

University Standing Committee Physical Environment Committee

Academic Year Covered by Report 2014-2015

Date Report Submitted May 7, 2015

Submitted by Barbara Fair

Number of times committee met 4

**Recommend:** That Barbara Fair be reappointed chair for the 2015-2016 academic year

## **SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION ITEMS/ACTIVITIES OF COMMITTEE**

### **PRESENTATIONS FROM STAFF**

**Barbara Fair** presented Barbara Fair provided a detailed slide show about the state of campus trees. Her purpose was to:

- Increase awareness of tree issues on campus
- Provide an observer's view from outside Grounds Management
- And with help from the committee, provide suggestions to increase tree health and longevity

She told the committee and guests that she had over 25 years of experience in the tree care industry, has been an International Society of Arboriculture Certified Arborist since 1994, has an urban forest management background with over 10 years in tree research, and she is a tree lover – always.

She said she was concerned about plant selection, installation and site preparation, and pruning. Concerning selection she said we need greater diversity on campus. Presently, Main Campus has 1,123 oaks out of 6,983 trees (includes trees in wooded areas). The oak population accounts for 16 percent of the trees. Of that, 48 percent of the oaks are willow oak, meaning that eight percent of the total tree population is willow oaks. It likely is much higher once Centennial Campus is included.

Most researchers indicate there should be no more than 10 percent of single genus and no more than 5 percent of single species. Diversity is needed to reduce chance of losses to insect and disease, to diversify age groups, and to provide greater diversity for desirable wildlife. Fair added that we need to understand why a tree may fail to thrive or die outright and not replace with same species.

Focusing on installation and site preparation, she said the university should follow American National Standards Institute (ANSI) standards, which are developed by expert practitioners and researchers that are based on research.

She said the reason so many young trees have had to be removed recently is due to standards not being followed and planting areas not properly prepared. Plant placement needs to be refined.

Problems with pruning on campus include:

- No consistency on campus
- Pruning is done with little to no oversight and is done by untrained crews
- The mistaken belief that pruning technique is opinion based.

Throughout her presentation, Fair provided photos to substantiate her assertion about poor plant selection, incorrect installation and site preparation, and improper pruning. Photos of diseased and dying trees, showed the resulting problems.

She concluded her presentation by asking what we can do and what we want. She said that we can:

- Provide definitive recommendations for NCSU Grounds Management
- Develop an internship program with Grounds Management to have students trained and involved in young tree training
- Develop handbook for:
  - Plant selection
  - Plant installation and site preparation
  - Pruning techniques, timing, amount. (There should be no tree pruning without authorization from the campus arborist.)

We want healthy, long-lived, safe trees, species diversity, use of appropriate industry standards for installation and maintenance techniques, and consistency across campus. All new building projects should be held to same practices – species selection and site preparation.

The Grounds Management team in attendance headed by Director Sarah Ketchem responded to Chair Fair's presentation. Ketchem said we have done things well and meet often to discuss plans and progress. Jeff DelPinal said that Grounds is aware of the concerns mentioned. They have a dedicated staff and want the same results as outlined by Fair. DelPinal continued that the team does meet often and learns from its mistakes. Rick Hilburn commented that he continually tries to ensure that his crew gets the proper training. He added that Grounds does have an extensive tree and plant replacement program. Mark Davin noted he has been in the tree care business all his life and worked for a number of companies. Grounds Management is a dedicated group open to change. Ketchem concluded the group's comments saying that they want Chair Fair there when trees are planted.

## **CAMPUS PLANNING AND DESIGN AND RESOURCE AND CONSERVATION SUBCOMMITTEE:**

The full committee met in September and November. At the September meeting, it reviewed the Textiles Innovation Center Study. The committee had a number of comments following the presentation:

- The project should look for ways to offset the increase in impervious surfaces, such as adding extensive green roofs or providing other storm water devices than shown. Consider a BMP in the green space between the new building and the College of Textiles.
- Consider adding access control to the parking deck.

- Parking for service vehicles may still need to occur on the site. Consider including those spaces in the total parking count provided for the project.

The committee recommended proceeding with the feasibility study with special attention given to recommendations of the committee.

At the November meeting, the committee reviewed the Centennial Campus Conference Center and Hotel project. The subcommittee had previously recommended approval of the project with the condition that the following items be addressed:

- Since the site is isolated from the rest of campus and downtown, the site should accommodate transit buses to serve the hotel so those without vehicles can travel to other points on campus, downtown Raleigh, and other area destinations.
- The planting plan should be enhanced so that it contributes to a high quality, memorable experience for guests and visitors.

The committee had a number of questions:

- Can the site handle large buses?
- What kind of plants will be used? Developer is looking at plants that are native to North Carolina. The follow-up comment from committee was that care needs to be taken in the selection of native plants in the parking lot since the site offers many challenges due to excessive heat generated, among other issues.
- Could rain gardens be established in the parking lot?
- Will the area between the building and Lake Raleigh remain a natural area?
- Could a green roof be considered?
- Is it possible to walk from the hotel to the golf course?
- Have traffic lights been considered at the intersection of Main Campus Drive and Alumni Drive?
- How about a pedestrian crosswalk?
- Can you describe the type of guests expected to stay at the hotel?
- Could we review the plans for the project? Plans for this and all university projects are available for viewing and comment in the plan room on the third floor of Administrative Services III Building.

The presenters did respond to the concerns, indicating some need more study.

The committee voted to approve the project with the proviso that the designers follow up with the committee on landscape issues noted above.

### **CAMPUS PARKING & TRANSPORTATION SUBCOMMITTEE**

At the April meeting, the subcommittee reviewed the Proposed Revision to Policy 7.60.1 Parking and Transportation Ordinances 2015-2016, which contained a number of minor changes to the policy. Transportation is proposing a 2 percent increase in parking fees for 2015-2016. Employee impact would be an increase between \$0.25 and \$1.75/month with 98% of employees paying \$0.50 and \$0.75 more per month and students paying \$2.00 to \$6.00 more each year. Other permits would be as shown in the table below:

| <b>Other Permits</b>     | <b>Current</b>                                  | <b>Proposed</b>                  |
|--------------------------|---|----------------------------------|
| <b>Loading Zone</b>      | First permit free, additional permits \$25/year | All permits \$25/year            |
| <b>Guest On-Line</b>     | \$2/day   | \$5/day                          |
| <b>Undated Temporary</b> | \$5/day   | \$10/day                         |
| <b>Contractor</b>        | \$5/day & \$40/month                            | \$10/day, \$25/week & \$50/month |

Since the subcommittee had already recommended approval of the changes to include the increase in parking fees, acting Chair Richard Bernhard called for a vote to approve, which passed unanimously.