

Protecting the Trees

by Richard Burton, Publisher

The melodic chirping of our feathered friends has been silenced by the roaring buzz of area chainsaws. Thankfully, City Councilor John Hummel has proposed that a tree ordinance be placed on the city books. A municipal tree ordinance is long overdue in Bend. Developers and homeowners alike have had too much leeway in hacking away our most treasured trees. With no regulations currently in place, it's time for The Bend City Council to take clear and precise steps toward protecting our cherished landscape.

Perhaps a drive down OB Riley Road will encourage council members to propose even stricter ordinances, casting off the loopholes that have allowed developers and residents to crank up chainsaws on a whim. A staff has been ordered to create a tree preservation ordinance that would require a resident or landowner to pay for a permit only when cutting down five or more trees over 10 inches in diameter. If passed, this would be the first restriction of its kind placed on homeowners.

Longtime Bend residents concerned about additional restrictions placed on them need only to look outside. Our landscape has changed considerably over the past few years. Wide-open clearings where forests once flourished are becoming far too common.

Bend residents who truly appreciate our environment may wonder why five trees are the minimum. The loss of one tree is a loss to our entire community. To require Bend residents to pay for a permit to cut down a

single tree is worth the trouble and money if it prevents unnecessary chopping without concern for the overall landscape.

Though The Bend City Council has decided to incorporate a municipal tree ordinance, there is some dissension within the council about which trees to protect. Our treasured juniper trees are in more danger than ever, labeled by some council members as "invasive trees that suck up a lot of water". To leave the junipers off of the list of protected trees would pose a huge threat to the beauty of Bend. There are entire groves of junipers growing within the area. To exclude junipers from the tree preservation ordinance would dramatically change Bend's roadsides, parks, landscape and overall environment, practically handing the executioner his rights to cut down these grand beauties.

The aged ponderosa pines have been guaranteed protection by the council, though other trees are not so lucky. Some council members have suggested protecting all native trees, but according to City Planner and certified arborist, Wendy Robinson, the native list of trees is very short. Species such as weeping willows and walnut trees would be excluded. Though many of our most beloved trees are not native to Bend, they were brought here by the early pioneers, becoming indigenous, thriving in this climate. A municipal tree ordinance that includes indigenous trees as well as native trees is necessary to protect all species surrounding Bend.

A proactive approach is needed to protect our lush landscape. With over 62% of Oregon cities enacting preservation ordinances, Bend need not lag behind. According to the United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service, for every \$1 cities invest in managing their trees, \$2.70 is returned in the form of community benefits.

The Bend City Council should take appropriate measures now, working closely with the Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) Urban and Community Forestry Assistance Program. It is imperative that we make good use of this department's valuable assistance as new developments continue to pop up overnight. Protective ordinances are needed right away in order to preserve Bend's overall pride, image and beauty. The future of Bend's cherished trees cannot be ignored. Protecting the grand ponderosa pine as well as the hearty juniper will only enhance community appeal to new residents and businesses, providing shade and beauty for generations to come.

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