

Tree advisory committee gets to work

Landscape architect added to group

BY GARY HYNDMAN
staff writer

Three decades in the making, a long-awaited special task force has begun its work to consider conservation of the community's tree canopy.

The Greenville County Tree Advisory Committee authorized by Greenville County Council held its organizational meeting at County Square. If its catalyst has her way, its work will result in a tree ordinance designed to protect mature trees in new residential and commercial developments.

Diane Eldridge, a consultant with Upstate Forever, proposed a resolution to county council last April calling for the committee. She wants a county ordinance to provide some protection for mature trees and replacement of those removed at building sites. The ordinance wouldn't affect individual homeowners.

Retention of trees is encouraged in the county code but not required.

The resolution was delayed for months by disputes over who should serve on the committee and what its duties should be.

Eldridge was among the 10 members who began to meet last week to hammer

The Greenville County Tree Advisory Committee

Diane Eldridge, consultant with Upstate Forever

David Holmes, attorney

Coleman Shouse, homebuilder

Tom Keith, landscape architect

Steve Smith, timber executive and forester

Sandra Hamin, Greenville Council of Garden Clubs representative

Todd Ward, Greenville County Planning Commission planner

Doug Harper, construction company executive

Dan Rawls, homebuilder and planning commission member

Gordon Seay, Realtor

Kim Kaufman, landscape architect

out non-binding recommendations to present to county council for consideration.

The committee includes two women and no minorities.

The other members are attorney David Holmes; homebuilder Coleman Shouse; landscape architect Tom Keith; timber executive and forester Steve Smith; Sandra Hamin, representing the Greenville Council of Garden Clubs; Todd Ward, a planner with the Greenville County Planning Commission; construction company executive Doug Harper; homebuilder and planning commission member Dan Rawls; and Realtor Gordon Seay.

At the meeting, the committee elected Kim Kaufman, a local landscape architect, as its 11th and final member.

Holmes was chosen chairman of the group. And Jimmy Forbes, executive director of the planning commission, is serving as its non-voting facilitator.

While the committee has nine months to complete its work, Shouse said public discussions about whether or not a tree ordinance is needed date back to the 1970s. Those discussions have become more relevant as the community has grown and mature trees have disappeared to make room for new development.

Among the issues the committee must look at is the form its final report to county council will take. Eldridge wants the group to draft a proposed ordinance that recommends minimum standards. But other members said they favor making suggestions only.

The committee is expected to decide on what form their report will take at the next meeting. Whatever they eventually recommend, it will be subject to public hearings and approval of county council.

The group agreed to meet every other Thursday at 8 a.m. at County Square. Its next meeting is scheduled for Feb. 16. All committee meetings are open to the public.

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