



Oak Lodge Community Council

Your Clackamas County-recognized Community Planning Organization (CPO) • www.oaklodgpcpo.org

September 3, 2010

Jennifer Hughes

Clackamas County Planning Division

Development Services Building

150 Beaver Creek Road

Oregon City, Oregon 97045

Re: Oak Lodge Community Council comments on Revised Draft Tree Ordinance

Dear Ms. Hughes:

The Oak Lodge Community Council remains in favor of a Tree Ordinance that fulfills the goals set by the Clackamas County Board of Commissioners to “maintain, preserve and enhance the tree canopy in the urban, unincorporated area of the County.”

Before addressing the proposed Revised Tree Ordinance, we wish to acknowledge and express our strong support of the steps that the Board took at its June 28th meeting to enhance the tree canopy through strategies such as increased tree planting and public education. In our own area, the Stringfield Park and River Villa Park improvement projects, jointly sponsored by the County Parks Department and the Oak Lodge Sanitary District, reflect this approach, are strongly supported by the community, and achieve the desired goals of tree canopy enhancement and improved ecological health at minimum expense to the County while producing significant value and savings to the local community in the execution of the Sanitary District’s capital improvement program.

We have the following comments on the proposed Revised Tree Ordinance.

1. Some of the people opposed to a Tree Ordinance have a substantial number of trees on their lots and are managing their trees in a manner consistent with the spirit of the Tree Ordinance. They value the benefits of a healthy tree canopy. It is critical that these citizens understand the purpose of the proposed Ordinance and have protection in the proposed Ordinance, so that the community can come together to address our shared concern about our diminishing tree canopy. To address this concern, the County may wish to consider the following changes:
 - Setting the limit to trees cut per year to a percentage of trees on the lot (say, 10%),
 - Allowing lot owners to manage their trees in accordance with a plan approved by a licensed arborist, or
 - Allowing an exception to lot owners who meet certain criteria, such as belonging to, or taking classes from, an appropriate organization, such as a Small Woodland Owners Association.

If the annual tree-cutting limit is going to remain a specific number, we recommend that that number be changed to 2 per year, as set in the original Draft Tree Ordinance.

2. We believe that restrictions resulting from Excessive Tree Cutting should be applied to the deed. This approach prevents a lot owner from escaping the penalty by “selling” the lot to a friend or relative who can then develop the lot immediately, as happened in the infamous “heron rookery” case in Oak Grove.
3. We recommend that the County consider giving special status to Heritage Trees and other notable trees (determined perhaps by DBH or by diameter of the circle made by the drip line). Such trees might be noted on an application, and planned removal could be included in any required review.
4. We believe that there are a number of significant terms that should be defined, including “specimen trees”, “significant trees” and “wherever feasible” (existing language in 1002.05.A).
5. We continue to recommend the changes to the Comprehensive Plan we provided in our response to the original Draft Tree Ordinance (see attached). In particular, we strongly recommend establishment of an Urban Forestry Commission to
 - a. assist the County Commissioners in matters of urban forest stewardship,
 - b. measure the tree canopy to establish a benchmark, and
 - c. assist the County Commissioners in developing a goal for the tree canopy and a plan to meet that goal, and measure the progress of efforts to maintain and enhance the canopy in coming years,.

Finally, we wish to express our gratitude to the Board of Commissioners and to the County staff who have continued to work to address the issues surrounding the health of the tree canopy of Clackamas County within the Urban Growth Boundary.

Sincerely,

Eleanore Hunter, Chair
Oak Lodge Community Council