

The Planning Commission of the Town of James Island met on Thursday, May 9, 2024 at 5:00 p.m. in person at the James Island Town Hall, 1122 Dills Bluff Road, James Island, SC 29412.

Commissioners present: Deborah Bidwell, Vice Chair, Kelly Hall, Zennie Quinn, and Ed Steers. Absent: Patrick Broderick, (gave notice). A quorum was present to conduct business. Also, Kristen Crane, Planning Director, Flannery Wood, Planner II, Michael D. Hemmer, Town Administrator, Mayor Brook Lyon, and Frances Simmons, Town Clerk and Secretary to the Planning Commission.

Call to Order: Vice Chair Bidwell called the Planning Commission Meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

Compliance with the Freedom of Information Act: Vice Chair Bidwell announced that this meeting was duly noticed in compliance with the SC Freedom of Information Act. This meeting was also live-streamed on the Town's website with notification provided to the public.

Introductions: Vice Chair Bidwell introduced the members of the Planning Commission, staff, and Mayor Lyon as the elected official, and Tamara Avery, Charleston County Planner III.

Approval of December 14, 2023 Minutes: The minutes of the December 14, 2023 Planning Commission were approved upon a motion by Commissioner Steers; seconded by Commissioner Quinn and passed unanimously.

Public Comments: Vice Chair Bidwell opened the floor for comments from the public. She asked speakers to state their name and address for the record. Three (3) minutes were allowed for comments.

Town of James Island Zoning and Land Development Regulations Ordinance, including: General Provisions, Grand Tree Definition (153.013) change definition of a grand tree from 24" DBH to 18" DBH; Subdivision, Tree Preservation (153.309) change definition of grand tree from 24" DBH to 18" DBH; and Development Standards, Tree Protection (153.334) change definition of grand tree from 24" DBH to 18" DBH.

*\*Some persons spoke and also submitted comments in writing. Public Comments are attached to the minutes.*

Megan Dean, 1243 Cornwallis Rd., comment attached.

Cora Tyrrell, 1043 Winward Rd., Miss Tyrrell asked the Planning Commission to pass the amendment to change the tree size.

Jennifer Tyrrell, 1043 Winward Rd., comment attached.

Garrett Milliken, 762 Ft. Sumter Drive., comment attached.

Robin Hardin, 902 Preston Rd., Ms. Hardin spoke in favor of reducing the protected tree size from 24" DBH to 18" DBH. She spoke of the importance of maintaining biodiversity that is essential to many living organisms. Trees are superstars in controlling flood waters and flood runoffs and far superior than retention ponds, ditches, pipes and drains that are put in by developers. An 18" DBH tree will absorb 11,000 gallons of water during the growing season alone. Their roots grips the soil by keeping it from washing away and filtering harmful substances to recharge the water table. She said given sea level rise on the island and in other places, many trees are being lost. We need to keep and add to our tree canopy; not sell it out to self-serving developers.

John Peters, 1301 Hampshire Rd., Mr. Peters asked the Planning Commission to pass the 18” DBH tree amendment because preserving trees, preserves James Island.

James Luby, 1330 Whitehouse Blvd., Mr. Luby asked the Planning Commission to support the change in the Grand Tree size from 24” DBH to 18” DBH. Mr. Luby shared a story that the early settlers on James Island discovered that the island thrived with Live Oaks and Southern Pines. The Live Oak has a quirky growth habit; the twisting, curving branches form in unpredictable ways making them natural components in ship building. Many seagoing vessels were built at shipyards in James Island. From 1700 to 1770, hundreds of ships of all sizes were constructed until most of the Southern Grand Oaks were eliminated. An average of 60 grand trees were used to construct a small boat of 30 feet in length. A single ship might require the wood from 60 acres of Oak and Pine Trees. That was then... this is now! The future of grand trees are being eliminated for the expansion of roads and new construction one by one, little by little. Please help us save the trees.

Wendy Teel, 1290 Hampshire Rd., comment attached.

Jenny Welch, 1163 East and West Rd., comment attached.

Other Public Comments Received (Attached)

Martha E. Lundstrom	Ruby Kvestad	Pat Gaylor
Paul S. Cantrell	Ali Paquette	Valerie Simson
Stanley Kozokowski	Corie Hipp	Melba Hawkins
Natalie Rumph	Ashley Brown	Dan Stewart
Maegan Bonow	James Cook	
Melanie Lovell	Ashley & James Cook	
Dawn Aldieri	Art Vandelay	
Patrick Bucher	Susan Milliken	
Brooke Czwartacki	Bridget Lussier	

Staff Comments: None.

Discussion, Presentation and Vote of Preliminary Plat for the Dills Bluff Subdivision, Application # SBDV 11-23-02617 (TMS# 425-12-00-185): Planning Director, Kristen Crane, gave an overview of the Town’s Preliminary Plat Process. She stated that a major subdivision in the Town consists of four (4) lots or greater. The Town currently has an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) with Charleston County where they act as our staff when applications for major subdivisions are received. Town staff have been working with Charleston County’s Public Works, Planning, and Stormwater Departments in an effort to move this submittal to an approving state. The applicant has completed the pre-application process, conceptual plan, attended multiple meetings, and is ready to present the request to the Planning Commission for its decision. If approved by the Planning Commission this would constitute general acceptance of the overall planning concepts for the proposed subdivision and a prerequisite of file the final plat. Ms. Crane stated that this language is included in the Town’s Ordinance.

Ms. Crane explained that after the Preliminary Plat is approved, Letters of Coordination, Final Plat Approval and the Final Review would be done. Ms. Crane stated that the land is zoned Residential Suburban Low-density (RSL) and is 5.25 acres with a proposal of 13 single family lots; some Homeowner Association (HOA) areas; and ponds for stormwater maintenance. The plan does not show access to the adjacent Whitehouse Plantation neighborhood. Ms. Crane pointed out that the review was included in the Planning Commission’s packet. The Planning, Public Works, and Stormwater Departments are recommending Preliminary Approval with the conditions that states: The HOA will maintain the right-of-way, drainage,

and easements - that it meets all RSL zoning standards for 1/3 acre per lot; setback requirements, buildable areas on each lot. She said all comments and requirements have been addressed. Staff recommends approval. Ms. Crane stated that the applicant is present to answer technical questions that the Planning Commission might have.

#### Questions from the Planning Commission

Commissioner Steers said it appears that the applicant has checked all of the boxes and the meticulous nature of the applicant's work is impressive. Also, the 39 trees were identified and ranked. He commented on the fact that changing tree size is on tonight's agenda. The applicant has done a great job with being precise about the details.

