

**CITY OF ISSAQUAH
Environmental Board**

6:30 PM
May 14, 2025

MINUTES

Tibbetts Manor, 750 17th Ave.
NW, Issaquah

BOARD AND ADMINISTRATIVE PERSONNEL PRESENT

Board members:

Don McQuilliams, Chair
Alix Lee-Tigner, Vice Chair
Nancy Davidson – excused absence
Tommy DuBeau
Mina (Alexandra) Jun*
Prajakta Ghatpande
Tom Anderson
Kiran Pan*
Jonathan Smith
Keith Gonzalez

Administration/Staff:

Stacy Vynne McKinstry, Sustainability
Manager
Minnie Dhaliwal, Director of Community
Planning and Development
Doug Yormick, Environmental Planner

Anne Newcomb, Alternate – excused
absence
Dixie Bair, Alternate – excused absence

*Youth/young adult members.

CALL TO ORDER

CHAIR MCQUILLIAMS called the meeting to order at 6:31 PM.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Chair introduced the minutes, which were included in the agenda materials. The minutes were approved as presented by unanimous consent.

a) Minutes of April 2 (Special Meeting with Equity Board)

b) Minutes of April 9

PUBLIC COMMENTS

CONNIE MARSH articulated that the existing and proposed tree code changes are complex, difficult to follow, and expensive. MARSH asked that the City cover some of the cost of the permits so the burden is not on the individual homeowner. Additionally, MARSH noted that the City should use a targeted approach within the neighborhoods to meet tree canopy goals laid out in the Comprehensive Plan.

SUSAN GLICKSBERG lives in Montreux and has been working with the City on tree canopy goals. GLICKSBERG expressed agreement with the comments from MARSH stating that following the tree code is extremely burdensome on some properties and is difficult to achieve in a way that does not cause harm to the property.

STEVE PEREIRA noted that the proposed tree code update is a major update in requirements and is asking that the Environmental Board push back on the proposed changes. PEREIRA stated that the existing tree code was developed based on extensive feedback and is concerned about the extent of the changes proposed and asked the Environmental Board support continued high tree canopy standards.

VYNNE MCKINSTRY highlighted written comments provided by community members for the Environmental Board to consider.

AGENDA ITEMS

a) **Welcome New Members 2025-2026 Environmental Board (I)**

Presented by:

Don McQuilliams and Alix Lee-Tiger (Board Chair and Vice Chair)

Board Member DUBEAU introduced themselves and discussed their work and background as it relates to the Environmental Board. Board Chair MCQUILLIAMS noted that Board Member GONZALEZ moved from an alternate member to a regular board member while Board Member BAIR moved from a regular member to an alternate member. Each of the other present Board Members introduced themselves, welcomed Board Member DUBEAU and provided a summary of their background.

b) **Chair and Vice Chair Elections (A)**

Presented by:

Don McQuilliams, Board Chair

Stacy Vynne McKinstry, Staff Liaison

Board Chair MCQUILLIAMS introduced the elections process. Board Member ANDERSON nominated Board Chair MCQUILLIAMS to another term as Board Chair. Board Member GHATPANDE seconded the motion. Board Member ANDERSON nominated Vice Chair LEE-TIGNER to another term as Vice Chair. Board Chair MCQUILLIAMS seconded the motion.

Both elections passed by unanimous consent.

c) **Tree Code update (D)**

Presented by:

Doug Yormick, Environmental Planner

Minnie Dhaliwal, Director of Community Planning and Development

YORMICK and Director DHALIWAL presented on the proposed Tree Code updates, including responses to feedback from previous Environmental Board and Planning and Policy Commission meetings. YORMICK began by presenting on the background of the updated Tree Code and the proposed changes. Based on previous comments from the Environmental Board, YORMICK provided details on the Tree Fund, an updated Multi-family Target, Wildfire Mitigation efforts, an updated process for working with large projects such as HOAs and designating planting areas in partnership with the Parks and Community Services team.

VYNNE MCKINSTRY provided an overview of written comments from Board Members DAVIDSON and NEWCOMB. Board Member DAVIDSON noted that the proposed changes seem more complicated than what already exists and therefore she could not support the proposed changes as written. Board Member NEWCOMB provided input regarding wildfire safety and defensible space.

Board Member ANDERSON asked if staff had engaged with King County on a Tree Code toolkit. YORMICK noted that staff had worked with King County but not directly on the Tree Code toolkit. Board Member ANDERSON suggested that public education is key to reaching goals and should be a focus of City plans as well as simplify the rules for single family residences. YORMICK noted that the intent of the proposed changes in the code is to bring a property up to tree canopy goals only if it is a new

development or redevelopment of a property, not if a hazard tree is removed. For hazardous trees and for removing trees at existing single family homes, the proposed Tree Code update encourages 1:1 tree replacement. The Environmental Board noted that the language was difficult to follow and could be made more clear.

