

Department of Planning and Development

446 West Crogan Street • Lawrenceville, GA 30046-2440
(tel) 678.518.6000
www.gwinnettcountry.com



gwinnettcountry

Gwinnett County Tree Advisory Committee
Monday February 12, 2018
at 6:00 p.m.
One Justice Square
446 W. Crogan Street, Lawrenceville
Conference Room B, 2nd Floor

As set forth in the American with Disabilities Act of 1992, Gwinnett County Government does not discriminate on the basis of disability in the admission or access to, or treatment or employment in, its programs or activities. Michael Plonowski, 75 Langley Drive, Lawrenceville, Georgia, 30045-6900, 770.822.8015, has been designated to coordinate compliance with the non-discrimination requirements contained in Section 35.107 of the Department of Justice regulations. Information about the Americans with Disabilities Act, and the rights provided there under, is available from the accommodations required by individuals to fully participate in any meeting, program, or activity of Gwinnett County Government should be directed to Michael Plonowski, 75 Langley Drive, Lawrenceville Georgia, 30045-6900, 770.822.8015.

TAC MEETING MINUTES

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT

Chris Barneycastle
Wendy Aina
Dennis Billew
Patrick Kien
Stuart Prince
Hilary Wilson

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT

Carol Hassell
Tommy Loggins

STAFF PRESENT

Susan Owen, Planning & Development
Patricia Huguenard, Planning & Development
Cyndi Sloan, Development Review Manager
Maria Serban, Planner II
Adena Fullard, Plan Review Manager

GUESTS PRESENT

None

1. Call to Order

Meeting was called to order at 5:59 p.m.

2. Determination of a Quorum (6 Members Were Present)

It was determined that there was a quorum.

3. Action Upon the Minutes from the Previous Meeting

July 2017 minutes were approved. Hilary Wilson motioned; Pat Kien seconded. Motion carried unanimously with a vote of 6-0.

4. Announcements

Cyndi Sloan announced that Chris Barneycastle received the 2017 Presidents Award from the Georgia Arborist Association.

Patricia Huguenard announced new members Wendy Aina representing District 2 and Stuart Prince representing District 4.

Hilary Wilson announced that Tree City has an event Thursday, February 15, 2018 at Trees Atlanta. They acknowledge all of the cities that have gotten Tree City designation and Gwinnett County is very well represented.

5. Adoption of the Agenda

Dennis Billew motioned; Hilary Wilson seconded. Motion carried unanimously with a vote of 6-0.

6. Old Business

Chris Barneycastle presented his research findings on specimen tree condition requirements from other county / city tree ordinances. Handouts were provided.

- At the July meeting the members had an extensive discussion about condition requirements and that Gwinnett County was probably the only county that had the good, fair, poor and dead rating system. Most of the other cities and counties have the same tree ordinances. Chris provided size requirements and the average size tree is 24" for hardwoods and some increase to 30" for pines and softwoods.
- Chris Barneycastle did not provide information for Fulton County; however City of Johns Creek and the City of Milton just copy and pasted the Fulton County requirements. Fulton County as 27" for hardwoods and 24" for pines.
- Brookhaven has changed their condition requirements and added a uniform crown distribution with no more than 70% of all branches on one side of the tree.
- The City of Alpharetta is very strict with their ordinance and tough on specimen trees. They do not publish their condition requirements.
- Patrick Kien asked if Gwinnett County has defined requirements. Chris said that yes Gwinnett County does and you are required to say whether it is in good, fair, poor or dead condition.
- Hilary Wilson asked about Brookhaven and the crown distribution. Chris Barneycastle replied, normally crowns that are unbalanced are around homes. Crowns can also lean to the sunlight, called phototropic lean, and are not a potential hazard if a tree has grown most of its life like that. In the woods where there is competition, you typically have smaller crowns. An unbalanced crown is typically growing towards the sunlight.
- Stuart Prince added that Sandy Springs condition requirements are very easy.
- Patricia Huguenard said Gwinnett County needs to come up with something more specific and less subjective on specimen trees.
- Chris Barneycastle said that in appraisals there is a scoring system to rate conditions, but said it would be a little bit too intensive and then would have to be added to the ordinance.
- Dennis Billew asked if Gwinnett had been getting complaints on people cutting specimen trees. Patricia Huguenard answered that we have not been getting complaints on the rating system but do wonder when the arborist rates every specimen tree as fair and the recompense is much less.
- Chris Barneycastle asked if there was a recommendation on how to proceed and asked Patricia Huguenard if she had any suggestions. She said in light of what we

are going to present to the committee that may or may not come into play.

7. New Business

Patricia Huguenard discussed revising the specimen tree review process as specimen tree requirements were put into place in December 2007. Specimen Tree Standards and Process Changes and the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for Specimen Tree Survey and Concept Plan handouts were given to the members.