Vice Chair Bidwell agreed with Commissioner Steers that the plan was well done but she does not see the name for the ingress/egress. Other than that she thinks everything on the list looks good and the stipulations and contingencies listed seems to have been addressed.

#### Questions for the Applicant

There were no questions for the applicant and a presentation was not done.

Commissioner Steers moved for the approval of the Preliminary Plat for the Dills Bluff Subdivision Application SBDV-11-23-02617 (TMS# 425012-00-185); Commissioner Hall seconded. Vice Chair Bidwell reiterated the motion and read the following stipulations and contingencies into the record:

#### **Stipulations**

- Approval of this plan in no way obligates the Town of James Island to maintain any of the proposed rights-of-way, ingress-egress easements, and/or drainage systems;
- The private HOA areas shall be dedicated to a legally recognized entity. Private HOA areas shall not be dedicated to the public. Further, the Town of James Island, nor Charleston County is obligated or responsible for the private HOA areas maintenance. The dedication to an entity will be reviewed and approved by the Town's legal department prior to recording of a final Plat.

#### **Prior to Final Approval, the following contingencies must be met:**

- The Right-of-way must be named. All proposed road names must be approved by the Charleston County 9-1-1- Center.
- Dedication Statement signed by entity who will own and maintain the road.
- Lots must comply with the provisions of the Town of James Island's Subdivision Regulations pertaining to final plats and final approval.
- Lots must comply with the Town of James Island's Zoning and Land Development regulations.
- This approval in no way constitutes approval for any individual lot in this subdivision.
- Provide DHEC Permit to operate for water and sewer.
- Public water and sewer taps are to be installed to each lot prior to the recording of a final plat.
- Development of each lot must comply with the ordinances in effect at the time application is made.
- All infrastructure is to be installed prior to recording a final plat.
- Homeowners Association document should include language that states The HOA takes full responsibility for maintenance of the 20' Private ROW, Open Space "A", Open Space "B" Pond

No. 1, Pond No. 2, Pond No. 3, Pond No. 4, Pond No. 5, and any other dedicated areas labeled on plat.

**Motion passed unanimously 4-0.**

Proposed Amendments to the Town of James Island Zoning and Land Development Regulations Ordinance (ZLDR) including: a): General Provisions, Grand Tree Definition (153.013): Changing definition of grand tree from 24" DBH to 18" DBH; b). Subdivisions, Tree Preservation (153.309) Changing definition of grand tree from 24" DBH to 18" DBH; c). Development Standards, Tree Protection (153.334) Changing definition of grand tree from 24" DBH to 18" DBH:

Ms. Crane stated that the amendment would be changed in all three sections of the Ordinance: General Provisions, Subdivision Regulations, and Development Standard from 24" DBH to 18" DBH. Ms. Crane gave an overview speaking of the importance of trees and them being critical to the environment. The Comprehensive Plan talks about the natural resources of trees. Ms. Crane stated there are three criteria that the zoning text must meet. 1) corrects an error in consistency or meets the challenge of a changing condition; 2) is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, and 3) to further the public welfare.

The amendment would protect more species and varieties of trees; younger and healthy trees; promote biodiversity and for smaller and younger trees in development plans that are submitted and make for more mitigation fees to the tree fund to allow more trees to be planted in public places. Ms. Crane commented that 22 letters in support were received for the amendment; none were received in opposition, a few commented were received after the deadline and were provided for the Planning Commission's information.

Commissioner Steers commented that the letters and points everyone made were super. He said since knowing that this item would be coming up for discussion, he contacted a number of people to get their counsel, i.e., civil engineers, a professor of climate at the Citadel, and one of his wrestlers from William and Mary College who is a Biology Major. As the conversation with him ensued, he was asked when is the best time to plant a tree, which Commissioner Steers replied, maybe in spring. His student said no coach 20 years ago. Commissioner Steers said this is far-reaching and farsighted on our parts to build and to be safe for the future of our community.

Vice Chair Bidwell agreed that this is a good idea for all of the reasons mentioned by everyone in letters that were sent and in public comments shared tonight. This will promote biodiversity and with a forward looking lens for others who will be inhabiting our lands when we are no longer here. Humans and non-humans will benefit from this if this amendment passes.

Commissioner Quinn moved to approve the amendment to change the Zoning and Land Use Regulations Ordinance: a): General Provisions, Grand Tree Definition (153.013): Changing definition of grand tree from 24" DBH to 18" DBH; b). Subdivisions, Tree Preservation (153.309) Changing definition of grand tree from 24" DBH to 18" DBH; c). Development Standards, Tree Protection (153.334) Changing definition of grand tree from 24" DBH to 18" DBH, seconded by Commissioner Steers and passed unanimously 4-0.

Vice Chair Bidwell announced that Town Council will hold a First Reading at its May 16, 2024 and a Public Hearing at the June 20, 2024 meeting.

Vote for Chair and Vice Chair:

Vice Chair Bidwell announced that local Planning and Zoning Commissions must elect from its membership a Chair and Vice Chair to serve one year terms. The appointment will begin immediately and run through the end of 2024.

Chair

Commissioner Steers moved for the nomination of Vice Chair Deborah Bidwell to serve as Chair. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Hall. There were no other nominations. Motion passed unanimously for Deborah Bidwell to serve as Chair, effective May 9, 2024. through December 31, 2024.

Vice Chair

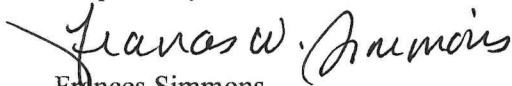
Commissioner Steers moved for the nomination of Zennie Quinn to serve as Vice Chair. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Hall. There were no other nominations. Motion passed unanimously for Zennie Quinn to serve as Vice Chair, effective May 9, 2024 through December 31, 2024.

Chair's Comments: None.

Commissioners Comments: None.

Adjournment: There being no further business to come before the body, the meeting adjourned at 5:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:



Frances Simmons  
Town Clerk

Date: May 8<sup>th</sup>, 2024

To: James Island Planning Commission  
James Island Town Council

From: Megan Dean  
1243 Cornwallis Road  
Charleston, SC 29412

Re: Ordinance to Recommend Definition of Grand Trees from 24" to 18" DBH

Dean James Island Planning Commission and Town Council,

My name is Megan Dean. I live at 1243 Cornwallis Road, and I am writing a letter to urge your support of changing the definition of Grand Trees in the Town of James Island from 24 inches to 18 inches and greater dbh.

I am a long-term resident of James Island (over 20 years), and I have witnessed unprecedented growth in our community in my tenure. I am always amazed, or I should say disappointed, at how quickly land can be cleared, how fast homes can be built, and how people put homes on the smallest plots in neighborhoods, and they clear all the trees. It breaks my heart to see wildlife searching for their homes and confused by the devastation of the land clearing, which often seems haphazard and recklessly bulldozed. Also, there always seems to be sitting water when the root systems are removed, and it makes me nervous how quickly it gets backfilled to start foundations.

