-within permissible surface coverage. Mr. Burbage explained that if the tree is 18 feet from the point of construction, then the tree may very well survive the disruptive activity on the property and therefore removal would be unnecessary. Mr. Morris and Mr. Wallace voiced their agreement. The owner agreed that the root system would not be compromised, but expressed concerns that it would be more difficult to access the tree after the construction of the building. Mr. Wallace stated that the ease of the future removal of the tree could not motivate the board to promote its immediate removal. Mr. Wallace went onto state that his primary concern would be whether or not the tree was compromising the existing brick house on the property. Ms. Webster mentioned pruning the root system back toward the house. Mr. Wallace agreed that it would be less expensive to prune than to remove. Mr. Burbage motioned to deny the application. Mr. Morris seconded the motion. The motion was denied. Mr. Wallace stated that the applicant should attempt to prune the tree and return to the board if problems persist.

3. 203 Beaufort St – Removal of one Tulip, two Pear, and two Gum trees

The property owner expressed concerns to the board about the tulip's shallow roots as a result of a storm. The property owner went on to state concerns regarding property damage should another storm impact the trees. Ms. Campbell stated she was unsure as to when Summerville would experience another storm of similar magnitude. The property owner expressed that the slope of their property often led to pooling of water during storms which made the ground so damp that the foundation of the tree was compromised. Mr. Burbage inquired as to the health of a tree that fell on the property previously. The property owner stated that the tree was in good health until a storm uprooted it. Mr. Burbage explained that decay can enter the root system of a tree and compromise its structural integrity. Mr. Burbage stated that he saw no decay on the shallow roots of the tree. The property owner commented on the fact that the tree removal company that came to remove the fallen tree was shocked to see no sign of decay. Mr. Wallace asked the property owner if he would consider having a certified arborist come assess the tree.

The property owner stated that he can do that, but that it would not change how he felt and his concerns about the safety issues posed by the tree. Mr. Wallace reiterated that he would like to have a professional arborist assess the tree's proneness to damaging the house on the property. The property owner stated he would be willing to do whatever he needed to do. Mr. Burbage explained that a certified arborist could determine the viability of the root system and the health of the tree, which would make it easier for the board to make an informed decision on the matter. Ms. Campbell reiterated that it would make it easier for the board to make a determination. Mr. Wallace inquired as to whether it was possible to lighten the load on the tree. Mr. Burbage explained that therapeutic pruning is always good. Mr. Wallace went on to state that removing excess branches could be beneficial in preventing safety issues in the future. Mr. Wallace motioned for approval of all trees in the application but the poplar, which would need assessment from a certified arborist. Ms. Campbell seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

4. 109 Carroll Court – Placement of cottage within critical root zone of Oak tree.

The property owners, residents of the property for 16 years, stated their request to build a small cottage on their property. The property owner presented a revised site plan in which the shed on their property would be replaced with a single-car garage in order to do all the work at one time and move structures away from the tree. Mr. Wallace commented on it being a nice plan. Ms. Campbell acknowledged that the new site plan would require no additional access to the property. Mr. Wallace stated that an additional access would have negatively impacted the root system of nearby trees, so the new plan was very beneficial in that regard. The owner stated that the new proposed 660 square foot structure would be situated nearer to the house on the property and away from the trees in question. Mr. Wallace made a motion to approve the new site plan with respect to its impact on surrounding trees. Mr. Burbage recused himself, as he is a neighbor of the property owner. Mr. Morris seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

5. 116 Wynfield Forest Drive – Removal of three Pine trees – NOT ADDRESSED (Unpaid)

6. 1000 Shinnecock Hills Court – Removal of one Oak and one Pine tree

There was no representative present to speak on behalf of the application. Mr. Wallace suggested discussing the willow oak first. Mr. Salisbury stated that the willow oak is healthy, though close to the sidewalk and driveway, it has done no serious damage to either. Mr. Salisbury went on to state that he would recommend thinning out the tree to lighten the load. Mr. Salisbury then discussed the pine tree in the backyard. Mr. Salisbury explained that the pine was very healthy and pointed out that a deck had been built around it and it was very close to the house, only seven feet from the structure. Mr. Salisbury stated that the new owners of the home were concerned about the pine's proximity to the building. Mr. Burbage suggested considering the possibility of root pruning and maintenance for the oak in the front yard of the house as opposed to removal. In regards to the pine in the rear, Mr. Burbage expressed that he understood the new owners' concern but that the tree is healthy and should also be on a maintenance program rather than be removed. Mr. Morris reiterated that the oak could use some pruning, though it did not appear to be doing any damage to the driveway or sidewalk. Mr. Morris stated he was more on the fence about the pine tree. Mr. Wallace stated that the area of the deck around the pine should

be enlarged to give the tree room to sway and so as not to crack the deck. Mr. Wallace went on to state that he would prefer to not see the tree removed. Mr. Wallace motioned to deny the tree removal, but to examine the foundation of the house for any negative impacts from the roots of the pine and to make the opening of the deck around the tree larger. Mr. Burbage seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Adjourn:

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:57 AM on a motion by Ms. Campbell and a second by Mr. Burbage. The motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Date: _____

Bill Salisbury

Arborist/Natural Resource Planner



Approved: Mr. Sott, Chair _____ ; or,

Ms. Campbell, Vice Chair _____ .