Hi Mona:

Thanks for your email.

FYI, at our Citizens for Sammamish monthly meetings where we discuss any and everything and Sammamish citizens come and go to voice opinions, the subject of Sammamish “applying” to become a Tree City has come up on a number of occasions. We have asked one another, what is a “Tree City?” But, the reason the subject has come up is that it has been mentioned in several local newspapers of late.

The subject of Sammamish being a Tree City has also been mentioned at several City Council meetings recently because of the removal of so many trees in the Inglewood Hill Road vicinity down by East Lake Sammamish. We won’t even drive by because our blood pressures elevate so rapidly when we see what has happened there. I do know that Tom Odell, Ramiro Valderrama, and Don Gerend have all mentioned this subject. With Nancy Whitten voicing herself frequently as an active environmentalist, this subject is probably near and dear to her as well.

I suspect the City Council is waiting for you to hold these public input meetings, investigate with those who confer “Tree City” status on jurisdictions, etc. and then relay to the City Council the requirements for qualifying, as well as advantages, if any, and disadvantages, if any.

You are going to no doubt be identified as the person in the know regarding Sammamish trees and Sammamish as a potential designated Tree City.

Regarding those who reside within jurisdictions of Homeowners’ Associations, if I correctly understand what you’ve written, it appears homeowners are at the mercy of the HOA’s with zero recourse if neighborhoods disagree with HOA approval of dramatic removals of mature trees. I do believe, however, that if the City of Sammamish tightens control on tree removal that would or could trickle down to impact how HOA’s treat tree removal within their respective communities.

The Sahalee County Club (golf course) recently had a “rape of the trees” exercise (obviously, they did not call it that, but the affected residents did) where the golf course people removed a huge number of trees, but focused primarily on limbing trees up to about 20-30 feet. Those huge stands of trees provided privacy for the Sahalee homeowners for the last 30-40 years, and overnight we can now all see every property fronting fairways and all over Sahalee. At night, the spotlights on the house exteriors are light laser beams entering our houses where the tree growth and undergrowth used to offer seclusion and privacy. We had Sahalee residents running up and down the streets yelling as the severed limbs revealed twenty or thirty neighborhood houses they’d never seen before, along with activity they’d hope they’d never see. Most of the people who purchased fairways properties paid an average of $100,000 more for their houses fronting on fairway property, most often because they wanted the privacy of the undergrowth and trees. That is all gone, and most of us will not live long enough to ever see original privacy conditions restored. At night from every room in one’s house, from about twenty houses, these “flashlights” enter our bedrooms, bathrooms, and all living quarters. It is very disruptive, and all because of tree and foliage removal.

FYI, Mona, Don Gerend can be a valuable resource for you to discuss the Tree City subject. Most of the Council Members purport to want to slow down the removal of vast numbers of trees in our Sammamish community (or say they are concerned about the volume of tree removal).

Harry and Claradell
To: Claradell Shedd  
Subject: RE: Tree Removal_03.26.14;10:56am;4:06pm

Good afternoon, Claradell...thank you so much for your comments. I hope to meet you tomorrow afternoon at the open house, but if you can’t make it, I understand. There will be other opportunities to comment as we get further into the process. I anticipate Planning Commission meetings in May...City Council in June/July.

I want to clarify that there hasn’t been any discussion about Sammamish becoming a Tree City. Not so say that it couldn’t happen in the future...it might. I will make note that you have asked about it and would support this in our City. At this point, I’m not entirely sure of what’s involved to become a Tree City...but I will research that a bit.

The questions you are asking are ones that I’m trying to determine as part of this process. Would you like to see tree retention requirements for existing single family lots? It sounds like you would.

What you’re explaining with the Sahalee Homeowners Association is typically tied to the CC&Rs within the development. Many subdivisions require that the HOA give approval in advance of the City’s permit approval. That is a private matter with the HOA and the City wouldn’t have any control over that. The City requires a tree removal permit for any significant tree proposed to be removed in the City, whether or not they need approval from the HOA also. It would be up to the property owner to abide by their CC&Rs and obtain HOA approval.

If a tree is located with an HOA tract within a subdivision, the HOA is considered the applicant on the permit. The HOA is typically required to maintain all tracts. If there’s a tree within an HOA tract posing a hazard to a neighboring resident on a privately owned lot, the HOA is responsible for removing it. Privately owned communities/clubs would need to obtain permits to cut trees on their property like anyone else in the City. Tree removal permits are not required to be noticed to the public. Most existing lots in developments can cut their trees without limitations unless it’s in a critical area or specified to be retained as part of a tree retention plan in the development. A tree removal permit is still required, but if it’s not in a critical area or a designated retained tree, we typically don’t regulate the quantity of trees allowed to be cut on someone’s individual lot with a house already developed on it.

I hope this helps to clarify some of your questions. Again...I appreciate you taking the time to provide your comments and I look forward to meeting you in person at an upcoming meeting at the City. Thanks so much! ☺

Mona

Mona Davis, Senior Planner  
City of Sammamish  
Community Development Department  
801 228th Avenue SE  
Sammamish, WA 98075

NEW EMAIL ADDRESS as of March 1, 2013: mmdavis@sammamish.us  
Direct: 425-295-0529

From: Claradell Shedd [mailto:shedd@hshedd.com]  
Sent: Wednesday, March 26, 2014 10:56 AM  
To: Tree Retention  
Subject: Tree Removal_02.26.14
Hi Mona:

We’re not certain we can make the Thursday, March 27th meeting at City Hall, but we do have several questions which are most likely in the minds of many Sammamish residents.

We are elated that Sammamish is making the decision to “become a Tree City”.

Will the City of Sammamish Tree Program specify diameter and species of trees which the City will wish to retain?

We suspect that the Tree Program will be enforced most probably with developers, not existing residential sites, but will existing residential sites on occasion be affected?

We live in Sammamish. We live in Sahalee. Occasionally, the Homeowners’ Association permits very desirable live mature trees to be removed. Residents within the Sahalee community often question the practicality and validity of removing these mature trees, since in many cases it is appearing the Homeowners’ Association is making a political decision to satisfy a single homeowner, obviously at the expense of retaining a naturally heavily-treed community and neighborhood.

Can the residents in the Sahalee community ever consider that it might have the Sammamish City jurisdiction as the deciding, determining, and governing body on tree removal? We hope that Sammamish will be enforcing the Tree Program guidelines within all of Sammamish, because we feel specific communities, regardless of whether they are organized with Homeowners’ Associations, should not be immune from the fact that the City of Sammamish is desiring to retain as many cedars, etc. in order to qualify as a Tree City and in concert with maintaining Sammamish as a picturesque treed environment.

Will residents of specific communities within Sammamish have a voice of recourse if those communities discover plans to clearcut various residential properties? If so, can you identify the portion of the Tree Program guidelines where residents might have this recourse? I am not addressing the private property of the Sahalee Country Club, but rather the residential community of the homeowners themselves who reside within the City of Sammamish’s Sahalee gated community. It does, however, pose a question about private property; i.e., do private courses such as Sahalee, The Plateau Club, etc. enjoy immunity over Sammamish City tree-removal jurisdiction?

Even though I make the inquiry referencing Sahalee, you are no doubt aware of several Sammamish communities which are too abusive and compromising with tree removal. In most cases, the treed environment is what attracted residents to purchase there in the first place.

Thirty years ago we moved into a wonderfully mature “forested” area. The Sahalee Homeowners’ Association has permitted heavy severe limbing and so much tree removal that it is not the Sahalee many of us once knew.

Thanks, Mona.

Harry and Claradell Shedd
shedd@hshedd.com

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