

TREE BOARD

May 3, 2021

The Tree Board of the City of Norman, Cleveland County, State of Oklahoma, met for a virtual meeting appearing via video conference on the 3rd day of May, 2021, at 4:00 P.M.

ITEM 1, being:

ROLL CALL

Present: Chairman Menzie and Members, Fagin, Huffman, Pape, and Spain

Absent: Members Buthod, Janaway and Tedder-Loffland

City Officials: Tim Vermillion, City Forester
Karla Sitton, Administrative Technician IV

ITEM 2, being:

APPROVAL OF THE APRIL 5, 2021 MEETING MINUTES

Member Pape made the motion and Member Spain seconded to approve the minutes. The vote was taken with the following results:

YEAH: Chairman Menzie and Members, Fagin, Huffman, Pape, and Spain

NAY: None

ITEM 3, being:

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Member Huffman made the motion and Member Pape seconded to approve the agenda. The vote was taken with the following results:

YEAH: Chairman Menzie and Members, Fagin, Huffman, Pape, and Spain

NAY: None

ITEM 4, being:

DISCUSSION REGARDING THE EXISTING RESIDENTIAL TREE ORDINANCE PERTAINING TO NEW SINGLE-FAMILY AND/OR TWO-FAMILY CONSTRUCTION

Mr. Tim Vermillion, City Forester, said distributed information regarding the Residential Tree Ordinance, R327.1 Tree Requirements, prior to the meeting. He highlighted the ordinance, stating it requires one tree to be planted for each lot designated for single-family or two-family use before a Certificate of Occupancy can be issued. For lots larger than 10,000 square feet, two trees must be planted and for corner lots, one tree must be planted per street frontage. Mr. Vermillion said the trees are initially planted in order to obtain the Certificate of Occupancy; however, for various reasons some end up dying.

Mr. Vermillion said he would like suggestions/ideas from the Tree Board on how the City can assist the citizens on getting trees planted properly and getting them to live. Member Pape asked if the Board made suggestions, what would the next step be, i.e., would the recommendations need to be approved by Council? Mr. Vermillion said yes, the Board would make recommendations on changing the current ordinance and Council would need to approve their recommendations/changes. Chair Menzie felt if the builder(s) would make improvements to the soil, the trees would have a better chance of surviving. He said if/when the trees die, the Home Owners

Association (HOA) requires another tree to be planted in its place. Member Pape felt the HOA should give the homeowner(s) better direction on the type of tree that would thrive better since they are familiar with the condition of the soil in the addition versus a new citizen moving into the addition. Member Huffman agreed that having the HOA assist with this issue would be best. Mr. Vermillion said a tree list could be offered to the builder(s) and he can visit with them prior to the tree planting to help get it right the first time.

Member Huffman asked what Staff suggested and Mr. Vermillion said he would like to visit with the builders. Mr. Vermillion requested the Board research this issue and bring back ideas. Member Spain asked what would give the builder the incentive to contact Staff once they have already followed their obligation(s) regarding tree plantings. Mr. Vermillion said he would like to let the builders know he can consult with them when they begin clearing land for development. He said he has helped Ideal Homes before with a plant list and would rather not have a "heavy handed rule", but instead consult the builder(s) on what would get more trees to live. Member Pape asked whether Mr. Vermillion would have time to meet with builders and he said he did not know, but he would possibly need to give up something with less priority.

Mr. Vermillion suggested changes to the ordinance that would have a little oversight such as a planting site on the property, a planting species and/or to request consultation with the Forester so that money and time will not be wasted on trees that are prone to die. Member Spain asked whether there was anything in the building permit process that this step could be added. Member Fagin suggested adding "... to the Forester's discretion ..." so the builders would not be penalized. Member Spain said language could possibly be added to #6 of the current requirements; however, he felt this is an issue that needs to be addressed between the builder(s) and HOAs. Mr. Vermillion asked whether language could be added that would give an exception and Member Spain said the exception already exists in #6.

Member Huffman asked if Hackberry trees are hearty enough to survive and Mr. Vermillion said yes; however, they are very difficult to buy anywhere at this time.

Member Huffman requested Staff to compile the information and suggestions discussed and bring them back to the June meeting. Member Pape agreed and also felt the HOAs needed to be educated as well. Mr. Steven Koranda, with the Builder's Association, said anything he and the association will help do whatever they can to connect the builders, homeowners, and/or Forester together to educate on tree species, soil, etc.

ITEM 5, being:

MISCELLANEOUS COMMENTS

Chair Menzie asked if the next meeting is scheduled for June, 7, 2021; and whether it can be an "in-person" meeting. Mr. Tim Vermillion, City Forester, said yes, that is the next scheduled meeting and we can meet "in-person."

Mr. Vermillion said the Arbor Day Planting at Reaves Park was held on April 30, 2021, and the trees were provided by OGE. He said this Friday, May 7, the OU Environmental Students will be working in Eastridge Park.

Mr. Vermillion said he will be planting 3-4 more trees this week along Berry Road.

ITEM 6, being:

ADJOURNMENT

Member Huffman made the motion and Member Pape seconded to adjourn. The vote was taken with the following results:

YEAH: Chairman Menzie and Members, Fagin, Huffman, Pape, and Spain

NAY: None

Passed and approved this 7th of June 2021

Don Menzie, Chairperson


