

MEMORANDUM

From: City of Biloxi Tree Committee
Robin Galle Rodolfich, Chair
Mary Kinney, Secretary
Tracy Wyman
Juli Bocek
Matthew Dubaz
Bernie Marinovich
Carroll Campbell

To: The Honorable Fofo Gilich, Mayor
Jerry Creel, Director of Planning
Eric Nolan, City Arborist

Date: December 12, 2016

Re: Recommendations Regarding a Request for a Permit to Remove Two Live Oaks at
At the Intersection Keller Avenue and Beach Boulevard

The Biloxi Tree Committee has been asked to review an application for the removal of two trees on the property at the corner of Keller Avenue and Beach Boulevard. This committee recommends that both trees be retained. There are several justifications for this recommendation.

Both trees proposed for removal meet the definition of a Specimen Tree, and are therefore protected. According to the definition found in Article 23-10 of the City of Biloxi Land Development Ordinance (LDO), Definitions and Interpretations, "Tree, Specimen," which states that, "Any oak, magnolia, or bald cypress with a DBH (diameter at breast height) of five or more inches..." is a specimen tree. Specimen trees are protected at 23-6-4(G)(2), of the LDO.

It is in the interests of the City to preserve trees; removing trees diminishes our environmental quality. The purpose and benefits of a healthy urban tree population are numerous, substantive, and well established: They include shade; reducing temperatures by as much as 5% on a residential site and directing cooler breezes inland; soil stabilization; and buffering high winds— the combination of which strengthen the capacity for inland homes and businesses to weather coastal storms. Additionally, the trees, and particularly live oaks, contribute to habitat for a wide diversity of insects, birds, and mammals important to the coastal ecosystems.

Therefore, maximizing a beach view does not qualify as justification to remove a Live Oak specimen tree with a DBH of 36". In fact, a healthy coastal view of the Mississippi Sound is one that is scattered with Live Oaks and other vegetation native to

the Mississippi Coastal Plain, and many of our current homes and buildings feature such a view. There are buildings all along the coast that feature large live oaks to the south, oaks comprising in part the view from the standpoint of the buildings. One example is the property next door, which features a large majestic oak to the front of the house. Another example is the Elks Lodge, where several majestic oaks in front of the building beautify the view to the south and shade the grounds.

Moreover, this Committee is empowered by the Land Development Ordinance to approve or deny applications to remove Majestic Oaks. The trees at the Keller Avenue property qualify as Majestic Oaks by dint of their age and size, and for this further consideration should not be removed.

Finally, The Tree Committee wishes to avoid establishing a precedent by which majestic oaks/specimen trees may be removed with the justification that such trees “obstruct” the view.

The Tree Committee members are in agreement that the two trees in question should not be removed. The east tree appears to have been trimmed and is perhaps not in the best condition, but it does show signs of new growth. The tree to the west is in excellent shape and should not be removed.

We recommend the following:

a) That a certified arborist selected by the Tree Committee review the eastern-most tree in question and assess whether dead-wooding the tree is practical, considering the large diameter of the branches that would need dead-wooding and the potentially awkward appearance the tree would be left with. Based on the arborist’s assessment, retain this tree if at all practical since, if cared for properly, it will recover in time.

b) That the western-most tree be retained;

c) That the property owner reconfigure the house if need be. There are options for reconfiguration:

- There was a residence on this property prior to Katrina, which co-existed with the trees presently on the site. The homeowner should consider rebuilding on the original footprint of previous home.
- Re-site the house to benefit from rather than be distracted by, the heritage oak(s)—
 - e.g., siting the house with the two trees showcased at its SE corner/yard for shade/cooling benefit;
 - or site the house with the two trees in the ‘back yard’ and providing a bit of privacy at the NE corner; thus the house would

be situated between the two trees requested to be removed, and the line of oaks along the south property line;

- build within the footprint of the building that existed on the property before Katrina, which was situated on the lot in relationship with the existing trees.