



**Agenda Planning Commission
Gig Harbor Civic Center
Thursday, March 16, 2023 5:30 P.M.**

This meeting may also be accessed through Zoom at <https://zoom.us/j/95353411299> or by calling (253) 215- 8782 and entering Meeting ID 953 5341 1299. Please see the Public Comment & Decorum section at the end of this agenda for information on options to make public comment.

This meeting may also be viewed live in the Community Rooms at the Civic Center.

- I. Call to Order/Roll Call:**

- II. Approval of Minutes: March 2, 2023**

- III. Public Comment:**

- IV. Agenda Items:**
 - a. Tree Ordinance Study Session

- V. Other Business: Next meeting Thursday, April 6, 2023**

- VI. Adjournment:**

PUBLIC COMMENT & DECORUM

Commenters will be allotted 3 minutes per individual, unless revised by the Chair. In-person comments shall be made from the microphone, first giving the speaker's name and address. When there are 30 seconds remaining, staff will alert you to summarize your comments. At the end of your comments, staff will notify you it has come to the end of your comment period. Anyone making "out of order" comments may be subject to removal from the meeting.

Public comment may be made remotely via Zoom or by phone during designated portions of the meeting. To speak during the meeting, press the Raise Hand button near the bottom of your Zoom window or press *9 on your phone. Please refrain from raising your hand until the Chair has announced that the Commission has opened the public comment portion of the meeting. Your name or the last three digits of your phone number will be called out when it is your turn to speak.

When using your phone to call in, you may need to press *6 to unmute yourself. All speakers will have up to three minutes to speak.

All remarks shall be addressed to the Commission as a body and not to any specific Commissioner. All speakers shall be courteous in their language and deportment and shall not engage in or discuss or comment on personalities or indulge in derogatory remarks or insinuations with regard to any Commissioner, the Chair, or any member of the staff or the public.

There will be no demonstrations during or at the conclusion of any public comment. These guidelines are intended to promote an orderly system of holding a public meeting, to give every person an opportunity to be heard and to ensure that no individuals are embarrassed by voicing their opinions.

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES (ADA) ACCOMMODATIONS ADA accommodations can be provided upon request. Those requiring special accommodations should contact the City Clerk at cityclerk@giharborwa.gov or (253) 853-7613 at least 24 hours prior to the meeting.



**Minutes for Gig Harbor Planning Commission
Gig Harbor Civic Center
Thursday, March 2, 2023 5:30 P.M.**

- I. Call to Order/Roll Call:** Chair Krawczyk called the meeting to order at 5:35 p.m. Commissioners Bradbury, Soltess, Brown, Burcar (virtually) and Snodgrass were present. Jordan was not in attendance
City Staff: Principal Planner, Robin Bolster-Grant; Senior Planner, Roxanne Robles & Planning Technician, Michelle Thomas were present
- II. Approval of Minutes:** Move to approve minutes for February 16, 2023 (Bradbury/Brown) Unanimously approved
- III. Public Comment:** No public comment
- IV. Agenda Items:**
 - a. Climate Action Plan (CAP) Engagement Plan & Schedule – Staff presentation by Robles and Commission discussion
 - b. Tree Ordinance Study Session - Staff presentation by Robles and Commission discussion
- V. Other Business:** Next meeting Thursday, March 16, 2023 – Tree Ordinance Study Session. Commissioner Brow’s handout and discussion regarding ideas related to the Comprehensive Plan Update
- VI. Adjournment:** 7:34

Michelle Thomas
Michelle Thomas
Planning Technician



TO: Gig Harbor Planning Commission

FROM: Planning Staff

DATE: March 9, 2023

RE: Proposed Gig Harbor Tree Ordinance

The City of Gig Harbor has committed to the long-term management and stewardship of its urban forest through the development of an Urban Forestry Management Plan. The City has contracted with Davey Resource Group, Inc. (Davey) to develop the plan which should be delivered in draft form in April 2023.

