



NEWS

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Town hall meetings on Tree Ordinance

GLYNN COUNTY, Ga. – Glynn County will hold two town hall style meetings on Tuesday, March 22nd and Tuesday, March 29th from 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. to present the public with proposed changes to the St. Simons Island Tree Ordinance. Meetings will be held at the Strickland Auditorium located at Epworth by the Sea, 100 Arthur J Moore Dr., St. Simons Island, Ga. A quorum of the Glynn County Board of Commissioners is possible at both meetings.

Public comments will be accepted at the meeting. In addition, those who wish to do so may submit comments via the Glynn County website at www.glynncounty.org/SSItreeordinance. Comments submitted prior to the Friday before each meeting may be discussed.

The aim of the proposed amendments to the current ordinances is to protect the tree canopy of St. Simons Island. The tree ordinance committee has been meeting since the spring of 2015 and is comprised of:

Tim Murphy – Mainland Planning Commission
Joel Willis – Islands Planning Commission
Stan Humphries – Islands Planning Commission
Miriam Lancaster – Golden Isles Fund for Trees
Charles Taylor – Chairman, Tree Advisory Board

Cesar Rodriguez – Tree Advisory Board
Brad Brumbach – Golden Isles Custom Homes
David Hainley – Community Development Director
Will Worley – Senior Assistant County Attorney

Advisor: Dr. Don Gardner – UGA Extension Service

The following concepts have been proposed for public review:

ST. SIMONS TREE CANOPY ORDINANCE CONCEPTS

- a) Only applies on St. Simons Island.
- b) Must have Tree Plan approved by Islands Planning Commission prior to application for a site plan, building permit, preliminary plat, expedited subdivision, or land disturbance permit for: 1) all commercial property, 2) all industrial property, or 3) residential property of one acre or more.
- c) All affected developments must provide, or be designed to provide, at least 50% tree canopy after development.
- d) Tree canopy requirement is measured in open soil area preserved for the growth of trees. Research shows that every square foot of open soil area produces two square feet of tree canopy.
- e) The tree canopy requirement is determined by multiplying the area of the property (measured in square feet) by .25. This formula produces the total square footage that must be preserved as open soil area dedicated to trees.
- f) Canopy requirements can be met by preserving trees or planting new trees.
- g) For commercial properties of less than one acre, up to one half of the tree canopy requirement may be met by off-site planting without need for IPC approval.
- h) For commercial property of one acre or more, up to one half of the tree canopy requirement may be met by off-site planting with the approval of the IPC.
- i) Retained, existing trees (at least six inches in diameter measured at 4.5 feet above grade) will be given credit based upon the actual open soil area provided. Planted trees will be required to provide a minimum open soil area as follows: 1,500 sq. ft. for Large Canopy Trees; 550 sq. ft. for Medium Canopy Trees; and 250 sq. ft. for Understory Trees.

- j) For every specimen tree preserved, the property owner will be credited with an extra 25% for every square foot of open soil area. (i.e. – If the owner preserves 100 sq. ft. of open area for a specimen tree, they will be given credit for 125 sq. ft.)
- k) The Tree Advisory Board has a list of trees considered to be “specimen” trees.
- l) Tree protection zones must be established and maintained for canopy trees for the duration of the development process.
- m) Tree protection zones shall be established on private property for trees located on County right-of-way or other County property if the root system extends onto private property. In this instance, property owners will be given credit toward the canopy requirement for the trees in the right-of-way or on County property.
- n) Alternative compliance methods: If a property owner cannot meet the canopy requirements then they may meet the requirement by planting trees at another site on SSI.
- o) Property owners will have a continuing obligation to maintain the health of the tree.
- p) Reconstruction after Act of God (commercial property only) – no new tree canopy required unless other requirements (reduced number of parking spaces, buffers, similar requirements) free up space for tree planting. If space is freed up, then it must be used for tree planting.
- q) Approval process will be: 1) submit Tree Plan to County’s arborist, 2) the Tree Plan goes to the Tree Advisory Board for a recommendation, 3) the Tree Plan is considered by the Islands Planning Commission. Only after approval of the Tree Plan may a property owner apply for a site plan, building permit, preliminary plat, expedited subdivision, or land disturbance permit.
- r) A sign will be placed on the property with notice of the date, time, and place of the meeting where a Tree Plan will be considered. There will not be a public hearing.
- s) Applicants may appeal denial of Tree Plan to Board of Appeals.
- t) Penalties: In addition to the normal penalties for violation of a County ordinance: 1) If a tree protected by the Tree Plan is cut down or removed then the trunk will be measured (in caliper inches) and it must be replaced with the same number of caliper inches. 2) If a tree protected by the Tree Plan is cut down or removed then the open soil area shall not be developed. 3) If the Tree Plan is violated during development then a stop work order

can be issued until the problem is remedied. 4) Tree trimming companies can be cited for cutting down trees protected by the Tree Plan.

The following concept was not supported for inclusion in an ordinance by a majority of the Committee. However, a majority of the Committee did agree upon its being presented to you for consideration.

Trees may be designated as a “Heritage Tree” by the Tree Advisory Board with consent of property owner. After designation, Heritage Trees may not be cut or removed without permission from the Tree Advisory Board. Any time after designation, the current or subsequent property owner may petition the Tree Advisory Board for the removal of the Heritage Tree designation.

Changes suggested by Board of Commissioners on Feb. 16th

- ▶ Denial of Tree Plan should be appealed to Board of Commissioners rather than Zoning Board of Appeals
- ▶ Staff should be given discretion to modify some standards (i.e. buffers, setbacks, etc.) to help developers meet tree requirements
- ▶ A streamlined procedure for amending a previously approved Tree Plan should be added for individual homeowners with a hardship

PROCEDURE FOR CALCULATING TREE CANOPY REQUIREMENT:

CR = Canopy Requirement; SA = Site Area

$CR = SA \times 0.25$

Step 1: Area of total site from boundary survey.

Step 2: Divide area (in square feet) by four.

Step 3: Subtract preserved tree area from step 2.

Step 4: Select enough replacement trees to equal area in step 3.

Example 1: Following site to be developed:

Step 1: One acre site = 43,560 sq. ft.

Step 2: Canopy requirement figure.

$43,560 \div 4 = 10,890$ sq. ft. of open soil area to meet canopy requirement.

Step 3: Preserved trees left on site = 5,500 sq. ft.

10,890 minus 5,550 = 5,390 sq. ft. of replacement trees.

Step 4: Replacement trees required to meet canopy area requirement.

5,390 sq. ft. of area to be planted in trees.

Large Canopy trees = 1,500 sq. ft.

Medium Canopy trees = 550 sq. ft.

Understory trees = 250 sq. ft.

2 Large Canopy trees x 1,500 sq. ft. = 3,000 sq. ft.

3 Medium canopy trees x 550 sq. ft. = 1,650 sq. ft.

3 Understory trees x 250 sq. ft. = 750 sq. ft.

Total square footage of trees planted: 5,400 sq. ft.

THE 5,400 SQ. FT. OF PLANTED TREES HAS MET THE CANOPY AREA REQUIREMENT.

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