I am fortunate to live in Whitehouse Plantations, walking distance from here, where we have lots of mature trees. I am actively fighting to preserve the property off Dills Bluff for more green space. One of our prettiest roads on the Island is Fort Johnson heading to DNR. We are surrounded by so much beauty every day for the people that have committed to preservation of our Town. It is undeniable that Grand Trees are an attraction of the Lowcountry. Trees are quintessential to our wildlife and ecosystem and are unique to our community. Their root systems soak up the rains, rising tides, and Grand Trees are sturdy in storms. Protecting younger trees is vital to longevity of preservation and to the protection of established, multi-decade old trees. Passing this ordinance will allow for processes to be put in place to prevent people from cutting down healthy trees and it will allow for a mechanism to be in place for the Town to quantify how many trees are in fact removed under these critical thresholds and why.

Please know that I understand the hassles that can come with needing to have a tree removed, and I am not here to Save Every Tree. I encourage common sense review and expeditious responses to variance requests. I would urge support of removing trees that are a safety hazard, cause foundation issues, need pruned because of rodent access, etc. This is not a fight to work against the everyday homeowners like myself. Instead, passing this ordinance will help control developers, and create a path for smart developments with a focus on the environment first and more greenspace. More trees will reduce flooding, save wildlife, and create a more beautiful home for our families for years to come as we all grow and mature together in their shade.

I read an easy-to-understand way of quantifying what the argument is really about in regards to the size: 18 inches is a tree that is 57 inches in circumference, 30-40 years old depending on the species, and it would take up to a few small children to lock arms around it. In comparison, a 24-inch tree roughly measures 75.5 inches in circumference. That is a massive tree that deserves to be saved and admired.

I appreciate you considering my request and for voting in favor of saving our Island. The reason many of us are part of James Island is the focus on preservation and working with a reasonable Government that has its people and the preservation of our beautiful island at the forefront of every decision they make.

Respectfully,

*Megan B. Dean*

## Kristen Crane

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**From:** Milliken, Garrett <MillikenG@cofc.edu>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 8, 2024 11:32 AM  
**To:** Kristen Crane; Brook Lyon  
**Cc:** Frances Simmons  
**Subject:** Please Revise Tree Ordinance to Protect 18 Inch DBH Trees  
**Attachments:** Tree Survey Breakdown.docx

**CAUTION: This email originated from outside the Town of James Island. Maintain caution when opening external links/attachments**

Members of Planning Commission,

First, I want to thank you for your service to our island. Your decisions impact not only the present, but the future of James Island as well.

As all of you know because you are fortunate to live here, James Island is different from our surrounding neighbor communities. That difference is largely due to the fact that we have a tradition of protecting trees. James Island is greener, cooler, drains better and offers more for wildlife than our surrounding communities, but these priceless advantages need protection because they are primarily caused by trees.

Our present ordinance is designed to protect primarily oak trees as they are a species that if left to grow, can attain a 24-inch DBH (other species that can include pecan and magnolia; pines and sweet gum are specifically excluded from protection). **It is important to note that many trees will never achieve a DBH of 24 inches in their lifetime.** These "understory" trees also provide the advantages seen in more mature trees and through their diversity provide an array of feeding and nesting options for wildlife. **Wildlife does not exclusively feed on acorns.** I have attached results from a survey sponsored by the TOJI done from 2021-2022 that plotted the locations, species, health and DBH of trees in our major roadside right of ways. With respect to diversity, you can see the vast majority of the trees measured were oak trees and that most of the trees were greater than 24 inches DBH. These trees would be protected under the present 24-inch DBH. **However, in looking at the list, you can also see that there are 14 other species of trees and that there are 144 measured trees that were less than 24 inches DBH. These trees are not protected.** The graph shows that by changing the tree ordinance to include protections for trees 18 inches or greater, 40% (56 trees) of these "understory" trees would get additional protection. Younger trees are healthier and often stronger. Trees do not live forever, and by protecting older trees we run the risk of losing not only diversity but large numbers of old trees as they reach the end of their lifespans. **Protecting younger trees ensures generational turnover.**

Finally, I want to address the argument that having a different DBH protection from the City or unincorporated Charleston County "would cause confusion". **Residents of James Island value their trees and the town has worked to educate residents through the Trees Advisory Council and public Arbor Day celebrations.** By educating our residents as to the value of trees and caring for trees in our island right of ways we are setting a good example for our neighboring municipalities to follow. An educated public will not be confused. Let us be good stewards of our island and maintain the tree canopy that makes James Island special. Thank you for your consideration of these ideas. Sincerely, Garrett Milliken

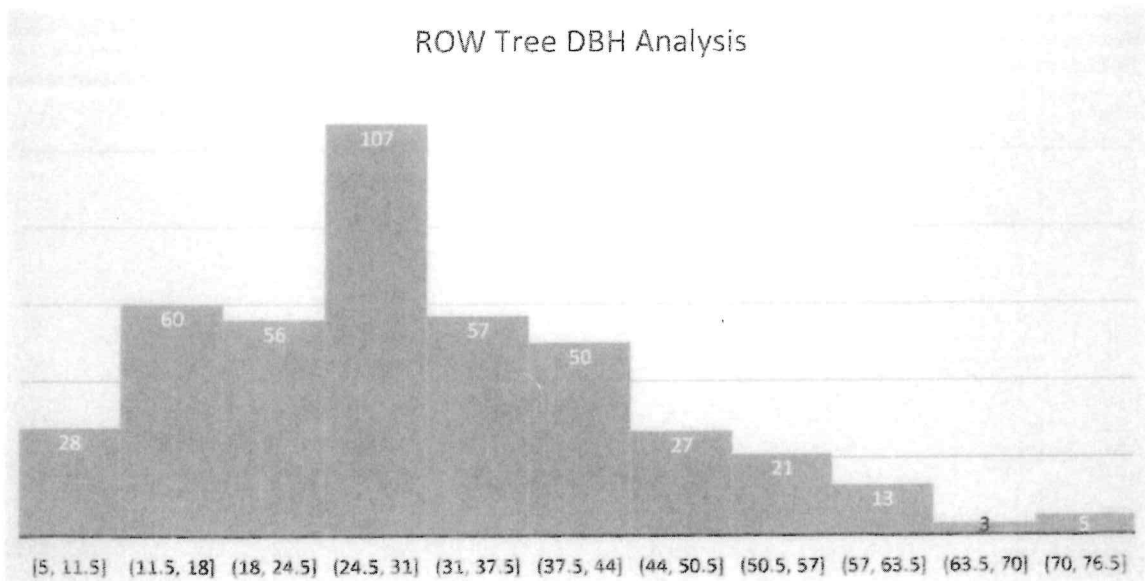


## 2021-2022 Tree Survey Data Summary

Number of Interns: 5

Number of Trees Assessed in James Island Right of Ways: 469

204 Live Oak  
139 Laurel Oak  
5 Water Oak  
1 Black Oak  
10 Ash  
4 Elm  
8 Sweet Gum  
4 Gum  
11 Hickory  
3 Pecan  
6 Cherry  
3 Magnolia  
1 Mulberry  
1 Willow  
1 Birch  
6 Palm  
9 Pine  
1 Cedar



