



WILDWOOD

August 15, 2023

MEMORANDUM

To: Planning and Parks Committee Members

From: Department of Planning and Parks

Re: **Tree Preservation and Restoration Code's Landscape Manual-Sustainable Plantings Guide (Ward – All)**

Cc: The Honorable James R. Bowlin, Mayor
Thomas Lee, City Administrator
John A. Young, City Attorney
Rick Brown, P.E. and P.T.O.E., Director of Public Works
Melanie Rippetoe, Assistant Director of Planning and Parks
Kristin Naeger, Superintendent of Parks and Recreation
Travis Newberry, Senior Planner

BACKGROUND INFORMATION >>> The City Council recently approved and adopted new regulations that were intended to update the City's Tree Preservation and Restoration Code, one (1) of Wildwood's hallmarks of environmental laws passed by the community during its early years. These new regulations are intended to better protect 'grand trees and related stands;' better define protected areas through new terms and processes; and implement higher standards for mitigation and restoration, when woodlands and certain trees are impacted by the City's allowances for land use purposes. This process utilized a number of expert resources to ensure the outcome of the regulations were respectful of certain property rights, but recognized that Wildwood is about trees and ensuring their health and retention, whenever possible.

As part of this discussion about the regulations, the Department had noted to the Planning and Zoning Commission, and then to the City Council, the promulgation of these items was the first step in a two (2) step process. The regulations have always been accompanied by other needed materials for the appropriate implementation of methods of protecting trees, both as a function of planning for development and thereafter as it occurs near or around these protected assets. Also included with these materials were landscaping practices and preferred planting methods as well. Accompanying this information were materials that also highlighted native species and others determined to be sustainable and not depending on groundwater resources for mortality. Combined, these materials formed the City's Landscape Manual and Sustainable Plantings Guide.

These publications, Landscape Manual and Sustainable Plantings Guide, formed the second step in this update process. Given the technical nature of these documents, the amount of information conveyed by them, and the need for graphics and other aides for users, in conjunction with the need to understand the components of the final, adopted regulations for these purposes, they were not completed at the same time of the adoption of the legislation. Again, it was noted in all reports and letters, these documents would follow thereafter and complete the process, once the regulations were adopted by the Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council.

These documents are the linchpins to successful tree preservation and protection practices, while assisting in the decision making processes regarding future plantings and how to mitigate damaging acts to the woodland resources of Wildwood. The importance of good guides cannot be overstated, which also justified completing them as part of a second step in this process. The current version of the Landscape Manual has been in phase since 1996, while the Sustainable Plantings Guide was added in 2014. Each, just by their respective adoption dates, need to be revamped and updated.

NEXT STEPS >>> At tonight's meeting, the Department is seeking certain authorizations to proceed with the development and formulation of these documents through the engagement of a consultant team. As part of the development of these materials, the Department would like to offer these recommended steps or changes to the documents for this major update:

1. Combine the two (2) documents into a single format for ease of use and access.
2. Add more graphics than text.
3. Use a Landscape Architect, Arborist, and Graphic Designer to assist in the development of the format and content.
4. Complete the process by the start of the first quarter of 2024.

The outcome of these changes would be a document that is easy to use, provides both technical tools for the practitioner, but easily allows a Wildwood homeowner to access information to help them in making tree and landscaping decisions on their respective properties. Despite an ambitious time schedule, the Department believes such is necessary, given the day-to-day decisions property owners and City personnel are making relative to one (1) of Wildwood's greatest assets – its woodlands and trees. Therefore, direction on these items is being sought from the Committee Members.

OTHER AND CONTACT INFORMATION >>> If any of the Committee Members should have any questions or comments regarding this information, please feel free to contact the Department of Planning at (636) 458-0440. A presentation is planned on these items at tonight's meeting. Thank you for your review of this information and input on the same.