

# Residents stand tall for trees

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You start with the basics. And basically, to Linda Sisson's mind, you're dealing with a serious misunderstanding. This would be on the part of the Greenville County Council. They don't believe people care very much about trees.

Sisson says she's tired of reading that in news stories.

People in Greenville County do care about trees, she is convinced. Ask anyone who lives in Overbrook. Ask the people on Paris Mountain. Or those who have recently driven along Pelham Road. Ask folks rolling toward downtown Greenville how they like the new I-385 vista.

Or wait until August, any afternoon when you can feel the heat of an asphalt parking lot through the soles of your shoes, and the interior of your car can practically melt steel. What would you give for a tree then? A tree to park under.

Greenville County's Planning Commission has drafted a tree ordinance for parking lots. Sisson was part of a citizens advisory committee that helped. Among others on the com-



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mittee was a representative from Upstate Forever, a nonprofit advocacy group for sensible growth.

At the moment, when it comes to parking lot landscaping and trees, the county requires nothing. "We have set our own standards by having no standards," as an Upstate Forever notice puts it.

When Sisson learned that a committee of the County Council — the Public Service, Planning and Development Committee — was ready to take a look at the drafted landscaping ordinance, she thought it was time. Time to clear up the misunderstanding.

The same committee looked at nearly the same proposal for parking lot

trees and other landscaping about a year ago. That went nowhere. For the same old reason, Sisson heard.

So a number of people began saying it would be a good idea to go to the committee meeting this coming Monday. Not to speak. There would be no opportunity to speak. But just to be there.

Just to show by filling every available chair that, yes, people here do care about trees. That a whole lot of people care deeply.

Sisson, who is urban forestry chairman for the Greenville Council of Garden Clubs, had an idea of who might be happy to display their interest in trees for parking lots. "I have written a letter personally to at least 450 garden club members," she says.

The garden club council represents 22 local clubs, according to Sisson. "We run the gamut of all political persuasions, yet we have in common this enormous love of beauty, and we care about the integrity of the environment."

She also sent e-mails to a

good percentage of Paris Mountain residents.

Be in Conference Room A at County Square at 5 p.m. on Monday, April 15, she told everyone.

She wrote letters to Joe Dill and Scott Case, her representatives on County Council, asking for their help. "No more hot, treeless Cherrydale Points," Sisson wrote.

Other supporters of the ordinance are likewise urging people to be at the meeting. People from Overbrook. Paris Mountain. Anyone who has driven past a piece of raw, clear-cut earth and felt angry.

They are being urged to show up for trees. To make trees for parking lots a start.

Sisson says, "If your representatives don't know how you feel, they can't represent you." She hopes that on Monday the County Council will learn exactly how people feel. She hopes it will be absolutely clear. Standing-room-only clear.

■ Jeanne Brooks' column appears on Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday. She can be reached at (864) 298-4261.