James Island Grand Tree Ordinance proposed changes.  
Jennifer McCarthey Tyrrell  
1043 Windward Rd Charleston SC 29412

I'd like to comment in support of the changing of the grand tree ordinance to be 18" at DBH.

- Every year James Island dozens of large trees to storm damage, and even more from development. Allowing healthy trees to be removed hurts the long term resilience of our sea island
- Healthy large trees, depending on species, can absorb 10-150 gallons of water daily. During storm and heavy rainfall events, the presence of trees absorbing water through evapotranspiration greatly shortens the impacts of storm water flooding.
- Large trees help to stabilize eroding shorelines. There are multiple salt tolerant tree species that can tolerate occasional inundation, making trees in tidal flooding prone neighborhoods all the more important for long term resilience.
- The summers are hot here. A tree shaded area, aided by the evaporative cooling of the tree in addition to the shade, can create temperatures 12-45 degrees Fahrenheit cooler than non-shaded or non-vegetated areas.
- Pavement and rooves can reach soaring temperatures capable of melting plastic.
- Tree shade has been shown to improve the longevity of paved surfaces, resulting in savings in infrastructure repair over time.
- Urban areas hold in heat from pavement and rooves, resulting in 1-7 degrees higher temps during the daytime, and heat retention through the night of 2-5 degrees compared to surrounding areas.
- We are in the hottest summer of our lives, and at the same time, the coolest summer for the rest of our lives.
- Allowing for adult trees to be removed despite the fact that they are healthy, have decades of flood mitigation potential, carbon storage, and cooling impacts left is only hurting the community and it's resilience in the face of a warming world with increased weather events and sea level rise.
- Let's also be honest, your average James Island resident is no arborist. Having a professional arborist determine if a tree is a danger or hazard should be a part of the process of applying for a tree removal.
- Dead trees and snags should also be left if there isn't a danger to life or property. Dead trees provide natural cavities for birds like the Eastern Bluebird, that was almost lost due to the removal of snag trees. Dead trees or declining trees are homes for many beneficial species like owls, who help control rodent populations.

**Frances Simmons**

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**From:** wendy teel <wendymariateel@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 8, 2024 10:09 PM  
**To:** Frances Simmons; Brook Lyon; Kristen Crane  
**Subject:** James Island Planning Commission - Definition of Grand Tree Ordinance Amendment

**CAUTION: This email originated from outside the Town of James Island. Maintain caution when opening external links/attachments**

Dear James Island Planning Commission,

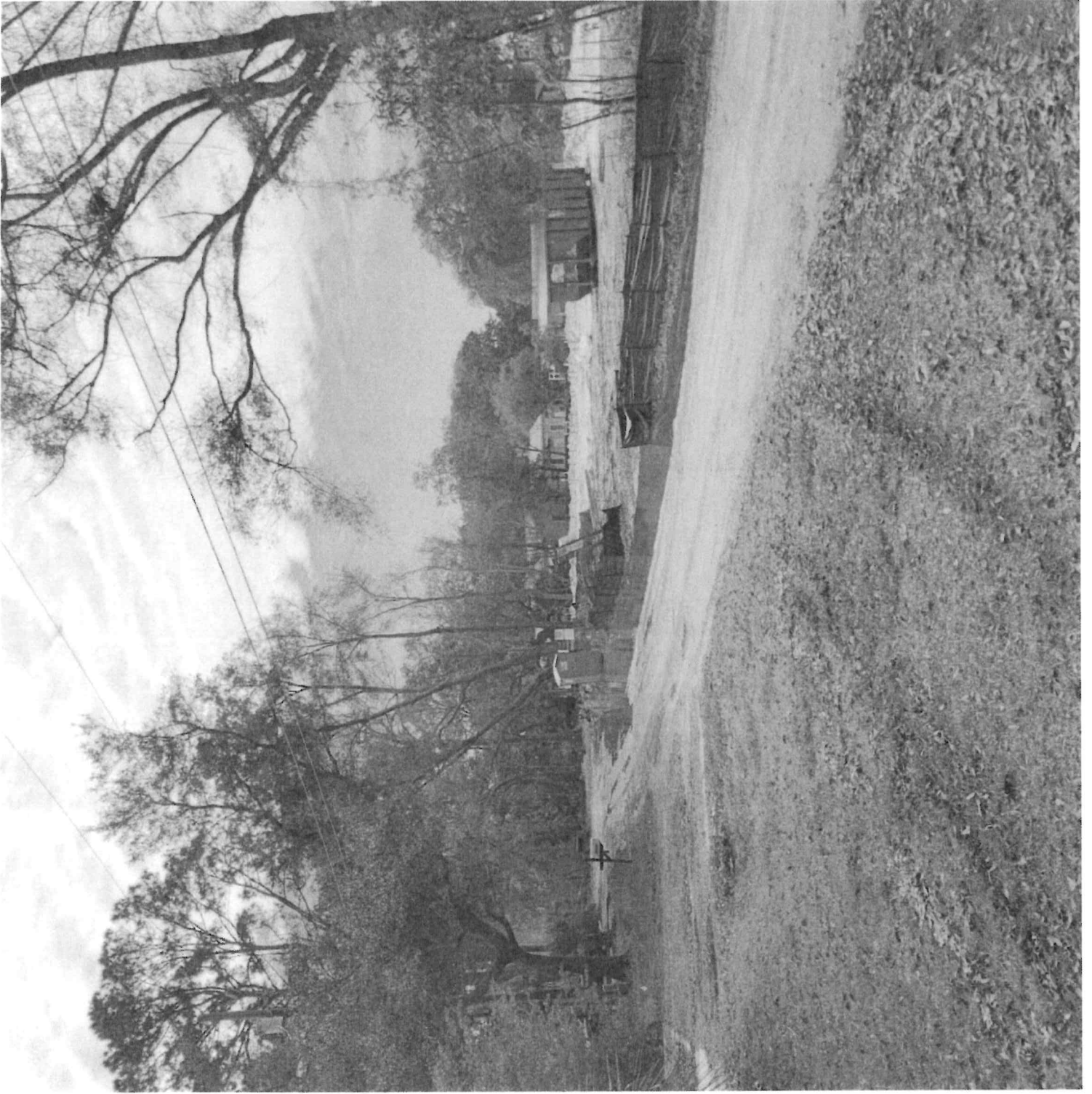
I have owned and lived at 1290 Hampshire Road, in the Whitehouse Plantation subdivision, on James Island since 2014.

