



MUNICIPAL BEAUTIFICATION COMMISSION/TREE BOARD

Time/Place: March 1, 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
Ms. Marjorie Cook

Members Absent: Ms. Donna Graham, excused

Staff and Guests: Mr. Mike Davis, Public Grounds Deputy Director
Mr. Jeff Pierson, Public Arts Director
Mr. Brent Webster, Public Works Director
Mr. James Yost, representing GAI
Mr. Jacob Burns, representing GAI
Ms. Ditsy Keightley, Kanawha Garden Club

The meeting was called to order by Chair, Ms. McLaughlin and the minutes of the March 1, 2022 meeting were approved as emailed.

Mr. Pierson gave his Public Arts report – lots of projects are in the works, including the police building at Slack Plaza including the living wall, the mosaic and freestanding sculpture with hopes of it coming together and be harmonious. Living Aids Memorial Guard is ready to go and should be installed soon.

Ms. Graham, Treasurer, reported that we made \$2.78 in interest bringing our balance to \$32,803.10

Ms. Forbes met with Mayor Goodwin to see what her vision for the beautification commission is – to keep it going as it has been in the past or to be a little bit bigger than it was in past historically, and if the latter, then we will need more money. Mayor Goodwin asked how much, and Ms. Forbes answered \$100K would be a nice start. A week later, Ms. Forbes was notified that \$100K will be added to our account as part of a \$300K investment into the beautification of the city, with the other \$200K going to Public Grounds and Parks. Also, as a result of reading the City Code which said that the City Council

could give us money, it also mentioned a horticulture consultant position. Ms. Forbes gave the mayor Eleanor Gould's resume as a possible interviewee for the position. If Eleanor were to be hired, she might be the point person for the living wall, which will consist of 462 planters. We discussed different ideas for the planters – annuals over perennials, what do to for winter, variety of grasses, seasonal, sustainable, etc. Ms. McLaughlin asked that we each come to the next meeting with at least one big idea – something you would like to see happen in the realm of beautification.

Ruffner Park Redesign – Ms. McLaughlin met with Lori Brannon and it was decided that expression of interest was not necessary, per the purchasing office, but rather just need to solicit quotes. Now that the process has changed, Ms. Brannon will reach out to Ms. Gould as well as a contact at GAI and Tim Forren for quotes. There is some concern about how to handle the situation with Ms. Gould should she become a Consultant, so that will be decided on how appropriate it will be should she be chosen with the potential for conflict. Ms. Crichton asked about Terrasalis and Valley Gardens and also brought up the point that there are two different needs – for design and execution – which may make a difference with whom is selected. Ms. McLaughlin will send us all the finalized version of what will be needed so that we can send it out to anyone for quotes. Ms. Brannon will check on this and let us know what was decided. Ms. Brannon also mentioned that in addition to all of this, there will be 3 interpretive “panels” that will be installed. The Historical Preservation Society will have information of the history of Ruffner Park (to replace the original plaque that was removed) on one of them, and thanks to a grant, the other 2 will have information about the history of the landscaping and references of the cultural plants recognizing the work that Kanawha Garden Club has contributed to the park on one of the panels and the explanation and summary of the survey they have done, including a map of the graves will be on the other panel.

Ms. Brannon also shared with Ms. McLaughlin that the Civil War interpretive panel that is on the river side of the boulevard across from Ruffner Park (references the Kanawha Riflemen?) has not been maintained for the past 2 years due to the city not renewing the organization (whose responsibilities are to pay for any changes or corrections and moving of the panel) that did that, but it has been renewed and plans are to move it across to Ruffner Park. Several members expressed concern for the potential of 4 panels in the park and how that would look. Ms. McLaughlin reminded us all that this is a joint project with the Historical Landmarks Association and beautification, so we can address that concern as it moves forward. Ms. McLaughlin said she would email us her finalized report from Ms. Brannon to review.

Mr. Franklin, who was unable to attend, emailed Ms. McLaughlin about a \$5-10K Gardens for Good grant being offered by the Garden Conservancy that he felt could be a possibility for beautification to apply for. Ms. McLaughlin will include that in her email to all members to review.

