

## CITY OF ST. AUGUSTINE

### Building Code Task Force for New Construction Meeting February 4, 2021

The Building Code Task Force for New Construction met in formal session Thursday, February 4, 2021, at 9:00 a.m. in the Alcazar Room at City Hall. The meeting was called to order by John Valdes, Chairperson and the following were present:

**1. Roll Call:** John Valdes, Commissioner-Chair  
Sarah Ryan  
Rob Matthews  
Robin Moore  
Jon Benoit  
Les Thomas  
Irene Arriola  
John Wooldridge

City Staff: David Birchim, Director, Planning & Building Department  
Reuben Franklin, Director, Public Works  
Buddy Schauland, Building Official  
Shelley Clayton, Permits Coordinator  
Denise May, City Attorney  
Candice Seymour, Recording Secretary

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### **2. General Public hearings for Items Not on the Agenda**

The Task Force heard from the following member of the public:

- B.J. Kalaidi

### **3. Discussion and Recommendation of Possible Incentives for Property Owners to Use Building Construction Techniques Which Do Not Require Land Filling**

Mr. Birchim and Commissioner Valdes gave a brief overview of the subject and highlighted key points of previous discussions including requiring a grading plan, limiting allowable fill, and avoiding the damming of storm water.

Reuben Franklin, Public Works Director, facilitated discussion regarding the following:

- The need for licensed surveyor involvement in creating grading plans to ensure accurate elevations for staff to review
- Staff-developed template to show contractors and property owners what information the City would require in a grading plan
- Utilizing the crown of the road as a point of measurement for additional fill on a property
- The need to consider fill on a case-by-case basis and creating a process to allow for additional fill on a property if necessary
- Including a technical infeasibility clause to fill limitation requirements that would allow for additional fill if the allowed maximum would not provide adequate flood protection and drainage

- Including language within fill regulations to regulate garage elevations
- Adopting maximum slopes on residential driveways to help limit garage elevations
- No minimum elevation for garages within the flood plain as long as there were flood vents
- Grading plan requirement could address fill concerns as long as the property owner could prove they were maintaining storm water on their property
- Surveyor involved in final closeout would assist staff in processing a quick closeout
- Concern that surveyor requirements may make new construction less palatable for property owners due to additional expenses and potential for a longer time-frame for approval
- Possibility of limiting slope of grading on a lot rather than limiting fill
- Grading based on neighboring property elevations
- Concern that limiting fill could be counterintuitive to future plans to raise roads, particularly in Davis Shores
- Desire to promote stem-wall and pier construction
- Potential for garages to be built larger to accommodate stairs that would allow access to the elevated house
- Potential for property entirely or mostly built-up by a stem-wall, which was already occurring in the County
- Adaptability of design would be necessary for the future
- Recommendation to eliminate the surveyor requirement upon building permit close-out, at least at the start of the program
- Grading plan inspection would need to be before landscaping was installed
- Regulations could be written to reflect that if staff did not feel the

final inspection met the grading plan, then the property owner would need to provide a final survey to prove otherwise

## MOTION

**Mr. Benoit MOVED to make additions to the Land Development Code that would require single-family residential improvements over 200 square feet to submit a lot grading plan which would demonstrate that the property was not draining stormwater onto adjacent properties and was maintaining some semblance of existing drainage patterns; and, in addition, that Land Development Code would require that there would be a maximum impervious surface area of 75% to include building coverage, driveways, and hardscaping.**

Buddy Schauland, Building Official, clarified that the main concern from a floodplain perspective was fill damming the flow of water and causing flooding on neighboring properties and streets. He facilitated continued discussion regarding the following:

- Many property owners are raising homes and putting the garage underneath to mitigate the need for a larger garage footprint
- Concern that owner-builders may not want to hire a surveyor to assist in creating and finalizing a lot grading plan
- Examples of that caused water-flow issues post-development
- Effects of fill regulation on the Community Rating System (CRS) program credits which could effect flood insurance rates across the City
- Fill limits would not mitigate complaints as much as ensuring the drainage plan clearly stated that applicants would maintain historic drainage patterns

- Ways to maintain existing drainage patterns on properties and how such regulation would allow for more effective enforcement of stormwater retention
- Lot Coverage versus impervious surface ratio
- Historic drainage regulations may not prevent construction of retaining walls to raise property elevations; however, it would prevent the filled area from covering the entire lot
- Need to define criteria for variances and choose a board to hear variance applications.

#### **4. Discussion of Creating a Maximum Impervious Surface Ratio for Residential Properties**

(Not discussed)

#### **Public Comment**

The Task Force heard comments from the following members of the public:

- Charles Pappas
- B.J. Kalaidi
- Deltra Long

#### **5. Closing Remarks**

Mr. Birchim advised that he would draft requirements for the grading plan and return with it for review. He asked the Task Force members for clarification regarding limitation of fill.

Mr. Benoit said he intentionally left limitation of fill out of his motion and restated it as follows:

#### **MOTION**

**Mr. Benoit MOVED to make additions to the Land Development Code that would require single-family residential improvements over 200 square feet to submit a lot grading plan which would**

**demonstrate that the property was not draining stormwater onto adjacent properties and was maintaining some semblance of existing drainage patterns; and, in addition, that Land Development Code would require that there would be a maximum impervious surface area of 75% to include building coverage, driveways, pools, and hardscaping. The motion was SECONDED by Mr. Wooldridge.**

#### **VOTE ON MOTION**

**AYES: Benoit, Wooldridge, Arriola, Thomas, Moore, Matthews, Ryan, Valdes**

**NAYES: NONE**

**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

Final remarks from members included:

- Continuing discussion regarding incentivizing additional lot coverage at the next meeting
- Applicability of final regulations all over the City
- Impervious Surface Ratio, how it would be implemented through the Comprehensive Plan and a recommendation to lower the maximum to 70% to meet area standards

#### **6. Adjournment**

Having no further business, Commissioner Valdes adjourned the meeting at 10:57 A.M.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Transcribed by Candice Seymour