Please accept this email as my **emphatic** citizen support for the proposed amendment to Land Development Regulation Ordinance for the definition of Grand Trees to be changed from 24" DBH (current) to 18" DBH (proposed adjustment).

Retaining trees 18" DBH and larger will provide long term benefits to both the future citizens of new neighborhoods and current citizens in surrounding neighborhoods by continuing to absorb large amounts of water, especially as flooding events grow more frequent. Air quality, wildlife, and preserving our communities quality of life on James Island would also reap significant benefits from this proposed amendment.

Thank you for your consideration,

Wendy Teel  
1290 Hampshire Rd,  
Charleston, SC 29412





1168 Dawn Drive X Q



Selected Parcel

PID	428020079
OWNER	AUSTIN RUDDY B
PLAT BOOK PAGE	L-181
DEED BOOK PAGE	0616-170
Jurisdiction	CITY OF CHARLESTON

▼ 1168 Dawn Drive X Q



< Selected Parcel

PID	4280200051
OWNER	AUSTIN RUDDY H
PLAT BOOK PAGE	L-151
DEED BOOK PAGE	0516-470
Jurisdiction	CITY OF CHARLESTON

**Kristen Crane**

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**From:** jenny welch <jerdone@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 8, 2024 9:57 AM  
**To:** Kristen Crane  
**Cc:** Brook Lyon  
**Subject:** 18 Inches Amendment For the Win!

**CAUTION: This email originated from outside the Town of James Island. Maintain caution when opening external links/attachments**

Good morning to the members of Planning Commission,

I am asking that you amend the tree ordinance to protect trees that are 18 inches in diameter on James Island. Currently, the tree ordinance is 24 inches and most tree species will never grow that large but still deserve to be protected (or at least stand a good fight by having to get a variance for removal).

Trees and tree variety is crucial to the wellbeing of our Town. With the current 24 inches, it seems like it mostly caters to our ancient live oaks. This is wonderful as we love our live oaks! However, I also really love magnolias, dogwoods, maples, pecans, etc. but they often don't ever reach 24 inches and, therefore, are not protected by our ordinance. Tree variety is crucial because it helps protect against disease spreading amongst our trees and wiping them all out. Different species have their various strengths and purposes and deserve to remain standing even though they don't fit the bill of 24 inches.

We all know that flooding is rampant on our island. We are seeing it after each and every rain storm that hits us. We need every tree possible to help mitigate the flood waters. We have seen it happen time and time again on our island when a developer comes in and is able to clear cut a piece of land due to our current and very weak ordinance and, poof, suddenly nearby houses and yards are flooding where they have never flooded before. We need trees on our island to help us stay afloat.

Sometimes, I feel like people view trees as nuisances because they are often "in the way" of some type of human improvement or project. I feel quite differently about our trees. They are life. They are joy. They are nature. And they are the key to balance and any quality of life remaining on James Island.

I appreciate you reading this and taking the time to truly examine how critical a strong tree ordinance is for our Island.  
Sincerely,  
Jenny Welch  
1163 East and West Road



## Kristen Crane

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**From:** Martha E. Lundstrom <Martha.Lundstrom@bishopgadsden.org>  
**Sent:** Sunday, May 5, 2024 1:11 PM  
**To:** Kristen Crane  
**Cc:** Brook Lyon  
**Subject:** RE: RE: Support for the new 18 inch DBH Grand Tree definition

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**From:** Martha E. Lundstrom  
**Sent:** Sunday, May 5, 2024 1:04 PM  
**To:** kcrane@jamesislandsc.us  
**Cc:** blyon@jamesilandsc.us  
**Subject:** RE: Support for the new 18 inch DBH Grand Tree definition

Kristen Crane,

This email is in support of protecting trees on James Island by adopting the new 18 inch DBH Grand Tree definition. I have lived in Parrot Creek since 1994 and since retiring from Bon Secours Saint Francis Hospital I work part time at Bishop Gadsden on Camp Road. When the weather is hot the drive either to work or to home via Ft. Johnson Road and Camp Road is made very enjoyable due to the canopy of trees on both roads. No matter how hot or how long my car has sat in the sun it cools so quickly that I can often turn off the AC! I support any measure that will save our trees.

Mardy Lundstrom

591 Crowned Kinglet Retreat  
James Island, SC 29412

**BISHOP GADSDEN CONFIDENTIALITY NOTICE** This message is intended only for the use of the individual or entity to which it is addressed and may contain information that is privileged, confidential and exempt from disclosure under applicable law. If the reader of this message is not the intended recipient, you are hereby notified that any dissemination, distribution, or copying of this communication is strictly prohibited by law. If you have received this communication in error please notify the sender immediately.

**Kristen Crane**

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**From:** Paul S Cantrell <pcantrell@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, May 7, 2024 11:02 AM  
**To:** Kristen Crane  
**Cc:** Brook Lyon  
**Subject:** TOJI 9 May 2024 Planning Commission Comment

**CAUTION: This email originated from outside the Town of James Island. Maintain caution when opening external links/attachments**

Good morning,  
I am writing in support of the following Planning Commission agenda item:

- VIII. PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE TOWN OF JAMES ISLAND ZONING AND LAND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS ORDINANCE (ZLDR) INCLUDING:**
- a. General Provisions, Grand Tree Definition (153.013): Changing definition of grand tree from 24" DBH to 18" DBH**
  - b. Subdivisions, Tree Preservation (153.309): Changing definition of grand tree from 24" DBH to 18" DBH**
  - c. Development Standards, Tree Protection (153.334): Changing definition of grand tree from 24" DBH to 18" DBH**

This is a great change to protect more grand trees on James Island!

Thank you!  
Paul Cantrell  
1163 E and West Road  
James Island

He's the kind of a guy who lights up a room just by flicking a switch

..... (·) / (·)

§ Please consider the environment before printing this email

To whom it may concern,

My name is Natalie Rumph, I'm a sitting member of The James Island Tree Advisory Council, a horticulturist, a local no-till flower farmer, and owner of a landscaping business with a commitment to sustainable practices. I'm writing today to address the proposed ordinance to decrease the protected size of tree removal from 24 to 18 inches in diameter. I believe this is in fact to the benefit of all parties making this a value added piece of legislation. The decreased trunk diameter will preserve more trees on a development site which will result in a more continuous canopy cover for that site, maintain the character of the community and possibly reduce the necessity for developments to plant more juvenile trees and maintain their survival for 3 to 5 years.

