



MUNICIPAL BEAUTIFICATION COMMISSION/TREE BOARD

Time/Place: November 9, 2021 1:00 pm at Municipal Parking Bldg 1

Members Present: Ms. Amy McLaughlin
Ms. Marlene Dial
Ms. Donna Graham
Ms. Bobbi Holland
Mr. Otis Laury
Ms. Anna Forbes
Ms. Marjorie Cook
Ms. Lois Crichton
Ms. Brenda Ellis

Members Absent: Ms. Susan Shumate
Ms. Jane Powell

Staff and Guests: Mr. Mike Davis, Public Grounds Director
Mr. Brent Webster, Public Works Director
Mr. Jeff Pierson, Public Arts Director
Mayor Amy Goodwin
Matt Sutton, Chief of Staff
Lori Brannon, City Planner

The meeting was called to order by Vice Chair, Ms. McLaughlin and the minutes of the October 5, 2021 meeting were approved as emailed.

Mayor Goodwin addressed the group, saying that the decision was made to keep the Municipal Beautification Commission with some tweaks in the language for the MBC, keeping the rules and regulations the same, minus the Wayfinding portion as well as the Public Art element. She will also be adding Alex Franklin to the MBC and the Wayfinding Commission will be fall under the new Public Arts Commission

Mr. Forren was absent but no expenditures this past month, so balance should be close to the \$32,781.10 (reported in June) in our Project Fund. Since he is no longer a commission member, a new Treasurer will be elected today.

Current Status of MBC – Ms. McLaughlin expressed her pleasure that with the addition of Mr. Franklin, along with the other new members, will bring our commission back to the 12 members required according to City Code, something we have been an item of concern for the past couple of years. She

went on to give a brief history for the newer members as well as the primary functions of what we currently do.

“The Municipal Beautification Commission was formed in 1960 under Mayor Shanklin in anticipation of the droves of tourists anticipated with the upcoming WV Centennial celebration. Over the years our responsibilities have changed.

2021 Primary Function of the Municipal Beautification Commission:

1. Oversight of passive parks within Charleston. Oversight includes design, planting, maintenance, rules, and permitting for use. Passive Parks currently include Ruffner Park, Davis Park, Elk River Park, Shanklin Park, the north bank of the Kanawha River, Fort Scammon, Mary Price Ratrie Green Space, Barton Street Park, and Slack Plaza (which may change designation after the remodel).
2. Coordination of the Memorial Tree Program.
3. Serving as the official Tree Board for the City of Charleston. Oversight of the planting, maintenance, and removal of trees in public streets, parks, and other municipally-owned property.
4. Oversight of Public Right-of-Way Permits. Oversight includes review of applications and permits for use of green spaces, planter strips, mowing areas, and other municipally-owned property.
5. Special projects generated by the city and from within the Municipal Beautification Commission.”

Introduction of our members. We went around the table to introduce ourselves and give a little background of how we came to be on the commission and for those who were already members, how long we have been a member.

Election of Officers – Ms. McLaughlin explained that in light of the membership changes, and since she was the Vice Chair for Chair Tom Vasale, she will take over the Chair position for the next year, if nobody else was interested in doing so (and nobody was). Same for Ms. Holland with the Secretary’s position. Ms. Ellis accepted the Vice Chair position. In the search for Treasurer, there was some discussion about the treasury account and the difference of the Municipal Beautification Project Fund (primarily from the Memorial Tree Program and donations to the MBC) that is with the city and the Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation’s separate account. There have been no expenditures for the MBC fund for quite some time. The GKVf was from (very old) leftover grant money that Mary Jane Vanderwilt oversaw and kept as a backup. Mr. Sutton offered the assistance of the city’s ‘very active finance director and city manager’ that will be more than willing to assist whomever accepts the position. Ms. Holland read and excerpt from an email from Mr. Vasale with suggestions to help with the transition, specifically projects that the money would hopefully be funded and the mayor would be open to add more to the budget to help with these projects. In light of all this, Ms. Graham accepted the position of Treasurer.

Ms. McLaughlin offered the slate of new officers, Ms. Sale moved that we accept, Ms. Holland seconded and a vote was taken and passed to accept the new officers.

Ruffner Park Progress – Ms. Brannon shared they are still running behind with the Historic Preservation group and Mr. Billy Joe Peyton, but she did say that she felt it would be ok to move forward with beginning the process for the Request for Proposal for the landscaping. She covered a little bit of the history of this project for the benefit of our new members. Ms. Brannon also offered her assistance with the R4P process. Ms. Sale added that the Kanawha Garden Club President, Ditsy Keightly, wants to be involved in this project when the time comes. Ms. Dial asked about the plaque that was removed and getting it replaced. Ms. Brannon said that Mr. Peyton and his group are working on the wording for that.

Public Arts Report – Mr. Pierson introduced himself to the new member and gave a little background on him. He then shared his ongoing list of many current and upcoming projects. With the expected implementation of the new Public Arts Commission, a question was asked if he would still continue to report to our commission, and he said he is more than happy to do so.

Director's Report – Mr. Davis was introduced. He said they are on schedule with their duties with the cleaning up of the many different locations. Mowing season is almost over, mulching is ongoing. Christmas decorations have started. The Davis Park trashcans have shipped and should be here for installation soon. Fully staffed, they have 27 people and a budget of around \$100K – to answer some questions from the new members.

Mr. Webster also introduced himself to the new members and shared his responsibilities.

Additional business – Ms. Dial asked about the cleanup in the alley behind Ruffner Park, as discussed at our last meeting. Ms. Holland spoke on behalf of Midland Garden Club about their garden on Dickinson St and their request to trim the magnolia tree against the building. Mr. Davis did say they will look at it, but their first priorities for now are removing dangerous trees, etc., in light of what happened to Councilman Bailey. Ms. Graham asked about locations for a monarch way station. Ms. Crichton asked about the city code and how to find them (on the city website). How these requests are handled and the application process was explained. Ms. Holland brought up the Facebook group that we have for members only.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:25 pm.