

TOWN OF PALM BEACH

Information for Town Council Meeting on: October 12, 2021

To: Mayor & Town Council

Via: Kirk Blouin, Town Manager

From: Wayne Bergman, Director of Planning, Zoning & Building

Re: Native Landscaping Regulations Amendments – Ord. No. 24-2021

Date: September 24, 2021

GENERAL INFORMATION

Chapter 66, Natural Resource Protection, was updated in early 2019 to address the benefits of using native landscape. The update included a requirement for new landscape projects to include at least 25% native vegetation. Native landscape plants were identified by referencing a few different Florida plant lists and guides.

Since the adoption of the update, staff and applicants have questioned how the 25% requirement should be calculated and which plant list or guide was best to follow. These questions have remained unanswered for about a year and a half. Landscape plans today show compliance with the 25% minimum, but there is no specificity on how the 25% is calculated and the plans usually do not show which list or guide was followed to delineate native versus non-native plants. These issues were presented to the Town Council last year and the matter was forwarded to the ORS Committee to review.

Staff made a presentation to the ORS Committee on July 1, 2021. The questions of how to calculate the 25%, which plant guide should be followed, and whether 25% was an appropriate amount of natives, were posed to a few landscape design professionals over the past year, and their responses were provided to ORS. A lengthy discussion occurred at the meeting and options were reviewed, but ORS did not find answers to the questions raised by staff and others. As a result, the matter went back to Town Council on August 10, 2021 to seek direction on how to resolve the open issues. The matter was deferred by the Town Council at that meeting until September 14, 2021. That delay provided an opportunity for ORS Committee consider and review the matter further at their September 2, 2021 meeting.

During their September 2, 2021 meeting, the ORS Committee again had a lengthy discussion on the native plant matter. The ORS Committee agreed at that meeting to recommend the following to the Town Council:

- Calculate the native plant requirement based upon the quantity of plants, not by the plant coverage.
- Increase to 35% the minimum amount of native plants in each of the following five categories: trees, palms, shrubs, ground cover and vines. Each of these categories would require a minimum of 35% native plants.
- Use the Institute for Regional Conservation (“IRC”), Natives for Your Neighborhood as the sole listing for native plants. This online list allows to filter by zip code.
- Use the Florida Invasive Plant Species Guide (“FLIP”) as the list for Category 1 and 2 invasive plants.

The Town Council again reviewed the matter at their September 14, 2021 meeting. The Council agreed with the recommendations made by the ORS Committee and asked staff to draft an ordinance to cover the recommended changes. The draft ordinance was reviewed by Skip Randolph for form and legal sufficiency. Ordinance No. 24-2021 is ready for First Reading at your October 12, 2021 meeting.

cc: Jay Boodheshwar, Deputy Town Manager
James Murphy, Assistant Planning, Zoning and Building Director
John Randolph, Town Attorney