Several pieces of the proposed tree ordinance were presented at the March 2, 2023 Planning Commission meeting. Planning Commissioners provided great feedback on how to move forward with issues related to a potential City Tree Commission, tree removal related with development, replanting requirements, and tree removal applications. Staff would like further input from the Planning Commission on a few more pieces of the proposed tree ordinance. Major questions for the Planning Commission are as follows:

- Should the City formalize definitions of ‘screening’, ‘buffer’ and ‘perimeter areas’? The use of these terms throughout tree and landscaping regulations emphasizes trees as a means to screen or buffer, rather than an ecological and aesthetic resource. Trees can be both a means to obscure unsightly or incompatible uses as well as ecological and aesthetic resources. However, the code at present does not define these terms, and uses them somewhat interchangeably. In a survey of existing regulations, the use of the terms are as follows:
 - Screen: Obscure from view
 - Buffer: To separate incompatible uses

- Perimeter: Outer boundaries of a lot or structure
- Should the City formalize irrigation standards? Applicants routinely are confused about what is considered an appropriate irrigation system and for how long they are required to establish and maintain trees and landscaping. Proposed definitions of irrigation and the implementation of irrigation systems:

17.xxx – IRRIGATION

A permanent system which applies controlled amounts of water to land to grow and maintain trees, landscaping, crops, and to revegetate disturbed soils during times of below-average rainfall. Irrigation is intended to ensure that plants will survive the critical establishment period when they are most vulnerable due to lack of watering. All required plantings must provide an irrigation system.

17.xxx – IRRIGATION, TEMPORARY

A system which applies controlled amount of water to land to grow and maintain trees, landscaping, crops, and to revegetate disturbed soils of below-average rainfall for a specified period of time. A temporary irrigation system may be removed after the specified period of time designated by the planning division if trees, landscaping, crops, or revegetation has been successfully established.

17.78.xxx Irrigation standards

The intent of this standard is to ensure that plants will survive the critical establishment period when they are most vulnerable. All required plantings must provide an irrigation system, using either Option 1, 2, or 3 or a combination of those options:

- A. Option 1. A permanent built-in irrigation system with an automatic controller designed and certified by a licensed landscape architect as part of the landscape plan.
- B. Option 2. An irrigation system designed and certified by a licensed landscape architect as part of the landscape plan, which provides sufficient water to ensure that the plants will become established. The system does not have to be permanent if the plants chosen can survive adequately on their own, once established.
- C. Option 3. Irrigation by hand, which includes the use of water bags. If the applicant chooses this option, an inspection will be required one year after final inspection to ensure that the landscaping has become established.

The selected irrigation option shall be specified on the landscape or tree plan. For each option irrigation shall be designed to conserve water by using the best practical management techniques available. These techniques may include, but not be limited to: drip irrigation to minimize evaporation loss, moisture sensors to prevent irrigation during rainy periods, automatic controllers to ensure proper

duration of watering, sprinkler head selection and spacing designed to minimize overspray, and separate zones for turf and shrubs and for full sun exposure and shady areas to meet watering needs of different sections of the landscape.

Exceptions, as approved by the Director, to the irrigation requirement may be approved for xeriscape (i.e., low water usage plantings) or established indigenous plant material. However, those exceptions will require temporary irrigation (Option 2 and/or 3) until established.

- Should the City formalize an incentives and variance system for tree and landscaping standards? At present the alternative landscape plan requirements and approval process are administrative and present a fairly low bar, they also do not provide incentives for those development projects that preserve more trees.

17.78.XXX Incentives and Variations to Development Standards

The Director may authorize modification of the landscape requirements in this chapter through the administrative variance procedures within GHMC Chapter 17.66. The proposed alternatives must comply with the intent of this chapter and provide a superior result to that which would be achieved by strictly following requirements; or incorporate the increased retention of significant, landmark, or heritage trees and understory vegetation.

- A. Reduced landscaping requirements. Groves of natural vegetation which form a continuous canopy at least 15 feet deep (average) and at least 25 percent of the parcel size (measured from the outer edges of the trunks) will meet the requirements for on-site trees; provided that screening and buffering requirements otherwise required are met. All other landscaping requirements must be adhered to.
 - B. Reduced parking stall dimensions. Parking stalls adjacent to protected trees may be reduced to eight feet by 16 feet to avoid encroachment into tree root zones.
 - C. Encroachment into setbacks. Structures and parking areas may encroach into required setbacks if it can be shown that such encroachment allows significant trees or tree groves to be retained. Encroachment shall be the minimum encroachment necessary to protect specified trees. In no case shall the yard be reduced to less than five feet. (Not applicable to single-family and duplex development or to development subject to zone transition standards).
- Should the City enhance GHMC 17.78.120 Maintenance? The proposal restructures the existing regulations and adds more specific expectations for the maintenance of vegetation over time.

