



COLUMBIA CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION MINUTES TUESDAY, AUGUST 2, 2022

The Columbia City Council conducted a Work Session on Tuesday, August 2, 2022 at City Hall, 1737 Main Street, Columbia, SC. The Honorable Daniel J. Rickenmann, Mayor called the meeting to order at 3:01 p.m. and the following members of Council were present: The Honorable Howard E. Duvall, Jr., The Honorable Edward H. McDowell, Jr., Mayor Pro-Tempore, The Honorable William Brennan, The Honorable Aditi Bussells, The Honorable Tina N. Herbert, and The Honorable Joe E. Taylor, Jr. Also present were Ms. Teresa Wilson, City Manager and Ms. Erika D. Moore Hammond, City Clerk. This meeting was advertised in accordance with the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act.

INVOCATION

The Honorable Edward H. McDowell, Jr., Mayor Pro-Tempore offered the invocation.

CITY COUNCIL DISCUSSION

1. Development Standards Text Amendment - Stormwater Impacts - Ms. Krista Hampton, Planning and Development Services Director and Ms. Dana Higgins, Engineering Director

Ms. Krista Hampton, Planning and Development Services Director said there are three parts to this text amendment: transitional buffer yard, street protective yard, and non-conforming site features – landscaping. The buffers we are talking about are not the same as stormwater buffers, which are regulated separately. Transitional buffer yards are landscaped areas between two land uses of different intensities intended to provide an area between commercial property and residential property or industrial property and lesser commercial property. The amendment exempts development that consists of the renovation or reuse of an existing structure where the buffer would require the reduction in the number of parking spaces in an existing parking lot. This does not exempt the entire buffer requirement, only the vegetation that would cause the removal of parking. All other requirements remain, to include a fence, if required.

Councilor Herbert said the language might need to be clearer because there have been different interpretations.

Ms. Krista Hampton, Planning and Development Services Director said I understand that people might not read it the same but the zoning ordinance gives full authority of interpretation to the zoning administrator. I have spoken with Hope Hasty and she is of the same mind and she can make a formal interpretation that is logged and establishing that clarification. If you were to make a change from what has already been reviewed by the Planning Commission, it will need to go back for review.



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Councilor Brennan asked if there are any exemptions for additions.

Ms. Krista Hampton, Planning and Development Services Director said in the last part of it, we have a provision about additions and when non-conforming site features have to come into play. It is a sliding scale percentage depending on the value invested.

Councilor Brennan asked if it is based on the construction percentage value and not the addition to the four walls.

Ms. Krista Hampton, Planning and Development Services Director said there are two: one based on construction value and the other on expansion size. There are two different thresholds. Street protective yards are landscaped areas abutting and parallel to a recorded public street right-of-way. The area between the parking lot and street. The amendment exempts development that consists of the renovation or reuse of an existing structure where the protective yard would require reduction in the number of parking spaces in an existing parking lot. This does not exempt the entire street protective yard requirement. It only exempts the vegetation that would cause the removal of parking. All other requirements remain. The final piece is non-conforming site features, an element of a property that does not meet current standards, such as landscaping. The amendment relates to existing parking lots and sites and increases the threshold at which sites do not meet current standards. Before they had to make partial landscape improvements at 50%. The text amendment removes the requirement for full compliance when 75% or more of the value of the building is expended. We are changing the partial requirement from 50% to 75%.

Councilor Herbert asked what we are trying to achieve.

Ms. Krista Hampton, Planning and Development Services Director said it is the same as the others. When you are redeveloping an existing structure coming into full compliance with the landscape code is typically a struggle because the lots are usually pretty tight. All of these were a result of what Council asked to do which was look at how we can encourage redevelopment of our existing building stock. Currently, they would have to come into full compliance with the landscape ordinance. This amendment will allow them to come into partial compliance. They would not have to do interior plantings but they would have to come into partial compliance with the protective yards and buffers, and they would have to do any necessary screenings like for dumpsters.



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Councilor Taylor said we should be helping people improve the appearance of properties in our city. This contributes to the fact that we may not have quite the appearance renovations that we could enjoy. We need to take the penalty away from making that investment.

Councilor Herbert said I am in agreement but I think the language is unclear. What I am reading is not about the parking spaces but instead the location. We are only talking about parking spaces where a buffer would be. This refers to what would require a reduction in the number of parking spaces in an existing parking lot, which sounds wide open. I think that is why people are misinterpreting it.

Ms. Krista Hampton, Planning and Development Services Director said it says in the location where the protective yard would require the reduction of a number of spaces. It is only in that spot. Only where the buffer would require the reduction or the protective yard. Those are defined areas. The new code has definitions in the back that are actually written in English.

Councilor Brennan said let's make sure we educate and market this specifically to architects, landscape designers, and general contractors. We are talking about an inventory of buildings that are pretty affordable but it will take a designer to come on board.

Councilor McDowell said all folks need to understand this. Can we put it in layman's terms so everyone can understand?

Mayor Rickenmann said we can send out information and pictures of examples so there are no questions.

Councilor Brennan asked if this would be retroactive.

Ms. Krista Hampton, Planning and Development Services Director said no, you can't make something more non-conforming.

Ms. Dana Higgins, Engineering Director said rainfall data is available by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and DHEC makes it available in their Best Management Practices Manual. They have it over many return frequencies. This is the chance of a storm happening over a given year. It ranges from 1 year frequency to 100 year frequency. A one year storm has a chance of happening 100% in one year. A 100 year storm has about 1% of happening. Today we are talking about the ten year frequency, which is a 10% chance of a storm happening in a given year because that is what we require our consultants to design by. The information provided is over 24 hours. For Richland County that is 5.30 inches. The volume is calculated based on the rainfall data, the area, the land cover, the slope, and the length of the



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watershed contributing. In the new construction example, the text amendment does not apply and must come into full compliance. In the renovation of existing structures, the amendment removes street and buffer yard requirements where parking is impacted. The text amendment is not going to adversely impact this by creating more stormwater but it will cause a loss in opportunity to reduce stormwater in the impervious area by 2.5%. There has been discussion in regards to if this violates our permits. We have a Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) and a Wastewater Consent Decree. The MS4 permit was issued in January 2010. We are required to monitor water quality and quantity within city limits and we also monitor discharge of pollutants within six watersheds within city limits. This text amendment does not violate that permit. The Wastewater Consent Decree was issued in 2014. Early on we had some supplemental and environment projects that were stormwater related which included Rocky Branch, Smith Branch, and Gills Creek. The text amendment will not violate compliance.

Councilor Bussells said are we saying that the text amendment will only impact stormwater drainage by 2.5%?

Ms. Dana Higgins, Engineering Director said yes, we took different examples and they all landed between 2.4 to 2.5% with different size properties.

Mayor Rickenmann said as we continue with stormwater projects from Rosewood all the way to downtown coordinating with DOT, it may be good for us to share the information on the innovative things we are doing to try and handle stormwater. Provide this information for all of us to share with constituents.

Ms. Dana Higgins, Engineering Director said absolutely, we have an interactive list of capital improvement projects at <https://columbiascwater.net/capital-improvement-projects/>. We update the progress of construction monthly. We also have a public facing portal for questions.

Ms. Teresa Wilson, City Manager asked if Council agrees to schedule second reading on August 16, 2022.

The consensus of Council is to schedule second reading of the Development Standards Text Amendment on August 16, 2022.



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ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 3:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Erika D. Moore Hammond, CMC
City Clerk