

STATE OF TEXAS §
COUNTIES OF POTTER §
AND RANDALL §
CITY OF AMARILLO §

On February 12, 2014, the Comprehensive Plan Implementation Advisory Committee met in a scheduled session at 12:00 P.M. in Councilmember’s Conference Room in 303, on the third floor of City Hall, 509 East 7th Avenue, Amarillo, Texas, with the following members present:

VOTING MEMBERS	PRESENT	NO. MEETINGS HELD	NO. MEETINGS ATTENDED
Bill Chudej	Yes	22	15
Bob Juba, Chair	Yes	22	17
Wes Knapp	No	22	16
Eddie Scott	Yes	22	17
Howard Smith, Vice Chair	Yes	22	21
Dana Walton	Yes	22	15
Milford Burrell	Yes	19	17
Steve Rogers	No	6	4
Mark Meister	Yes	1	1

CITY STAFF:

Kelley Shaw, Planning Director
Kathleen Collins, Planner II

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Mr. Juba opened the meeting, established a quorum, and conducted the consideration of the following items beginning with ITEM 1.

ITEM 1: Approve the minutes of the Committee’s November 13, 2013 meeting

Mr. Juba asked if there were any questions on the previous meeting’s minutes. Hearing none, a motion to accept the minutes as presented was made by Mr. Chudej, seconded by Mr. Smith, and carried unanimously.

ITEM 2: Election of Comprehensive Plan Implementation Advisory Committee Chairman and Vice Chairman

Mr. Shaw stated that the Resolution creating this committee indicates that a Chairman and Vice Chairman should be selected annually. Mr. Juba has been the Chairman since its creation. He can continue if reappointed or someone else can be appointed. Also, Mr. Sanders served as Vice Chairman. However, he has resigned and this position is open.

Mr. Juba asked for nominations for Committee Chairman. A motion to re-elect Mr. Juba as Committee Chairman was made by Mr. Smith, seconded by Mr. Chudej, and carried unanimously.

Mr. Juba asked for nominations for Committee Vice Chairman. A motion to elect Mr. Smith as Committee Vice Chairman was made by Ms. Walton, seconded by Mr. Meister, and carried unanimously.

ITEM 3: Presentation and discussion of proposed Landscape Ordinance amendments

Mr. Juba invited Mr. Shaw to discuss this item. Mr. Shaw stated Staff is in the process of presenting Landscape Ordinance amendments to City Council. The goal will be to meet and present this as an action item to the Comprehensive Plan Implementation Committee in the upcoming months.

Mr. Shaw distributed packets from the February 11th City Council Landscape Ordinance workshop. He began by stating the City of Amarillo adopted the current Landscape Ordinance in 1985, shortly after the 1980's Comprehensive Plan was adopted. This was due in part to the focus on improving Amarillo's image. Mr. Shaw acknowledged several areas along Amarillo Blvd. where development occurred before landscape standards were implemented and areas developed after the standards were in place.

Mr. Shaw identified several benefits to landscaping. These included the enhanced appearance of a site and its surrounding neighborhood, decreasing water runoff, as well as reducing excessive heat radiating from impervious surfaces. With that, City Staff believes landscape standards serve a purpose. While reviewing the current landscape ordinance, City Staff focused on promoting water conservation, enhancing community character, and balancing the needs of business owners. In an effort to be more 'water wise', Staff discussed encouraging business owners to install water efficient groundcover and trees. Staff also discussed other components such as alternative ways to calculate landscaping requirements, drip irrigation, subsurface irrigation, non-living landscaping, and preservation of existing trees.

Mr. Shaw noted the current standards require a majority of non-residential developments to install living groundcover at a rate equal to 5% of the off street parking provided and one tree for every 5,000 square feet of developed lot area. By using this method, groundcover becomes excessive for uses that require large amounts of parking, such as restaurants, and the tree requirement becomes excessive for large lot developments, big-box stores as an example.

Staff's alternatives include groundcover at a rate equal to 10% of total building footprint. Additionally, up to 50% of the required groundcover can consist of non-living material in order to encourage water conservation and provide flexibility for business owners. Also, City Staff is proposing alternatives to the current tree requirement. The first component would include 1 tree for every 40 linear feet of street frontage with placement to be within 15 feet of the property line. The second component would include 1 tree for every 20 parking spaces provided. Placement of these should be throughout the parking area to minimize the "sea of asphalt" and heat effects. Mr. Juba suggested requiring placement of a permeable weed barrier in areas with non-living landscaping so as to reduce water runoff. Mr. Juba questioned if canopies (bank drive thru, fuel canopy, etc.) would be included in the building footprint calculation. Mr. Shaw stated these would be included in the calculation.

Mr. Shaw noted that during the City Council workshop, a concern was raised for businesses having outdoor display areas (car dealerships, RV dealerships, Tractor Supply, etc.). It was stated that the proposed street and parking lot tree requirements could possibly hinder the sale of items by creating a visual barrier and waste from birds and foliage make for messy products. Mr. Meister suggested planting larger trees which could be pruned to increase product visibility. Ms. Walton suggested installing narrow evergreen trees in order to decrease both types of waste mentioned and also increase visibility. Mr. Shaw pointed out that street front trees are not required to be planted every 40 feet on center and tree placement would be up to the business owner. Also, parking lot trees are intended to be placed throughout the parking area to reduce heat, therefore a business owner has options as to where the trees are installed. He noted that creating special standards for specific land uses is not the intent of the Landscape Ordinance amendments. City Staff believes much more flexibility has been created for the business owner.

Mr. Shaw stated that City Staff has applied the proposed landscape standards to multiple types of land uses in order to identify the impact it would have on the community and business owners. In most instances, groundcover and total tree requirements for interior lot development will be decreased. However, corner lot developments are likely to see an increase in groundcover requirements due to the fact that an area equal to 10% of the total building footprint will be applied to each street frontage. Total tree requirements will decrease in most instances on corner lot developments.

Mr. Shaw also mentioned that a point system has been created which would encourage drought tolerant plants. City staff has created a recommended plant list that includes 127 water efficient perennials, shrubs, grasses, ornamental trees, and shade trees. Each landscaping plan must achieve at least 20 points for a plan to be approved. Mr. Shaw reviewed multiple scenarios where the minimum points could be attained. He stated that enforcement has been implemented into the proposed landscape ordinance.

Mr. Shaw noted that City Staff will continue to present this information to the City Council.

ITEM 4: Public Forum: Comments from interested citizens on matters directly pertaining to City policies, programs or services

None were present.

Kelley Shaw
Planning Director