

## ARE WE CUTTING TOO MANY TREES?

Within the past few months, town officials have received several inquiries whose gist is, "Has the town relaxed its standards concerning tree removal and other means of maintaining the natural beauty of this area?" The answer is an unqualified "No", as illustrated by the following:

Q. Why are so many trees being removed from some of the lots being prepared for home building?

A. The lots now being developed are generally smaller than most of those previously developed and the house and drain field occupy a proportionally larger fraction of the lot area. Also, some clearing is frequently needed to allow access during the process of granting permits.

Q. Has there been a recent change in permitting procedures?

A. No.

Q. What are we doing to increase compliance with our ordinances aimed at preserving natural beauty?

A. First, the town has recently enacted a new civil ordinance specifying a penalty of \$100 per tree, or more, for unauthorized removal of trees greater than 3" in diameter measured at a point 3 1/2 feet above the base. A marked reduction in violations has been observed.

Second, the Community Appearance Commission issued a new booklet last year, entitled "Guidelines to Building and Gardening in Pine Knoll Shores." It tells property owners what they need to know about procedures and permits relevant to these subjects. Copies are available at the Town Hall.

For your guidance, one of the following criteria must be met, as determined by the Building Inspector, before a permit for the requested activity can be issued:

1. Protect a structure or improvement on the property;
2. Promote the growth and health of other more desirable vegetation;
3. Improve the appearance and/or livability of the property, without significantly destabilizing the soil thereon, or otherwise damaging the ecology of the property;
4. Before pruning oceanfront vegetation, an application to the town must be accompanied by a letter from a qualified professional stating that pruning will be done in accordance with good practice, will be supervised by a professional and will not permanently damage the vegetation. (These rules are a summary of ordinances found in paragraph 21-3.5J of the Pine Knoll Shores Municipal Code.)

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Community Appearance Committee