Reading Conservation Commission

Reading Conservation Commission, 9/28/2016

The Conservation Commission is charged with protection of natural resources in the Town of Reading, such as lakes, rivers, ponds, streams, wetlands and floodplains. Under state and Town Bylaws and regulations, any work occurring within or that may impact the resource area, including removal of trees, requires review and permission from the Conservation Commission or the Conservation Administrator.

Tree removal is reviewed by the Commission at its scheduled bi-monthly meetings, pursuant to an application filed beforehand. The Commission requires replacement ratio based on the Replacement Tree and Shrub Schedule for trees removed within one hundred feet of a wetland and 200 feet of a river. Upon mutual agreement of Commission and applicant, when the appropriate replacement ratio cannot be achieved on site, a voluntary contribution deposited into Reading's Shade Tree Fund may be made in lieu of replacement of one or more trees. These funds will be used for tree planting, transplanting, and other tree-related needs. However, the Commission may at its sole discretion apply a different standard when conditions warrant. Voluntary Shade Tree Fund contributions will be a minimum of $250.00 and the maximum amount of $500.00 for applicants who are individual homeowners. For new subdivisions and commercial uses the minimum will be $250.00 and the maximum amount will be set at the Commission's sole discretion.

Standard replacement Tree and Shrub policy Reading Wetland Protection Bylaw Section 7.1.

1. Planting within the buffer zone must be a native species or cultivar of a native species approved in advance by the Conservation Commission.
2. A tree six inches or greater in caliper that is cut with a remaining tree trunk that is between 8-15 feet tall above grade (called a snag) does not require the installation of a replacement plantings. This option may be preferred by the Commission when a large tree threatens structures but is within the Zone of Natural Vegetation. These snags provide habitat and food for wildlife.
3. If any tree within the Buffer Zone is cut down without leaving a snag, the tree shall be replaced with new plantings according to the replacement Tree and Shrub schedule below.

4. Replacement plantings must be installed within 180 days of the day the existing tree is cut. Replacement plantings that do not survive for at least two growing seasons must be replaced. No Certificate of Compliance shall be issued if the plants have not been established for at least two growing seasons without an established surety acceptable to the Commission.

How to Request Approval

Applicants should call or email the Town Conservation Administrator mailto:ctirone@ci.reading.ma.us for instructions on what permit is needed and how to get on the agenda.

Importance of Native Species and Proper Planting

Replacement trees must be native species selected from the Recommended Native Plant Materials List and be between four and ten feet tall with a trunk caliper of three inches or more measured at six inches above the root ball. The following guide from the Tree Care Industry Association website at www.treecaretips.org provides instructions for planting your new tree with the best chance for survival.

Hazard Trees

Circumstances may arise when one or two trees become an imminent hazard to property or public safety and need to be removed before an application can be filed with the Commission or before the Commission can meet to review the request in order to avoid such hazard.

In such limited situations, the Commission shall follow this Hazardous Tree Protocol.
For three or more trees, the Emergency Certification procedures in the state and Town Wetlands Regulations shall be followed.

Hazardous Tree Protocol

If the tree in question is within 100 feet of a wetland or pond, or 200 feet of a river, the property owner shall:

1) Provide written notification to the Conservation Commission office which includes:
   name,
   address,
   contact phone and, if available, email,
   location of tree,
   size of tree – dbh and approximate height
   species of tree,
   water body or wetland nearby,
   photo(s)
   sketch plan showing location of tree.
2) Provide a letter from a qualified professional stating that the tree(s) poses an immediate threat to property or to public health and safety.

Replacement tree and shrub schedule

Existing trees to be removed	Replacement Tree and Shrubs			
Size 6" or greater (DBH) of trees to be cut	Number of deciduous shade trees 2.5" dbh or greater	Number of evergreen trees 5-6' in height or greater	Number of large shrubs or small trees 5-6' in height or greater	Number of shrubs 3' in height or greater
Replacement Ratios	1 for each tree removed	1 for each tree removed	2 for each tree removed	3 for each tree removed
	The Commission may at its sole discretion apply a different standard when conditions warrant			