Not only does this proposed ordinance provide more flexibility to any future developments to James Island, it allows those developments to conscientiously contribute to the preservation to the community in which they wish to develop.

Additionally, James Island has a distinct character and esthetic which is a cornerstone to a community that values mature trees and canopy cover; protecting a smaller tree diameter of slow growing trees would establish and protect this character and esthetic for generations to come.

Thank You,  
Natalie Rumph  
1108 Mariner Drive  
Charleston, SC 29412

**Kristen Crane**

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**From:** Maegan Bonow <mbonow1011@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, May 7, 2024 11:42 AM  
**To:** Kristen Crane  
**Subject:** Re: Tree diameter

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1319 Teal Avenue  
Charleston, SC 29412

> On May 7, 2024, at 11:29 AM, Kristen Crane <kcrane@jamesislandsc.us> wrote:

>

> Thank you! Would you mind please including your address?

>

> Kristen Crane

>

> -----Original Message-----

> From: Maegan Bonow <mbonow1011@yahoo.com>

> Sent: Tuesday, May 7, 2024 10:23 AM

> To: Kristen Crane <kcrane@jamesislandsc.us>; Brook Lyon <blyon@jamesislandsc.us>

> Subject: Tree diameter

>

> CAUTION: This email originated from outside the Town of James Island. Maintain caution when opening external links/attachments

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>

>

> Hello,

>

> I am writing to let you know that myself and my family are in support of the new 18" DBH Grand Tree definition. Please let us save more trees on our gorgeous island.

>

> Thank you!

>

> Maegan Brown

## Kristen Crane

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**From:** Melanie Lovell <melanielovell@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, May 7, 2024 2:48 PM  
**To:** Kristen Crane; Brook Lyon  
**Subject:** Support of the 18 inch DBH Grand Tree Definition

**CAUTION: This email originated from outside the Town of James Island. Maintain caution when opening external links/attachments**

Dear Planning Director Crane and Mayor Lyon:

I am writing to express my strong support for the proposal to lower the minimum diameter requirement for protected trees from 24 inches to 18 inches. The current ordinance allows developers to clear-cut large swathes of land by simply removing any trees under the current threshold.

Trees are vital to the health and beauty of James Island. They provide numerous benefits, including:

- Improved air and water quality: Trees absorb pollutants and release oxygen, filtering the air we breathe. Their root systems help filter rainwater, preventing runoff and erosion.
- Reduced energy costs: Trees provide shade, lowering building temperatures in the summer and reducing reliance on air conditioning.
- Habitat for wildlife: A diverse range of trees supports a healthy ecosystem for birds, insects, and other animals.
- Increased property values: Studies consistently show that homes with mature trees have higher property values.

Protecting only trees that are 24 inches or larger in diameter disregards the importance of younger, developing trees. These younger trees will become the larger, valuable trees of the future, and a healthy ecosystem requires a variety of age classes within a species. Additionally, a wider variety of tree species in different size ranges promotes biodiversity and resilience against pests and diseases.

By lowering the minimum diameter threshold to 18 inches, the Commission can take a significant step towards ensuring a sustainable future for James Island. This change will encourage developers to plan their projects around existing trees, promoting a more balanced approach to growth.

I urge you to approve this proposal and prioritize the protection of our valuable tree canopy.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Melanie Lovell  
1168 Wyndham Road

**Kristen Crane**

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**From:** dawnyankees <dawnyankees@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, May 7, 2024 4:44 PM  
**To:** Kristen Crane  
**Subject:** Grand trees

**CAUTION: This email originated from outside the Town of James Island. Maintain caution when opening external links/attachments**

Writing in support of the new 18 inch DBH Grand tree definition.  
Thank you

Dawn Aldieri  
1057B seaside lane  
29412

Sent from my T-Mobile 5G Device

**Kristen Crane**

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**From:** Patrick Bucher <patrickhbucher@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, May 7, 2024 8:27 PM  
**To:** Kristen Crane; Brook Lyon  
**Subject:** preserve more trees in James Island

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in favor of SUPPORTING the new 18 inch DBH Grand Tree definition

Thank You,

Patrick Bucher  
1350 Sea Aire Dr

**Kristen Crane**

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**From:** Brooke Czwartacki <brookeczwa@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 8, 2024 10:21 AM  
**To:** Kristen Crane; Brook Lyon  
**Subject:** DBH Grand Tree ordinance

**CAUTION: This email originated from outside the Town of James Island. Maintain caution when opening external links/attachments**

Good morning,

I am writing to you in support of changes to the proposed grand tree zoning ordinance in the Town of James Island that will redefine the definition of a grand tree by reducing the diameter at breast height from 24 inches to 18 inches. I have lived on the Island since 2008 and have seen the landscape change drastically with the addition of many neighborhoods. While I am certain we will see more changes over the near term, the loss of our forested parcels containing large trees is most alarming. The clearcutting practices have drastically changed the hydrology of the island by increasing runoff and flooding and reducing natural groundwater recharge areas. Large trees move more water than small trees, and preserving larger diameter trees (18 inches) in development plans will promote more rainfall infiltration to naturally alleviate localized flooding. I understand that this ordinance will not limit the amount of trees that can be removed, but by requiring a permit and/or appeals process for these larger trees it could make land developers rethink their plans to include larger trees in landscape design plans.

Thanks for the opportunity to comment on this matter.

Brooke Czwartacki  
1344 Sea Aire Drive  
Charleston, SC 29412



**Kristen Crane**

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**From:** ali paquette <alipaq93@live.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 8, 2024 9:21 AM  
**To:** Kristen Crane  
**Cc:** Brook Lyon  
**Subject:** Re: Tree Ordinance to 18 inches

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Yes!  
Sent from my iPhone

> On May 8, 2024, at 9:13 AM, Kristen Crane <kcrane@jamesislandsc.us> wrote:

>

> Thank you. Are you in support of the amendment?

>

> Kristen Crane

>

> -----Original Message-----

> From: ali paquette <alipaq93@live.com>

> Sent: Wednesday, May 8, 2024 9:12 AM

> To: Kristen Crane <kcrane@jamesislandsc.us>

> Cc: Brook Lyon <blyon@jamesislandsc.us>

> Subject: Re: Tree Ordinance to 18 inches

>

> CAUTION: This email originated from outside the Town of James Island. Maintain caution when opening external links/attachments

>

>

>

> 46 Crosscreek Dr 29412 😊

> Sent from my iPhone

>

>> On May 8, 2024, at 9:10 AM, Kristen Crane <kcrane@jamesislandsc.us> wrote:

>>

>> Thank you for your email. Would you mind including your address, please?

