



City of Largo, Florida

Post Office Box 296, Largo, Florida 33779-0296

MEMO DATE: October 16, 2004

AGENDA DATE: October 19, 2004, Regular Meeting

PREPARED BY: Michael J. Staffopoulos, P.E., Community Development Director
Carol Stricklin, AICP, Assistant Community Development Director

TITLE: ORDINANCE NO. 2005-07 – FIRST READING - COMPREHENSIVE DEVELOPMENT CODE AMENDMENTS, CHAPTER 6, LANDSCAPING STANDARDS

BACKGROUND:

Staff is requesting approval of amendments to Chapter 6, Landscaping Standards, of the Comprehensive Development Code (CDC) to amend the requirements for replacement of trees on developed, single-family lots to relieve the burden on single-family homeowners who currently are required to pay into the City of Largo's tree fund for tree removal. The City Commission directed staff at a work session on August 10, 2004, to prepare amendments to the CDC for review by the Planning Board. The Planning Board reviewed and recommended approval of the amendments at their October 7, 2004 meeting.

The City of Largo CDC protects trees and native vegetation during new development and on developed properties. Tree removal permits apply to protected trees, which are defined as trees with a diameter of greater than four (4) inches, measured four and one-half feet above the ground, and certain palms. Tree protection requirements are enforced during review of development orders for new development and review of tree removal permit applications for individual trees on developed properties. Replacement of removed trees on individual, developed properties is sometimes more difficult due to space constraints and other factors, particularly with regard to single-family development. When a protected tree is removed, the CDC requires replacement of the tree or payment into the tree fund.

The amount of tree replacement required varies based upon the diameter of the tree being removed. Larger trees provide greater value to the community and take longer to replace and are therefore afforded greater protection. Trees between four (4) inches and fifteen (15) inches require replacement of one (1) inch diameter of new trees for each inch removed. The ratio increases to two (2) inches of new trees per inch removed for trees between 15 and 30 inches in size, and to three (3) inches of new trees per inch removed. If the property owner is not able to plant the replacement trees on site, a tree replacement fee of \$25.00 per inch is paid into the City of Largo's tree fund, which is used to pay for trees planted throughout the City on public property.

Tree removal on single family properties can require payment by the homeowner into the replacement fund if tree replacement is not feasible on site. Tree removal for single-family homes is requested for a variety of reasons, including circumstances when trees are dead or diseased, have become too large for the lot and are damaging building foundations or sidewalks. Dead and diseased trees are exempt from fees, however, removal of healthy trees requires replacement or payment into the fund, which can place a significant economic burden on the homeowner. Staff has prepared the following amendments to provide relief to single family properties from this requirement.

Recommended Amendment

Staff is recommending exempting single-family properties that meet the minimum planting requirements for single-family development from tree replacement requirements, except for trees over 30 inches in diameter. Providing protection to large specimen trees would protect the character of older neighborhoods from removal of high-value trees. However, the replacement ratio for 30 inch or greater trees would be reduced for single family development. Instead of requiring replacement at a ratio of three (3) inches of new trees per one (1) inch removed, staff is recommending a one to one (1:1) ratio.

In addition, staff is recommending amending the minimum planting requirements to adjust the number of trees required for single-family residential development based upon the size of the lot. Currently, single family lots, regardless of size, are required to have two (2) canopy trees. Staff is proposing that each single-family lot contain a minimum of two (2) canopy trees for lots up to 5,000 square feet. An additional two (2) caliper inches of canopy or under story trees for every 2,500 square feet of lot area (but not a portion thereof) in excess of 5,000 square feet, excluding wetlands and water drainage features.

OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT & BUDGET BACKGROUND:

Not Applicable.

BUDGETARY IMPACT:

The proposed amendment will reduce the amount of tree replacement funds collected for single family residences. A total of \$99,275.00 was collected in fiscal year 2004, of which single family permits are a small component.

CONSEQUENT ACTION:

Second Reading and Public Hearing on the Comprehensive Development Code amendments is scheduled for November 2, 2004.

REVIEWED BY AND RECOMMENDATION:

The City Manager, City Attorney, Assistant City Manager, Community Development Director, and Assistant Community Development Director have reviewed the Comprehensive Development Code amendments and recommend approval.

POTENTIAL MOTION:

I MOVE TO APPROVE/DISAPPROVE ORDINANCE NO. 2005-07 ON FIRST READING AND SCHEDULE A SECOND READING AND PUBLIC HEARING ON NOVEMBER 2, 2004.

Attachment: Ordinance