- A. Whenever landscaping is required under the provisions of this chapter, shrubs and trees in the landscaping and planting areas shall be maintained in a healthy growing condition: ~~Planting beds shall not be located over impermeable surfaces. Dead or dying trees or shrubs shall be replaced immediately, and the planting area shall be maintained reasonably free of noxious weeds and trash.:~~
1. Planting beds shall not be located over impermeable surfaces;
 2. Dead or dying trees or shrubs shall be replaced immediately, and the planting area shall be maintained reasonably free of noxious weeds and trash.
 3. Trees or shrubs shall receive pruning or removal to avoid the creation of a safety hazard or nuisance.
- ~~B. Similarly, if necessary, the trees or shrubs shall receive pruning or removal to avoid the creation of a safety hazard or nuisance through excessive shading, overhanging adjacent properties or to preserve a view or scenic vista, subject to the provisions of GHMC 17.99.240.~~
- ~~C. Areas of natural vegetation shall be retained over time to maintain the health and fullness of natural vegetation and buffer areas as allowed in GHMC 17.99.240(G). (Ord. 1347 § 54, 2016; Ord. 1307 § 55, 2014; Ord. 1086 § 12, 2007; Ord. 975 § 72, 2004; Ord. 573 § 2, 1990).~~
- D. Maintain health and fullness of natural vegetation and buffer areas. Areas of natural vegetation shall be preserved over time, according to the following:
1. Volunteer saplings of coniferous trees should be allowed to grow to replace older, less healthy trees. However, thinning saplings is permitted to avoid overcrowding if existing trees are healthy and full. A healthy and typical spacing of larger trees in a natural or forested setting is about 12 to 15 feet on center.
 2. The order of preference in trees to be retained under a thinning maintenance program is:
 - a. Healthy coniferous and madrone trees with a 10-inch or greater trunk diameter;
 - b. Healthy coniferous and madrone trees with a six- inch or greater trunk diameter;
 - c. Smaller saplings of coniferous trees; and
 - d. Deciduous trees.
 3. No trees shall be removed if such removal results in tree spacing greater than 15 feet on center, except to remove dying or dangerous trees as determined by a qualified arborist. Full under-story vegetation shall be retained, except to thin out non-native species (e.g., blackberry, scotch broom).

- Should the City implement a proactive forest management permit? From the City of Lake Forest Park:

“Proactive forest management plan” means a plan for maintenance, management, preservation and enhancement of trees on a lot or lots that includes a qualified arborist’s approach for maintenance and pruning, tree removal, tree planting and forest enhancement over the course of five or more years.

Application requirements for a proactive forest management permit:

1. A proactive forest management plan proposal that meets the definition above.
2. A timeline for tree-related activity, including tree removal, replacement, and maintenance.

Proactive Forest Management Permit shall be granted if the application satisfies, or can be conditioned to satisfy, the following:

1. All recommendations by the city’s qualified arborist for maintenance, management, preservation and enhancement of the viability of trees on a lot or lots must be incorporated into the proactive forest management plan prior to approval.
2. The proposed tree removal and replacement plan, at minimum, does the lesser of the following:
 - a. Maintains canopy coverage at or above the applicable canopy coverage goal; or
 - b. Maintains canopy coverage at or above the percentage existing prior to tree removal.
3. If major development activity is proposed while a proactive forest management permit is active, then tree replacement must comply with subsection (D)(2) of this section and bring the parcel(s) up to the canopy coverage goal.
4. Tree removal shall not exceed tree replacement on an annual basis unless otherwise authorized by the city’s qualified arborist due to risks to viability of existing or replacement trees during the removal process.
5. Amendments to the approved proactive forest management plan may only be made with approval of both the administrator and the city’s qualified arborist.
6. The standard duration of an active proactive forest management permit is five years, unless otherwise authorized by the city’s qualified arborist.
7. Conditions necessary to safeguard trees identified for protection.
8. A notice on title, in the form required by LFPMC 16.16.190, shall be recorded by the applicant, disclosing the permit and associated tree retention conditions as required by this chapter.

9. A contract with a qualified arborist to undertake annual site visits at the expense of the applicant and submit annual progress reports to the administrator for each year that the permit is valid.