>>

>> Kristen Crane

>>

>> -----Original Message-----

>> From: ali paquette <alipaq93@live.com>

>> Sent: Wednesday, May 8, 2024 9:05 AM

>> To: Kristen Crane <kcrane@jamesislandsc.us>; Brook Lyon <blyon@jamesislandsc.us>

>> Subject: Tree Ordinance to 18 inches

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**Kristen Crane**

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**From:** Ashley Brown <wavepaddlerashley@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 8, 2024 10:58 AM  
**To:** Kristen Crane  
**Subject:** Re: Vote yes on reducing tree size to 18"

**CAUTION: This email originated from outside the Town of James Island. Maintain caution when opening external links/attachments**

Hi Kristen- 531 Sweetbay Rd.  
Anything else I can help with?

Ashley

On Wed, May 8, 2024 at 10:55 AM Kristen Crane <kcrane@jamesislandsc.us> wrote:

Thank you. Would you mind please including your address?

Kristen Crane

**From:** Ashley Brown <wavepaddlerashley@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 8, 2024 10:38 AM  
**To:** Brook Lyon <blyon@jamesislandsc.us>; Kristen Crane <kcrane@jamesislandsc.us>  
**Subject:** Vote yes on reducing tree size to 18"

**CAUTION: This email originated from outside the Town of James Island. Maintain caution when opening external links/attachments**

Hi Mayor-

Please vote yes on changing the tree ordinance to 18"

Please don't pave paradise and put up a parking lot.

Thank you very much,

Ashley Brown

Jl town resident

**Kristen Crane**

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**From:** James Cook <cookjh@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 8, 2024 11:29 AM  
**To:** Kristen Crane  
**Cc:** Brook Lyon  
**Subject:** Re: Tree ordinance

**CAUTION: This email originated from outside the Town of James Island. Maintain caution when opening external links/attachments**

My address is 1120 Fort Lamar Rd., Charleston, SC 29412

On Wed, May 8, 2024 at 11:15 AM Kristen Crane <kcrane@jamesislandsc.us> wrote:

Thank you. Would you mind please including your address?

Kristen Crane

**From:** James Cook <cookjh@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 8, 2024 11:12 AM  
**To:** Brook Lyon <blyon@jamesislandsc.us>; Kristen Crane <kcrane@jamesislandsc.us>  
**Subject:** Tree ordinance

**CAUTION: This email originated from outside the Town of James Island. Maintain caution when opening external links/attachments**

Dear town council members, I write in support of the better tree ordinance which will redefine a grand tree's diameter to 18 inches DBH. Our island needs to protect the trees which are vital to the integrity of James Island. Our trees provide habitat for the biodiversity of our island, improve air quality by reducing carbon emissions, their root systems prevent erosion and reduce flooding, and their beauty is the appeal of living on our island. We need to protect trees 18 inches DBH and larger so they have time to catch up and mature to become grand trees. We have already taken so much from the natural beauty of James Island. We need to protect and restore these trees for ourselves and for the future of James Island.

James Cook

**Kristen Crane**

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**From:** Ashley Cook <ashleyhawkinscook@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 8, 2024 11:03 AM  
**To:** Kristen Crane; kcrane@jamesisland.sc.us; Brook Lyon  
**Subject:** Better tree ordinance

CAUTION: This email originated from outside the Town of James Island. Maintain caution when opening external links/attachments

Dear town council members,

I write in support of the better tree ordinance which will redefine a grand tree's diameter to 18 inches DBH. Our island needs to protect the trees which are vital to the integrity of James Island. Our trees provide habitat for the biodiversity of our island, improve air quality by reducing carbon emissions, their root systems prevent erosion and reduce flooding, and their beauty is the appeal of living on our island. We need to protect trees 18 inches DBH and larger so they have time to catch up and mature to become grand trees. We have already taken so much from the natural beauty of James Island. We need to protect and restore these trees for ourselves and for the future of James Island.

Thank you,

Ashley and James Cook  
1120 Fort Lamar Road  
Charleston, SC 29412  
Sent from my iPhone

**Kristen Crane**

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**From:** Art Vandelay <artvandelay883@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 8, 2024 11:04 AM  
**To:** Kristen Crane  
**Cc:** Casey Buchanan; Brook Lyon  
**Subject:** In favor of changing tree ordinance from 24" DBH to 18" DBH

**CAUTION: This email originated from outside the Town of James Island. Maintain caution when opening external links/attachments**

Greetings. Below is my letter to the planning commission in regard to

My name is Casey Buchanan, and I am a resident of James Island. I am writing in support of the ordinance to recommend to the Town Council that the definition of a grand tree be changed from 24 inches DBH to 18 inches DBH. Or rather, change it back, as my understanding is that the definition of a grand tree was changed from 18" to 24" back in 2016.

The preservation of our island's trees is not just a matter of aesthetics, but a crucial aspect of stormwater management and the overall health of James Island. By protecting younger, more vital trees, we can ensure the longevity of our green spaces. Changing the definition of a grand tree from 24 inches DBH to 18 inches DBH will facilitate this. Moreover, many tree species will never reach a DBH of 24 inches, rendering any tree ordinance with such a threshold diameter relatively ineffective. It's worth noting that several neighboring towns, including our friends on Folly Beach, have more effective tree ordinances in place.

A threshold of 18" DBH will help to preserve younger trees and support a greater diversity of tree species on our island. It will also strengthen tree protection for stormwater management and wildlife habitat.

Please vote YES to revise the tree ordinance from 24" DBH to 18" DBH to protect more trees on James Island.

Very respectfully,

Casey Hall Buchanan, PhD

1022 Yorktown Drive Charleston, SC 29412

**Kristen Crane**

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**From:** Susan Milliken <sbmilliken@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 8, 2024 11:10 AM  
**To:** Kristen Crane; Brook Lyon; Frances Simmons; Michael Hemmer; Flannery Wood  
**Subject:** Please revise Town's Tree Ordinance to Protect more Trees

**CAUTION: This email originated from outside the Town of James Island. Maintain caution when opening external links/attachments**

Good morning,

I am writing to urge the Town's Planning Commission to please revise the Town's Tree Ordinance to protect more Trees 18 inches DBH and above.

