



MUNICIPAL BEAUTIFICATION COMMISSION/TREE BOARD

Time/Place: January 4, 2022 1:00 pm at Municipal Parking Bldg 1

Members Present: Ms. Amy McLaughlin
Ms. Marlene Dial
Ms. Bobbi Holland
Ms. Anna Forbes
Ms. Jane Powell
Ms. Lois Crichton
Ms. Brenda Ellis
Mr. Alex Franklin

Members Absent: Mr. Otis Laury
Ms. Donna Graham (excused)
Ms. Susan Shumate (excused)
Ms. Marjorie Cook (excused)

Staff and Guests: Mr. Mike Davis, Public Grounds Deputy Director
Mr. Jeff Pierson, Public Arts Director
Ms. Bethany Belding

The meeting was called to order by Chair, Ms. McLaughlin and the minutes of the December 7, 2021 meeting were approved as emailed.

Ms. Graham, Treasurer, reported a balance of \$32,832.00 in the project fund. She also questioned the need to create a Greater Kanawha Foundation account for Ruffner Park and if so, do we need the city's permission? Ms. Forbes said she felt it was a good idea and the rest of the group agreed. Ms. Forbes will be meeting with the mayor later this week and will bring this up to get the OK to proceed.

Ruffner Park Redesign – Ms. McLaughlin reviewed the goals that were decided upon to discuss as a group. A few changes were decided upon (and the revised copy is attached at the end of these minutes). Ms. Ellis moved that we accept the changes and the list of goals, Mr. Franklin seconded the motion and it was voted on to approve. Ms. McLaughlin will make the corrections and will send it Ms. Lori Brannon so that she can get started with getting the EOI started with the purchasing department.

Continuous learning: Special Projects – Passive Parks

- Passive Parks are generally defined as plots of land that are landscaped and maintained by the city as open spaces for citizens to utilize.
- Passive Parks do not have sports fields (think soccer fields or playgrounds) or facilities (think restrooms).
- City Code reads that MBC has the duty to “recommend maintenance and rules for Davis Park, Shanklin Park, Elk River Park and Ruffner Park.”
- Permits for special use of passive parks are on the city website under City Departments - Public Works. Special note: Mary Price Ratrie Greenspace is included, but not listed in city code and Slack Plaza/Brawley Walkway is still listed but should be removed. There was a discussion on the permit process involved and one of the rules for Ruffner Park about misconduct and hours and it was decided to question the city lawyer on clarification of the wording.

Slack Plaza Greenwall – there was questions about this project and Ms. McLaughlin shared pictures of the greenwall as it is now. Mr. Pierson will check on us getting to do a walkthrough to see in person. A question was brought up about the funding for the plantings and Ms. Forbes will ask the mayor about this when she meets with her.

Public Arts Report – Mr. Pierson shared his ongoing list of many current projects. The Slack Plaza sculptures have been installed. There are no current active projects ongoing but 17 new ones upcoming, including the old Fas Chek wall (located on W Washington St). There is a new contractor going to work on the base of the Jeff Fetty sculpture in the Aids Memorial Garden near the Capitol. In 2021, there were 17 new pieces of public art added that brings the total to 375 pieces of public art in Charleston.

Director’s Report – Mr. Davis reports they are on schedule with their duties with the cleaning up of the many different locations and are on track with the winter maintenance schedule. Ms. Crichton asked Mr. Davis if he had one wish that could be granted for his department, what would it be – his answer was “more hands” on deck.

Additional Business – guest Ms. Bethany Balding attended to ask about her previous request to work on the plantings in the garden beside Fire Station #1 on the corner of Morris St and Lee St. She said she wasn’t able to maintain both beds but wanted permission to keep maintaining one of the beds. Ms. McLaughlin said she would check on this and will get back to her.

Ms. McLaughlin shared that she would be out of town for the February 1 meeting. It was decided by the group to tentatively cancel the February meeting and resume on the March 1 meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:17 pm.

Goals for Ruffner Park Redesign

1. Maintain the current location of the sidewalk, markers, monument, and monument platform.
2. Incorporate generous lighting, expansive lines of sight and avoid the creation of hiding areas to create a park in which neighbors and visitors feel safe.
3. Create a design that is formal around the monument but natural throughout the park.
4. Provide a recommendation of trees that need to be removed for safety reasons but incorporate trees appropriate to the site into the redesign.
5. Include a dense natural screen along the border between the north side of the park and the backyards of the adjacent homes on Virginia Street.
6. Incorporate the existing rhododendron (azalea) plants as-is and/or by propagation.
7. Incorporate native plants as often as possible.
8. Incorporate traditional Appalachian cemetery plants that have cultural significance and hidden symbolism.
9. Avoid use of high maintenance plants or planting that require excessive weeding, understanding that Public Grounds will incorporate the maintenance of Ruffner Park into their already full workload.
10. Provide continuity with the Capital Gateway Project planned for Kanawha Boulevard by incorporating the same light fixtures, benches, trash receptacles and any additional fixtures used elsewhere along the Boulevard.
11. Provide connectivity to the Capital Gateway Project by recommending a crosswalk be installed between the riverside walking/biking path and Ruffner Park.
12. Incorporate signage for plants and markers with cultural and/or historic significance that utilizes QR readers. The QR readers should connect to a page on the city's website about Ruffner Park.