

MUNICIPAL BEAUTIFICATION COMMISSION/TREE BOARD
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Time/Place: October 27, 2020 1:30 p.m.
 Via Zoom

Members Present: Ms. Bobbi Holland
 Mr. Otis Laury
 Mr. Bruce Severino
 Ms. Marlene Dial
 Mr. Tom Vasale
 Ms. Donna Graham
 Ms. Amy McLaughlin

Members Excused: Mr. Tim Forren

Members Absent (unexcused): Ms. Lynne Sandy
 Mr. Otis Laury

Staff and Guests:

Mr. David Simms 3803 Staunton Avenue
Ms. Lou Dent Smith 3805 Staunton Avenue
Mr. Jeff Pierson- Public Arts
Brent Webster- Public Works
Mackenzie Spencer- City of Charleston/Meeting Host
Miranda Dillon- City of Charleston (Muted and did not
participate)
Nikki Smith- City of Charleston (muted and did not
participate)

The meeting was called to order at 1:30pm by Chair, Mr. Vasale. Minutes of the previous meeting were approved as distributed. There was no treasurer report but the previous balance in the Municipal Beautification Project Fund was \$32,764.00, reported at the September 1 meeting.

The first order of business was a request to remove a City owned tree from the public right of way located along the property line between 3803 and 3805 Staunton Avenue. Both residents, Mr. David Simms and Ms. Lou Dent Smith were present to make the request.

Mr. Simms would like to install a new driveway and the tree's trunk and buttressed roots intrude on the proposed location. Mr. Simms also stated that there is a bad standing water issue caused by drainage from the street toward his existing driveway and drainage from his property toward the street. The water puddles over the pavement of both surfaces and also over the lawn between the tree and the street. He believes that the installation of the new driveway plus the correction of the drainage would cause the tree to decline or die. Mr. Simms also stated the annoyance caused by starlings bathing in the standing water, then roosting in the tree, depositing excessive droppings on his vehicle.

Ms. Smith stated that a majority of the tree may be on her side of the property line.

Mr. Simms stated that he has already sent a drainage complaint to the City Engineer and that Aaron Morris has responded and is working on a remediation recommendation.

Mr. Vasale explained that he was asking about the drainage issue because the City of Charleston historically does not remove City trees just because people don't like them and that the benefit of having trees generally outweighs the inconvenience. He noted that the allees of trees in Kanawha City are part of its original design and form the character of the neighborhood. If every request for removal were granted, the neighborhood would lose the very thing that makes it a desirable place to own a house. He stated that the trees are older than most of the residents in the neighborhood and that the trees were present when the residents bought their houses.

Mr. Vasale stated that he was trying to help Mr. Simms and Ms. Smith justify the removal of the tree because it's healthy. It has been inspected by a forester and no structural weaknesses were noted.

After some discussion with Mr. Webster at Public works, it was determined that the tree has not been trimmed recently and that a City tree crew should attend to removing the deadwood and the lower limbs that are encroaching on Ms. Smith's house.

Before opening up discussion to the rest of the commission, Mr. Vasale noted that, if there is no overriding reason to remove the tree, the inconvenience of retaining it would not be likely to be the reason to remove it. He said that there was nothing preventing the expansion of the driveway on its west edge, so its width wasn't limited by the tree. Mr. Simms said that a planned porch would be to the east but that he hasn't had the plans drawn up yet.

Mr. Simms said that if this tree came down, both he and Ms. Smith would be happy to have a new tree planted to replace it.

Ms. McLaughlin stated that the drainage issue would worsen if the tree were removed. She has seen the tree and said she wouldn't vote to remove it.

Ms. Graham asked where the replacement tree would be planted and Ms. Smith responded that it would go a little to the west of the current location.

Mr. Severino said he'd like to see a diagram of where the proposed driveway would go. Mr. Simms said he had no diagram but could produce one.

Ms. Dial said that all people have limbs fall out of trees. Mr. Simms said he isn't concerned with the small limbs but he is concerned with the larger limbs that can damage property.

Mr. Webster said that there has been no maintenance pruning of this tree this year.

Ms. Holland said that she would acquiesce to the judgement of the commissioners that have seen the tree, as she has not. She asked about the cost of the removal and Mr. Vasale said that the residents would have to arrange for its removal and pay for it if given permission to do so. Mr. Vasale suggested that this item be tabled pending receipt of a diagram of the proposed construction and attendant landscaping.

Ms. Smith asked that the City crew do the required maintenance pruning while the removal is under consideration. Mr. Webster said he'd see that it got done.

Ms. Graham moved and Ms. Holland seconded to table the request. The motion to table passed unanimously.

Mr. Vasale offered to meet on site with Mr. Simms on site if needed. Mr. Simms will get a drawing to Mr. Webster who will then distribute it to the proper people.

Ruffner Park- Ms. Dial stated that the cleanup of the park has been great. Mr. Pierson said that the Historic Landmarks Commission has the funds necessary for the surveys and drawings. He texted Lori Brannon who said that they have secured all necessary funding and that students would be performing the surveys under the watch of Billy Joe Peyton of West Virginia State University next semester.

Mr. Vasale said that the Beautification Commission needed the completed surveys prior to sending out our Request For Proposal for design work, so it was looking as if it would be delayed until next fall.

Public Art- Mr. Pierson discussed five of the projects on which they're presently working: The Martin Luther King mural comprised of 1,000 12" X 12" portraits. The Living AIDS Memorial Garden Sculpture, Kanawha City's first mural, Art Bus, and some installation pieces that will be large butterflies attached to various downtown buildings.

Wayfinding- Ms. Holland said that they have not met and that no meetings are planned but that Susie Salisbury has sent memos about banner placement. Ms. Holland read a memo about the Keep It Local Campaign which will utilize four of the available banner spaces.

Mr. Webster gave an update on the activities of the Public Grounds Department. Some discussion about proper horticultural timing of pruning followed and it was suggested that Mr. Vasale do some training of the Public Grounds crew because plants aren't being trimmed at the optimal time and that things that provide winter color were being cut back prior to winter and fruiting plants were being cut back prior to fruit production, denying the plants an opportunity to have their best attributes appreciated.

There was some discussion about the representation of the Beautification Commission on the City Website and the publication of the agendas and minutes.

Having no further business or discussion items to bring before the commission, the meeting was adjourned at 1:18. The motion to adjourn was offered by Ms. Holland and seconded by Mr. Severino.

Respectfully submitted
Lynne Sandy