- We have tried to refine the process without changing the ordinance.
- Right now the process is that the developer would hire a consultant, certified arborist, landscape architect, surveyor, or forester and they would have the property surveyed for specimen trees. Their findings would be put into a specimen tree survey which is submitted to the Development Review group and then to the Development Inspections group. A certified arborist from the department will go on to the site and verify the information on the survey. Once the information is verified, a Specimen Tree Concept Plan is submitted to Development Review and will show what the developer is proposing to do on the site, whether it be a subdivision or commercial development.
- What we are finding is that most of the trees are removed and recompense is assigned.
- Development Review is also finding that the concept plan is coming in a week before or a week after the development plans come in and no thought has been given to the preservation of the specimen trees.
- With looking at the process and looking at the SOP as to what we do internally, there are several ideas we wanted to bring to the committee.
 - Remove the requirement to have the department arborist verify the data on the specimen tree survey. Design Professional state that they do all of this work and then the County sends out their certified arborist to verify their data as if the County does not trust their expertise and knowledge.
 - The Specimen Tree Survey should be submitted through the zoning process rather than a week before the development plans are submitted.
 - The zoning process would take it to Planning Commissioners and the Board of Commissioners.
- Dennis Billew asked if we had spoken with consultants that deal with zonings and the zoning process because there is no guarantee that you are going to be successful. He feels that the Development Advisory Committee would kick this idea out. It is adding a lot of costs and risk.
- Patricia said many times the concept is all worked out and the zoning condition shows “in general accordance” and is stated on the preliminary plan.
- Dennis Billew does not feel the construction plans should be submitted without taking into account the specimen trees which is what is happening.
- Patricia Huguenard said that Kathy Holland is questioning why we are going through this whole process if all of the specimen trees are coming down at the end.
- Dennis Billew said maybe it is better to take the compensation and remove the trees because the ordinance allows this.
- Patricia Huguenard asked if there is a compromise or balance? That, it is not all about the lots and not all about the trees. We are not getting plans prior to the development plans. We have to come up with something to get the people to think

about a few trees.

- There is no time frame to submit the survey prior to the construction plans at this time. The ordinance states that prior to submitting the development plan, the Specimen Tree Concept Plan must be approved. This means you have gone through the process of the Specimen Tree Survey, the arborist site visit and concept plan review.
- Hilary Wilson made a point that going through the zoning section is not such a good idea as most of the properties are already zoned. They are not trying to rezone the property.
- If the Tree Advisory Committee came up with a draft recommendation, they would take it before the Development Advisory Committee.
- Adena Fullard said we need a more upfront analysis into these zoning applications. If we take the requirement out of the regulations that says our arborist will go out and verify the site, we need something upfront in the interim stage before we get the development plans.
- The County wants to revise the recompense requirement and to do away with the good, fair, poor, and dead rating system and just do three times the credit for the specimen tree regardless of type and condition.
- Dennis Billew would rather the County have a requirement to plant an older/bigger young tree and some young small trees. Stuart Prince would rather see 16-20" trees than 40-60" trees be preserved. The tools and testing is easier to do on a young tree and adapts better to the surroundings. Testing is much harder to do on older trees as the drills are not long enough and you cannot see in the root system.
- Hilary Wilson asked that if we take out trees larger than 18" caliper, how do we get enough trees into the system? Stuart said more credit is given on keeping the younger trees than the older trees. He would rather see double the credit for keeping them or double the fine for taking them down.
- Chris Barneycastle stated we put too much emphasis on saving big older declining trees and if they are near a structure, they are extremely hazardous. They need to be out in a buffer zone. He would much rather see saving a smaller tree that has potential.
- Cyndi Sloan mentioned that Forsyth County has the lower specimen tree size and what they also do is, if the tree is 12-18" and is going to be saved, they are located on a plan and that they will get extra credit for those trees. Hilary agreed that this would help keep the canopies vibrant.
- Patricia Huguenard offered establishing a sub-committee to discuss these issues more as well as the parking lot lighting. Stuart Prince will be the sub-committee chairman and Hilary Wilson, Chris Barneycastle, and Wendy Aina will be on this committee. Hilary Wilson will ask Carol Hassel if she would also like to be on this committee. Chris Barneycastle thinks we should leave the specimen tree process the way it is, but is open to the sub-committee taking another look at it.
- The current ordinance states that all specimen trees are to be saved and go to the Director for approval of trees to be taken down.
- Patricia Huguenard will bring wording for the parking lot islands to the April 9th meeting to present to the board.

9. Adjournment (7:30p.m.)

Hilary Wilson motioned; Chris Barneycastle seconded.

Motion carried unanimously with a vote of 6-0.