Continuous learning: Public Right-of-Way Permits

- Public green spaces are all the different areas in Charleston that the city maintains, such as the little greenspaces around stops signs, the grass strips along sidewalks, intersections with grassy areas, etc.
- Several years ago a resident decided to maintain (take over) a greenspace on Circle Rd and added lots of “different” additions (gnomes, whirligigs, artificial flowers, etc,) which brought complaints from the neighbors. As a result of this, and because of the lack of any specific guidelines or clear procedures for situations like this, the city attorney asked Beautification to come up with guidelines. They were finalized and the form permit application is posted on the city’s website – <https://www.charlestonwv.gov/node/204> - for you to review the requirements.
- Ms. Ellis asked if there were any thoughts on encouraging residents to adopt and maintain a greenspace similar to the Adopt a Highway program. This led to a discussion of what the possibilities and pitfalls of doing this would lead to, such as the extra work for the city to monitor the areas that were approved by the permit process. Mr. Webster shared his thoughts on how this could become a problem for the public grounds and works departments. Ms. McLaughlin thought this might be an idea to discuss further at future meetings.

Public Right-of-Way Request: Several years ago, Bethany Belding, came to a meeting to ask for permission to maintain one of the raised garden beds on Lee St E, beside the Fire Station #1 on Morris St. She completed the form, was approved and she worked on it for that year. Since then, she has not maintained it and the beds have fallen into disrepair. Ms. Belding did attend our January meeting to discuss that project again, but she has not responded to calls from Ms. McLaughlin for further discussion on this matter. Commission members were asked to do a drive by of the location, we all agreed that the beds need to be removed and maintained by the city as a regular lawn to be mowed. With the blessings from Mr. Davis, Ms. Holland moved that the planters be removed, Ms. Graham seconded the motion and all members voted to remove the beds and return to the original lawn.

Additional Business: Ms. Holland presented a request on behalf of her neighbor, Mark Lowdermilk at 905 Maple Rd, to have a dead tree removed which is determined to be on the city right-of-way part of his lot. Mr. Davis has already seen and agreed that it needs to come down. Ms. Holland moved that the tree at 905 Maple Rd be removed. The motion was seconded (sorry, can’t remember who) and it was voted on to approve.

Ms. Cook, who was unable to attend, had emailed Ms. McLaughlin about Kanawha Garden Club’s upcoming Garden of America affiliated Flower Show, called Motherland. It will be held at JQ Dickinson Saltworks on May 10, 2022. Ms. Forbes explained a little about it and Ms. McLaughlin will email us all with more information about this.

Public Grounds Director’s Report – Mr. Davis said that their slow time is coming to an end with the changing of the weather. They are concentrating on cleaning up the leaves at various parks in preparation for mulching, etc. The trash cans were installed at Davis Park. Still cleaning up the riff-raff on the riverbanks. Their bucket truck was down temporarily which gave them time to work on tree maintenance and trimming. They are preparing for several upcoming projects, including the brick walkway at Edgewood Park and prepping the beds at the Goldstar Mother’s park on Patrick Street. At the mayor’s request, they will be doing 100 hanging baskets throughout the city. He brought a sample

of one of the baskets they are purchasing. They are as low maintenance as can possibly be with a self watering system to allow for less time between refills. The total weight of the baskets, filled, will be about 100 lbs. each. They are having problems with getting plant materials, having reached out to several nurseries and getting them to give quotes. He did mention the possibility of needing some "planting help" when all these plants start rolling in. Ms. Holland said she could possibly reach out to all the garden clubs in the area to ask for assistance for a "planting party". He also mentioned how hard it is to get the required quotes from nurseries because most of them know they can't beat the usual nursery price. Mr. Davis did say he would love it if they could get extended contracts, rather than yearly, so they wouldn't have to go through this process every year. They do try to stay with local vendors if possible.

Mr. Webster talked about the Annual Spring Clean Up program and gave that schedule.

Ms. Forbes requested if we could get something from the city to put in our cars for free parking when attending these meetings. Mr. Webster said he would check on that and get back to us.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:15 pm.