

TO: Mayor Marchione and City Council

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DATE: April 2, 2013

SUBJECT: STAFF REPORT: COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AND ZONING CODE AMENDMENTS REGARDING TREE PROTECTION EXCEPTIONS

The purpose of this staff report is to brief the City Council on proposed amendments to the Redmond Zoning Code (RZC) and Comprehensive Plan in advance of a study session on this topic scheduled for April 9, 2013.

As part of the staff report, staff will ask if there are particular issues or questions that Council members would like to discuss during the study session.

BACKGROUND

Neighbors and Citizens for a Sustainable Redmond (Sustainable Redmond), represented by Tom Hinman, Board Member, applied for amendments to the RZC and Comprehensive Plan related to exceptions to tree protection regulations. Specifically, the requested amendments would:

Comprehensive Plan Amendment

- Add a definition for Technical Committee to the Glossary

RZC Amendments

- Add a definition for Technical Committee
- Revise code provisions regarding tree protection exceptions: notice boards, neighborhood meetings, and tree replacement ratios and tree retention percentages

RZC Appendix 6

- Revise standards for extraordinary notice boards to include proposed tree exceptions

The applicant has stated that reasons for the proposals are:

- To engage the community more broadly in tree protection exceptions
- To remove special consideration of exceptions for master plans in urban centers
- To establish minimums for tree retention percentages for exceptions
- To retain some number of existing trees on sites undergoing development
- To modify the Comprehensive Plan and RZC to include a definition of the Technical Committee

Staff distributed the Planning Commission Report to City Council on March 20, 2013. The report is also available to the public online by visiting www.redmond.gov/PlanningCommission and then selecting “Topics Under Review” on the left side of the web page.

PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

The Planning Commission studied the proposed amendments during January and February 2013. The Commission held a public hearing on the topic on January 16, 2013, holding open written testimony until January 23, 2013. Ten people testified orally during the public hearing and 13 parties submitted written testimony. The testimony is included with the Planning Commission Report. After the closing of testimony, Planning Commission completed discussion and consideration of the amendments and made its recommendations.

The Planning Commission recommended denial of the applicant’s requested amendments to the Comprehensive Plan and the Zoning Code. While the Planning Commission commented that the City’s notice boards are not effective, asked staff to review Redmond’s standards for notice, and emphasized the need for public comment on development proposals as provided for in the RZC, they did not find that changes to the Zoning Code relating to public engagement were necessary.

Specifically, Commission asked staff to review the City’s standards for notice boards with regard to aspects of design and content, such as the use of icons to note exceptions and QR codes, or similar technology, to make easy links to more information. Staff is following up on this request and will provide an update this summer.

The Planning Commission majority recommended denial of the applicant’s proposed amendments to tree retention percentages and tree replacement ratios, finding the changes contrary to Redmond’s vision and policies. They also reasoned that a minimum required retention percentage for exceptions could preclude development entirely for some parcels.

The Commission recommended a change in referencing the definition of the term, “Technical Committee,” in the Comprehensive Plan and the Zoning Code. The recommendation calls for hyperlinking to the Redmond Municipal Code to provide the definition of the term. The reasons for this recommendation were to prevent loss of synchronicity between instances of the definition as documents are updated and to provide one place to look for the definition.

BRIEFINGS WITH PLANNING AND PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE

Staff briefed the Planning and Public Works Committee on this topic on February 12, 2013. During the briefing, members of the Committee expressed questions and concerns regarding the following topics, which are beyond the scope of the applicant's proposed amendments:

- Penalties for violation and enforcement of protection regulations
- Requirements for approval to remove dangerous trees
- Consideration of "junk trees" (cottonwoods and alders)

Staff addressed these questions and concerns at the subsequent Committee meeting on March 12, 2013. The Committee was satisfied with the responses and supported proceeding with consideration of the applicant's proposal, as docketed as a part of the 2012-13 Annual Comprehensive Plan Amendment Package.

COUNCIL REVIEW SCHEDULE

The City Council is scheduled to review this proposal at its April 9, 2013, study session. To help make the best use of Council's time, staff requests that Council members identify in advance particular questions or issues to discuss at the study session. Council members are invited to share those with staff at the April 2, 2013, meeting during the staff report, or any time prior to the study session.

After the Council has had an opportunity to study the proposal, staff will bring it forward for action.