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Subject: Comments for Planning Commission Public Hearing - 7/22
Date: Tuesday, July 21, 2020 2:26:17 PM

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Public Hearing Comments for Planning Commission Meeting of July 22, 2020

Commissioners –

These written comments are provided in lieu of on-line oral testimony as you continue your review of the Tree Canopy Strategic Plan. They follow on my earlier emailed comments of July 3, 2020 on the same topic.

First, let me clarify the intent of the 2013 vintage attachment to my earlier submission. I wished to demonstrate how long these conversations have been on-going. They were presented to the Planning Commission then considering a Comp Plan Amendment proposed by Sustainable Redmond in the aftermath of the Group Health tree removal process. (The first few slides were addressed to that reviewing body at the time.) By including projects since 2010, the numbers presented in the Powerpoint give more historical insights than presented in the current staff memo. The findings also address continued concerns about the lenient granting of exceptions to tree retention regulations.

Tree Definitions – In my memo of June 12/email of July 3, I addressed the confusion arising from the use of the same term – “significant” – referring to both the overall tree retention goal and to those tree specimens over 6 inches dbh. I recommended establishment of a separate tree retention target for landmark trees. See if this suggestion is any clearer.

Significant tree – tree for which a replacement tree (or trees) must be planted as mitigation for tree loss and to attain tree canopy goals.

Mature tree – (currently categorized as “significant” tree) Tree over 6 inches dbh for which a 1-to-1 replacement must be planted per current regulations. A minimum of 35% of mature trees must be retained, which corresponds to current regulations. Increasing the minimum to 40% would be consistent with the Tree Canopy Strategic Plan target.

Landmark tree – as currently defined, a tree over 30 inches dbh for which a 3-to-1 replacement must be planted per current regulations. Current regulations state that 100% of landmark trees must be retained unless an exception is granted in the permitting process. This high standard is rarely met and may be impractical in practice. Accordingly, I recommend that a minimum of 65% of landmark trees must be retained and that more stringent exception criteria be instituted in compensation for the reduction from 100%.

In lieu fees, mitigation enforcement and survival monitoring – I previously recommended review of these items for trees removed in Redmond. Regarding in-lieu fees, I would suggest \$500 for a Mature tree and at least \$750 for Landmark tree mitigation. (Even these values seem modest but are an improvement over the current fee structure.) Further, I recommend that the quarterly tree loss report being proposed by staff include the amount received as in-lieu fees and any relevant findings regarding mitigation enforcement, survival rates of plant stock by project, and corrective actions taken if warranted.

“No net loss” – The statement regarding **NE113** *Maintain no net loss of significant trees within the city over the long term* is necessary but imprecise. What is “long term?” I would suggest that it should be less than a 10 year period but should be informed by findings resulting from the “quarterly metrics and rigid reporting requirements” proposed by staff.

Issue Matrix Items #5 & 7 – I concur that the regulatory improvements being recommended need to be addressed in a Planning context (as is apparently in progress) rather than by Parks. I would be pleased to participate in that process.

Thank you for your consideration,
Tom Hinman

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