Board Chair MCQUILLIAMS expressed appreciation for the change making the process simpler for large projects but noted that the process for single family homes still seemed too complicated. Director DHALI WAL provided additional details about the alternative compliance pathways for single family homes. Board Member PAN asked for clarifications on the multifamily goals and urban heat island effect. Board Member JUN asked if this proposed code update would require reevaluation of trees on existing properties. YORMICK and Director DHALI WAL provided additional details on proposed updates and discussed plans for tree inventories and use of LIDAR data outside of the Tree Code process.

Vice Chair LEE-TIGNER asked for clarification on the intersection of wildfire risk assessments with the Tree Code so that property owners are not penalized for preparing for wildfires. Director DHALI WAL noted that the City is still waiting for additional resources and larger conversations regarding wildfire risk in Western Washington and the impact on local trees. Director DHALI WAL noted that the City would need to update the Tree Code when these regional assessments are completed. Vice Chair LEE-TIGNER provided recommendations on how to clarify language to meet the intent articulated by City staff.

YORMICK provided additional detail on the zoning targets for tree canopy coverage and discussed why staff were proposing changes based on zoning versus City subareas. Vice Chair LEE-TIGNER asked about the realism of the zoning targets. YORMICK noted that the zoning targets are achievable but if it was deemed they were not going to reach the targets that the numbers could be readjusted in the future. Board Member GONZALEZ and Board Chair MCQUILLIAMS asked about the tree replacement fee and how it was determined. YORMICK explained the rationale behind the tree fund and how staff calculated the cost of planting and maintaining a tree. Board Member GHATPANDE expressed support for the Tree Fund and the flexibility that provides for residents. YORMICK clarified that trees that fall down during storms are not always required to be replaced by homeowners.

Staff asked the Environmental Board to provide direct feedback on the following policy questions.

1. Does the board have feedback on including a standard to allow Wildfire Risk Assessment or wait until more detailed analysis is available?

Board Chair MCQUILLIAMS and staff discussed the value of moving ahead with some language related to wildfire risk now versus waiting until a more detailed analysis is complete. YORMICK noted that the proposed Tree Code changes include an updated definition of nuisance tree to include the potential to physical damage. Vice Chair LEE-TIGNER asked if staff could update the Tree Code language to include wildfire risk as defined by Eastside Fire and Rescue within the definition of nuisance tree. Additionally, Vice Chair LEE-TIGNER agreed that more extensive updates to the Tree Code based on wildfire risk should wait until more detailed analyses are complete.

2. Does the Board have feedback on the new methodology to calculate tree canopy coverage requirements?

Director DHALI WAL provided additional context on the calculated tree canopy coverage requirements and described how Community Planning and Development would use information provided by the Urban Forestry Manager as more detail is available. Board Member GHATPANDE asked for clarification on how the zoning based tree canopy percentages were developed and whether nearby Cities address this same issue. YORMICK discussed how the percentages were established based on existing and available data and how staff evaluated the percentage requirements of nearby jurisdictions like Lake Forest Park. Board Chair MCQUILLIAMS and Board Member GHATPANDE expressed support for the methodology to calculate tree canopy coverage requirements. Board Chair MCQUILLIAMS asked staff to revisit the percentages in a few years.

3. Does the Board have feedback on which thresholds require compliance with the full tree canopy coverage requirement?

Board Chair MCQUILLIAMS agreed that the intent of the proposed changes were good and met community concerns.

4. Does the Board have feedback on the proposed flexibility for Central Issaquah subarea?

YORMICK provided a summary of the proposed changes to the Tree Code as it relates to the Central Issaquah subarea. Vice Chair LEE-TIGNER and Board Chair MCQUILLIAMS supported the flexibility given in the Central Issaquah subarea and noted the importance of ensuring that new trees are planted onsite or within Central Issaquah in developments to mitigate current and future heat island effect.

Board Chair MCQUILLIAMS asked the Community Planning Department to come back to the Environmental Board an additional time before the proposed changes go to City Council. Director DHALIWAL provided a summary of feedback provided by the Environmental Board.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Board Chair MCQUILLIAMS reopened public comment following the conclusion of Board feedback.

CONNIE MARSH advocated for neighborhood level tree canopy goals. MARSH expressed support for the work of the Urban Forest Manager position but noted that the City should be prepared to achieve tree canopy targets without relying on one position. MARSH asked for additional language related to Central Issaquah that would preserve stands of healthy trees. MARSH noted that she believes the target for community facilities is too low and needs to increase. MARSH also expressed support for the Public Works department to pay into the Tree Fund if a tree comes down in the right of way.

SUSAN GLICKSBERG asked staff to clarify language in the proposed changes in the Tree Code. Additionally, GLICKSBERG encouraged staff to simplify and make cheaper the process to remove and replace trees. GLICKSBERG encouraged neighborhood level evaluation of Tree Canopy coverage.

REPORTS

VYNNE MCKINSTRY noted that she would provide written updates to the Board given shortness of time.

OTHER BUSINESS / ANNOUNCEMENTS

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:32 PM.

INQUIRIES