
MARCH 25 PLANNING COMMISSION WORK SESSION: AGENDA ITEM 3 - VEGETATION PRESERVATION CODE UPDATES

From Brock <golfersontheroad@yahoo.com>

Date Mon 3/24/2025 10:03 AM

To Jacob Foutz <Jacob.Foutz@ci.florence.or.us>

TO: Debbie Ubnoske, Chairperson
Laurie Green, Vice Chairperson
Marylin Datzman, Commissioner
Eric Hauptman, Commissioner
Renee LoPilato, Commissioner
Lucas McQuillan, Commissioner
Sandra Young, Commissioner

I'm writing to you today regarding your March 25 agenda item "Vegetation Preservation Code Updates."

BACKGROUND

I've been communicating since last fall with Jacob Foutz regarding AR 24 05 VEG 02: VEGETATION CLEARING LOT 3200 (Jose Perez). This is a case of the property owner removing trees from the property in violation of City Code. This property is just a hundred feet or so from mine at 1630 32nd Street.

This situation has brought to my attention that, despite the property owner being in violation of City Code, the City has very little recourse when it comes to penalties and mitigation. Although the Code allows for "replacement of damaged or removed vegetation which approximates the site condition prior to the offense," the property owner replaced 40-50' tall pines with 4' evergreens – that can hardly be considered restoring the site to anything like its former condition. Further, property owners/developers repeatedly violate this section of the Code because there's very little penalty for doing so. I've heard, as I'm sure you have, that owners/developers are more than willing to risk the insignificant fines that are imposed for violations in exchange for doing as they please.

MOVING FORWARD

I've provided the above for context, but I'm less interested in what's happened in the past and more anxious to see the City preserve our trees.

Trees provide environmental benefits including stormwater retention, shade, wildlife habitat and reduced energy consumption. Trees also provide separation between car traffic and residential and pedestrian areas. Trees help to bolster property values in residential and commercial areas, and improve the aesthetic appeal of our city streets. Trees can add value to the property where they sit, but also positively influence the values of properties nearby.

The City made a commitment to maintain and grow our tree cover when it sought and was granted designation as a Tree City USA. I urge you to follow through on that commitment by strengthening the Vegetation Preservation section of the City Code. I would also appeal to you to consider establishing a Tree Board that can assist the Planning Commission in protecting the trees in our community, as well as help residents and businesses in the community understand and appreciate the benefits of maintaining trees rather than cutting them down.

Respectfully,
Dolly Brock
Florence, OR 97439