



## **Town of Beaufort, NC**

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### **Town of Beaufort UDO Steering Committee Meeting 2:00 PM Monday, October 20, 2025 - Virtual via Zoom Minutes**

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#### **Call to Order**

Planner Eitner called the meeting to order at approximately 2:00pm. Those in attendance were: John LoPiccolo, Town Commissioner (UDO Steering Committee Member), Ryan Neve, Planning Board Chairman (UDO Steering Committee Member), Vic Fasolino, Planning Board Member (UDO Steering Committee Member), Kelly Cousino, White Smith Cousino (UDO Consultant), Sean Scoopmire, White Smith Cousino (UDO Consultant), Kyle Garner, Planning Director (Town Staff), and Michelle Eitner, Planner (Town Staff).

#### **Minutes Approval**

1. UDO Steering Committee Draft Minutes 8.18.25

The UDO Steering Committee meeting minutes from August 18, 2025, were approved by consensus without any changes.

#### **Items for Discussion and Consideration**

1. Review of Preliminary Discussion Draft - Landscaping & Tree Preservation

Michelle Eitner (Town Planner) opened the meeting, noting that John LoPiccolo would be running late and they were still waiting for Ryan Neve and possibly Paula Gillikin to join. The committee proceeded with the discussion of the draft plant list and landscaping standards.

Sean Scoopmire outlined his planned approach for the discussion, proposing to cover tree preservation authority in North Carolina, a general orientation to the document, and specific questions and comments. At Vic Fasolino's suggestion, they decided to postpone the discussion on legal authority until Ryan Neve arrived, as he had expressed particular interest in that topic.

Sean Scoopmire provided an overview of the document's purpose, explaining it was designed to consolidate all existing standards for plants and trees in one place rather than having them spread across Sections 14, 15, and 19 of the current LDO. He clarified that the draft plant list was not comprehensive of all native plants in North Carolina or Beaufort, but rather derived from Larry Mellichamp's book *Native Plants of the Southeast*, which rates plants on a 1-4 star system for landscaping suitability. The North Carolina Audubon Society created an Excel spreadsheet based on this book, which Scoopmire had further refined by removing species only found in the Piedmont and mountain regions.

Vic Fasolino raised concerns about commercial availability of some native plants on the list, particularly noting that native hollies are difficult to find in nurseries. Scoopmire acknowledged this challenge and indicated that while some plants might not be readily available, others on the list would be.

Michelle Eitner informed the committee that the trees and landscaping component, which had been moved to Module 1 with resilience ordinances, would be moved back to Module 3 as originally planned. She explained this decision was due to timing constraints with the year-end, election season, and holidays approaching, which would limit opportunities for meaningful public input on this important topic. The material would be revisited in the second half of next year as part of Module 3, which covers related site features like lighting and parking.

The committee then discussed buffer requirements. Scoopmire asked whether zoning districts or uses should determine buffer requirements. Ryan Neve expressed support for the current use-based approach, noting it was more workable and what people were accustomed to. The consensus was that the responsibility for buffering should fall on whoever develops their property second, as making existing property owners retroactively install buffers would create practical and political challenges.

Ryan Neve pointed out that current Type A buffers, intended to "exclude all visual contact between uses," were inadequate in practice. He cited the CVS at Live Oak Street and Campen Road as an example where the buffer failed to screen the commercial development from adjacent residential properties. The committee discussed how to improve buffer effectiveness, with suggestions to calibrate density requirements and consider which trees would be appropriate, especially since many native trees are deciduous rather than evergreen.

The discussion turned to fence locations in buffers, with concerns raised about developments building on mounds (i.e., fill) that render fences ineffective as visual barriers. Kyle Garner suggested they might need to reconsider whether fences should be allowed in certain grading situations or if landscaping alone should be required instead.

Regarding Type C buffers, currently used only for screening outdoor storage, the committee agreed to maintain this as a specific screening requirement rather than a general buffer type, while coordinating with use regulations for other situations that might require similar screening.

The committee addressed the maintenance of buffers, confirming that current property owners should be responsible for maintaining plantings, and discussed placement of dumpsters and their screening requirements, which would be discussed further in Module 3.

On the topic of tree planting distances from roads and sidewalks, the committee discussed separation distances of trees from streets and sidewalks. The proposed planting distance implies an 8 foot planting strip. Kyle Garner reported that current standards require planting islands of 8 feet for parking areas. Ryan Neve suggested that the distance could vary by species, as some trees are more compatible with urban infrastructure than others.

The committee reviewed sections on town and property owner responsibilities for trees in rights-of-way. Kyle Garner suggested consulting with the Public Works Director on these provisions, as they involve coordination with maintenance operations and debris pickup services. Ryan Neve noted concerns about potential conflicts with utility companies' tree pruning practices.

Significant discussion focused on the definition and protection of public trees. Sean Scoopmire clarified that a "public tree" would need to meet both criteria in the applicability section: being listed in Table 4.3.14-3 AND located on town property. The committee discussed the appropriate diameter threshold for requiring approval before removal (currently 8 inches) and the need for clear penalties for unauthorized removal of public trees.

Regarding tree preservation on private property, Sean Scoopmire noted potential legal uncertainties under North Carolina law about requiring preservation of trees on private property without specific local

legislation, which Beaufort currently lacks. Ryan Neve suggested consulting the town attorney and potentially bringing the question to the Board of Commissioners to determine their appetite for risk in this area.

The committee discussed mitigation requirements when protected trees are removed, though they did not come to a consensus on whether replacement trees should be in addition to other required landscaping rather than counted toward those requirements. Vic Fasolino noted that the 18-inch diameter threshold for protected trees means only truly large specimens would trigger these requirements.

On species requirements, the committee discussed whether to maintain the current encouragement that 20% of trees be live oaks. Ryan Neve suggested creating a "greatest hits" list of recommended native species that do well in Beaufort's conditions, particularly those that are salt and wind tolerant.

Kelly Cousino concluded the meeting by noting that they would incorporate all feedback into the document for future consideration when it returns in Module 3. She mentioned that the team would begin working on their drafting schedule for Module 2 (zoning districts and uses) and informed the committee that staff and the consultant team would be meeting with the Board of Commissioners the following Monday about the coastal resilience overlay district.

The meeting adjourned with the understanding that the trees and landscaping provisions would be revisited in 2026 as part of Module 3 of the UDO development process.

**Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned by consensus at about 3:35pm.

\_\_\_\_\_ Committee Staff – Approved \_\_\_\_\_