



City of Durham
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES
March 10, 2026

A. CALL TO ORDER.

Vice Chair Matt Winkler opened the meeting at 7:00 PM at Durham City Hall.

B. ROLL CALL.

Commissioners present: Vice Chair Matt Winkler, Commissioners Patricia Saab, Andrew Mast, and Krista Bailey.

Commissioners absent: Planning Chair Susan Deeming, Commissioners Forrest Boleyn and Cheri Frazell.

Staff present: City Administrator Jordan Parente and Administrative Assistant Wyatt Bean.

C. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES.

The Commission considered approval of the prior meeting minutes. With no discussion offered, Commissioner Saab moved to approve the minutes as presented, and Commissioner Mast seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously (4-0).

MO 031026-01

D. PUBLIC FORUM.

Vice Chair Winkler opened the public forum and clarified that members of the public could comment, including items appearing on the agenda, so the Commission could deliberate afterward. Brad Henry, the future resident of the property being developed, spoke in support of Tree Removal Request 845-26. He stated that they had hoped to retain Tree 22 and had spent about \$3,000 pruning and windsailing it, but excavation for the home foundation revealed a significant root conflict. After considering the tree's condition, likely root disturbance, and the risk it could pose to their future home or neighboring properties, they concluded removal was the safest option.

Project arborist Kyle Offerdahl of Pacific Consulting Arborists also addressed the Commission regarding Tree 22. He explained that excavation uncovered three major roots, indicating the tree relied heavily on a limited structural root system to anchor itself from south winds. He stated that the home's proximity, changes to drainage and soil conditions, and likely continued root conflicts during construction made long-term preservation uncertain. In his professional opinion, even if portions of the foundation were bridged, continued development activity and disturbance to the root system would create substantial future risk.

E. SIGN PERMIT 479-26 AINSWORTH #230 17400 SW UPPER BOONES FERRY RD.

The Commission reviewed Sign Permit 479-26 for Ainsworth, which proposed replacing the existing wall sign with a larger sign displaying "GDI" and "Ainsworth" with the existing logo. Staff explained that the new sign would measure 13.3 square feet, would remain well within the code's maximum size allowance, and involved a substantial change in size and material, requiring a Type II review by Planning Commission. Commissioners noted appreciation for having a physical sample of the material and agreed the revised sign would be more visible from the right-of-way while remaining within applicable code standards. Commissioner Bailey moved to approve the sign permit as submitted, and Commissioner Saab seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously (4-0).

MO 031026-02



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F. TREE REMOVAL REQUEST 844-26 DWH 16502 SW DEER TERRACE.

The Commission considered Tree Removal Request 844-26 for removal of one 42-inch Deodar cedar at 16502 SW Deer Terrace in Durham Heights. Dave Cady, on behalf of David Weekley Homes, explained that the tree had originally been approved for removal during the subdivision process but had been left in place to preserve as many mature trees as possible. He stated that once a home was fitted to the lot, site constraints became clearer, including the triangular shape of the lot, setback limitations, and a Clean Water Services easement at the rear that prevented shifting the home farther back. He said the house footprint could not reasonably be redesigned around the tree without losing basic residential functionality.

The Commission discussed whether the application should be treated as a Type G permit for previously undeveloped property rather than a Type E permit. Although the application had been filed as Type E, staff explained that it was administratively processed as a Type G permit. This is the applicable tree removal permit type for construction of a single-family dwelling on a newly developed lot. Commissioners also discussed the history of prior removals and preservation decisions within Durham Heights, the difficulty of tracking canopy retention over time, and the proposed mitigation tree. Despite being on the City's mitigation list, staff relayed the City Arborist's concern that Scotch pine may not be an ideal mitigation species because of its long-term susceptibility to pine beetle infestation. The applicant indicated willingness to substitute another approved species and suggested allowing the future homeowner to choose from the City's approved tree list.

After reviewing the findings, the Commission agreed that the request should be processed as a Type G permit and that mitigation should be required. Commissioner Mast moved to approve Tree Removal Request 844-26 as a Type G permit with a mitigation tree, and Commissioner Saab seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously (4-0)

MO 031026-03

G. TREE REMOVAL REQUEST 845-26 HENRY 7888 SW ELLMAN LANE.

The Commission considered Tree Removal Request 845-26 for removal of one 50-inch Douglas-fir identified as Tree 22 at 7888 SW Ellman Lane. Staff confirmed the request was being processed as a Type G permit, which is for tree removals to accommodate the construction of a single-family dwelling on a newly developed lot.

During discussion, Vice Chair Winkler asked whether removal of Tree 22 would affect neighboring trees. Mr. Offerdahl stated that, based on the site conditions and prevailing wind patterns, he did not believe removal would materially destabilize the remaining trees. Neighboring residents expressed support for the request and agreed the root conflict appeared legitimate, while also asking about a nearby tree on their property line. Mr. Offerdahl responded that earlier excavation had not revealed shallow roots near that tree and recommended monitoring it over time for soil movement rather than taking immediate action.

Commissioners acknowledged the applicant's efforts to preserve trees where possible and agreed it was preferable to address the issue before the home was built. The applicant confirmed willingness to plant a mitigation tree and work with staff on an appropriate species and timeline. Commissioner Mast moved to approve Tree Removal Request 845-26 with the condition that a mitigation tree from the City's approved list be planted within a reasonable timeframe, and Commissioner Bailey seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously (4-0).

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Following approval, Mr. Henry asked whether the tree could be removed immediately to alleviate construction delays. Staff responded that the code includes an appeal period.

H. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS / REPORTS / STAFF UPDATES.

In staff updates, City Administrator Parente reported that the city had received a site and design review application for Durham Estates and was conducting a completeness review. He also reported that the first reading of the new municipal tree code had occurred on February 24, 2026, that the second reading was scheduled for March 24, 2026, and that the city was preparing for implementation, including updating the scope of work for a revised City Arborist role. He noted that the newsletter was going to print and was intended to reach residents ahead of the second reading, and that the city was considering moving the second reading to a larger venue.

The Commission discussed public reaction to the tree code update, including concerns about increased fees, perceived punitive language, and a need for civic engagement. It was suggested that the new fee structure is intended to properly fund consistent professional arborist review rather than rely on limited City staff capacity. Commissioners and staff also discussed the value of a City-retained arborist for consistency, the need for some discretion in enforcement, and the balance between preserving trees and maintaining a functional, affordable program. Additionally, staff was asked if there was new information on a potential In-N-Out Burger outside City jurisdiction, but staff did not receive any updates. Staff noted that Durham's upcoming 60th anniversary celebration would be held on July 4th in Durham Park. Finally, the community would receive notice of April 25th as the date of the bulky waste pickup day, as well as a neighborhood weed pull event in the treed lot, which will both be noticed in the coming newsletter.

I. NEXT REGULARLY SCHEDULED MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION.

The next regular meeting of the Planning Commission was announced for April 14, 2026, at 7:00 p.m.

J. ADJOURN.

Vice Chair Winkler adjourned the meeting at 8:15 PM.

Approved:

Susan Deeming, Chair

Attest:

Jordan Parente, City Administrator/Recorder