Trees that are 18 inches DBH and above are younger and healthier trees---many trees of this size on James Island are about 40 years old and up. What we have learned over the years, is that while our huge old live oaks that are 24 inches DBH and above are amazing and we love them---many of the huge, older trees (70 years and more) sadly have disease. **By protecting and preserving younger, healthier trees IN ADDITION to our older, huge live oaks, we protect more species of trees and healthier trees.**

I've been looking at other local tree ordinances, and as Ms. Crane has provided in the PC meeting packet, **so many Charleston County towns and cities protect more trees than the Town of James Island currently does.** These communities include: City of Folly Beach, IOP, Sullivan's Island, Town of Mt. Pleasant, and also Summerville and Beaufort outside Charleston County-- historic SC towns and cities that are famous for beautiful TREES.

Any resident can request a permit from the Town of James Island to remove a tree that is diseased or dangerous. **What a better 18 in DBH tree ordinance will do is support the Town's designation as a Tree City USA, and enable more thoughtful, sustainable development on the island moving forward.** Developers and builders will need to MITIGATE tree removals by planting new trees or paying into the tree fund, and that is exactly what we need to preserve our island's special tree canopy.

James Island preservationist Carol Jacobsen used to say "*When you are downtown and on the Battery and look over at James Island, all you see are TREES*"----we miss Carol and I think of her often. Let's please preserve the uniqueness of a tree-filled James Island.

Thank you for forwarding my email on to the members of the Planning Commission.

Very truly yours,  
Susan Milliken  
762 Fort Sumter Dr.  
James Island, SC 29412  
Ph. 843-406-9616

**Kristen Crane**

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**From:** Bridget <bridgetlussier@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 8, 2024 11:36 AM  
**To:** Kristen Crane; Brook Lyon  
**Subject:** Please support a stronger tree protection ordinance for James Island

**CAUTION: This email originated from outside the Town of James Island. Maintain caution when opening external links/attachments**

Dear Mayor Lyon and Director Crane,

Please support a stronger and more restrictive tree ordinance protecting trees 18 in. DBH and above. In my day job, I work on coastal resilience and spend a large portion of my time looking for ways we can undo the damage of tree removal. Unfortunately, removal of these grand trees is not something we can easily undo or mitigate. The climate has changed since they were planted, and replanting with a small caliper tree, no matter how many of them you plant, is not going to provide the same ecosystem service benefits that the existing tree has. Removing one tree also exposes its neighbors to a new environment that may be too windy, sunny, or other conditions for the neighboring trees to survive.

The large trees protect homes and property from wind, reduce cooling costs through shade, reduce flooding through taking up water from their roots and intercepting it with their leaves, and that doesn't even begin to cover the aesthetic benefits we enjoy, and the habitat benefits that fish and wildlife enjoy. If you would like to get into the details, it's fun to look at the iTree tool which can show you some of the benefits of a specific tree based on its location. Check it out [here](#).

Protecting trees is a no-lose position. Tree ordinance hearings are also one of the few ways that the public can weigh in on proposed development activities. It serves as an important check in the system. As wetland protections have basically evaporated with the recent ruling at the federal level, we need a stronger tree ordinance now more than ever. The ordinance doesn't prevent people from protecting their property if a tree growing too close to their home needs to be removed. That is common sense.

I wish I could attend the meeting in person, but I am recovering from surgery and am not that mobile right now. Once I'm back on my feet, I will be very active in tree protection ordinance discussions. We moved from West Ashley in 2023 to James Island, where my husband grew up. While living in West Ashley, I submitted comments and attended City and County meetings for approximately 175 grand tree ordinance variance requests over the 18 years we lived there. I am even more passionate than ever about tree protection. I look forward to working with you to protect, maintain, and enhance the beauty of James Island.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Thank you,  
Bridget

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Bridget Callahan Lussier  
1345 Bresee Street  
Charleston SC 29412  
[bridgetlussier@gmail.com](mailto:bridgetlussier@gmail.com)  
843-270-7882



**Kristen Crane**

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**From:** pat gaylor <catapat78@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 8, 2024 11:43 AM  
**To:** Kristen Crane; Brook Lyon  
**Subject:** Please save the trees

CAUTION: This email originated from outside the Town of James Island. Maintain caution when opening external links/attachments

Please pass the ordinance to protect more trees!  
It is horrifying to see what is happening on our island!  
Thank you!  
Pat Gaylor  
1743 Pittsford Circle  
29412  
Sent from my iPhone

**Kristen Crane**

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**From:** Valerie Simson <valeriesimson@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 8, 2024 11:59 AM  
**To:** Kristen Crane  
**Cc:** Brook Lyon  
**Subject:** Public Comments: General Provisions, Grand Tree Definition (153.013)

**CAUTION: This email originated from outside the Town of James Island. Maintain caution when opening external links/attachments**

Dear Ms. Crane,

I'm writing concerning the following Planning Commission agenda item: General Provisions, Grand Tree Definition (153.013). I strongly urge the commission to adopt the changes to the Grand Tree Definition. The enhanced tree protections under the new definition are more in line with our neighboring towns, like Folly Beach and Sullivan's, and would greatly benefit the Town as the island continues to develop.

Thank you,

Valerie Simson  
1204 Cecil Circle  
Charleston, SC 29412  
(707) 484-3519

**From:** Melba Hawkins <[mpehawkins@gmail.com](mailto:mpehawkins@gmail.com)>

**Sent:** Wednesday, May 8, 2024 11:27 AM

**To:** Brook Lyon <[blyon@jamesislandsc.us](mailto:blyon@jamesislandsc.us)>

**Subject:** Trees on James Island

CAUTION: This email originated from outside the Town of James Island. Maintain caution when opening external links/attachments

Dear town council members,

I write in support of the better tree ordinance which will redefine a grand tree's diameter to 18 inches DBH. Our island needs to protect the trees which are vital to the integrity of James Island. Our trees provide habitat for the biodiversity of our island, improve air quality by reducing carbon emissions, their root systems prevent erosion and reduce flooding, and their beauty is the appeal of living on our island. We need to protect trees 18 inches DBH and larger so they have time to catch up and mature to become grand trees. We have already taken so much from the natural beauty of James Island. We need to protect and restore these trees for ourselves and for the future of James Island.

Thank you for your time,

Melba Hawkins

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** Dan Stewart <[danstewart315@gmail.com](mailto:danstewart315@gmail.com)>

**Sent:** Wednesday, May 8, 2024 9:02 AM

**To:** Brook Lyon <[blyon@jamesislandsc.us](mailto:blyon@jamesislandsc.us)>

**Subject:** Tree Ordinance Change

CAUTION: This email originated from outside the Town of James Island. Maintain caution when opening external links/attachments

As a James Island resident for the last 18 years, I strongly urge commission members vote YES on changing the tree ordinance to 18".

Dan Stewart

Stiles Point Plantation