



MUNICIPAL BEAUTIFICATION COMMISSION/TREE BOARD

Time/Place: May 3, 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
Ms. Donna Graham
Ms. Susan Shumate
Ms. Marjorie Cook

Members Absent: Mr. Alex Franklin, excused

Staff and Guests: Mr. Mike Davis, Public Grounds Deputy Director
Mr. Jeff Pierson, Public Arts Director
Mr. Brent Webster, Public Works Director
Ms. Bethany Belding
Mr. Lewis Payne, Business Improvement District
Ms. Ditsy Keightley, Kanawha Garden Club
Ms. Patty Hamilton, Green Team
Mr. Justin Marlowe, Green Team
Mr. Dan Verandt, Charleston Planning Director

The meeting was called to order by Chair, Ms. McLaughlin and the minutes of the April 5, 2022 meeting were approved as emailed, with a few corrections made (Susan Shumate's name was added to the attendees list, and a few people – Anna, Susan and Lois – had left early from the previous meeting and missed the vote to approve Otis Laury's resignation.)

Ms. Graham, Treasurer, reported we made another \$2.70 in interest bringing our balance to \$32,811.10. Also, at the request of Ms. McLaughlin, Ms. Graham investigate how to handle fundraising for the Ruffner Park project. She spoke with Andy Wood with City Finance Dept. If donations are made directly to the city, they are generally tax deductible if there is no exchange of service, but there is a gray area for donations from foundations so there is an advantage of going through the Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation. She then spoke with GKVF and they said the city has a fund in place that allows them to gather donations for different projects and they are definitely earmarked and separated and it's a much easier fund to take money out of. Also, Ms. Graham questioned the \$100,000 that was promised us but has not been deposited as of yet. Mr. Webster assured us the money is "there" when we will need it.

Ms. Belding addressed the commission about her desire to work on the flower beds by the Charleston Fire Department on Morris St. She was informed by Ms. McLaughlin that we had taken a vote to remove the beds at the last meeting.

“Big Ideas” follow-up: Ms. Graham shared her idea since she missed the last meeting. She wants to focus on a birds, bees and butterfly gardens in different locations in the city. Ms. McLaughlin shared that 3 committees have been formed as a result of our “big ideas” exercise. They are By-Laws, which Anna and Alex have agreed to work on updating. There is no hard deadline for this committee but once their work is completed, the changes will be presented to the commission for review and approval. Lois has agreed to chair the Court Street Beds Committee. This will focus on bringing the flower beds back to their former glory for Spring 2023. The committee will present a design or selection of designs to the commission for review and approval at the July meeting so the Mr. Davis can place his bulb order in August. The last committee is the Plant Labeling Committee, chaired by Brenda. She and Jane will be working on a plan to label plants with QR codes that direct park-goers to informational landing pages. The labels will first be used in Ruffner Park and then spread to other projects as the commission sees fit.

Continuous Learning – Tree Board/Green Team Collaboration

Chapter 50/ Article 5/Sec. 50-174 of the City Code is the Tree Ordinance of the City of Charleston, WV and establishes the members of the Municipal Beautification Commission as the official Tree Board. The commissioners are encouraged to read the code, but here are a few of the highlights.

- The code refers to the city arborist, which is a position that has not been filled for decades.
- Public utility companies whose right-of-way maintenance practices are affected by this article may appoint an ex-officio member to the Tree Board to serve in an advisory capacity.
- A public utility maintaining the public utility's rights-of-way within the city, need not obtain a permit in order to maintain its rights-of-way within the city, but shall instead comply with the provisions of this section.
- No person shall commence or proceed with any operation involving a public tree (planting, removal, replanting or replacement) without first obtaining a public tree work permit from the city. Permits shall be made at the office of the director of public grounds not less than 48 hours in advance of the time the work is to be done.
- Application for a public tree work permit shall be made in the form prescribed by the city by the abutting property if the work is to be performed within the street right of way on behalf of the abutting property owner. All work shall be done at the property owner's expense, and the property owner shall be liable for personal injury or property damage caused by such work.
- Any decision by the director of public grounds to deny the issuance of a public tree work permit may be appealed to the Charleston Municipal Beautification Commission by written notice to the commission, who shall review such decision at its next scheduled meeting following receipt of such written notice.
- Any person, firm, or corporation violating or failing to comply with any of the provisions of this article V, chapter 50, shall be guilty of a misdemeanor, and upon conviction thereof shall be punished by a fine in the sum of not more than \$500.00, or imprisoned for not more than thirty days, or by both fine and imprisonment. In addition to criminal penalties, the city may seek restitution for any destroyed or damaged tree.

The Charleston Green Team – Ms. Hamilton shared a little background of the creation of the green team, a citizen advisory body that helps inform the public and suggests ideas to the City of Charleston to improve sustainability. They want to work collaboratively with the MBC to become a “Tree City USA Community” The 4 overarching standards that must in effect to qualify are 1) maintaining a tree board or department, 2) having a community tree ordinance, 3) spending at least \$2 per capita on urban forestry and 4) celebrating Arbor Day.

Public Arts Director’s Report – in addition to their always growing and ongoing list of projects, Mr. Pierson shared that the Baskin Robbins wall that had the banana split picture (which was considered advertising and they were asked to change it and never did) will be a project for the UC Nurses who will do a mural project with flowers, including pictures of flowers from each student’s home state. KRT bus stops will now be “artful” with vinyl artwork wrapped on the bus shelters. Looking at a potential mural mosaic project around the living wall at Slack Plaza. The AID garden sculpture has been installed. Regatta will bring a Public Arts piece during Regatta. Ms. Crichton asked about the possibility of lighting on the pier project artwork. Ms. Pierson said they have been looking at downlighting. The new official Public Arts Commission is now in place and hopes to have their first meeting on May 5.

Public Grounds Director’s Report – Mr. Davis said summer maintenance is ongoing – mowing, mulching, trimming. Waiting on flowers to come in for the baskets, etc. The Goldstar Mother’s ground prep will soon be starting to prepare it for the roses, hopefully by Mother’s Day. Edgewood Garden Club’s bricks are in and they hope to get that project done in the next couple weeks.

Mr. Webster added their list of projects and priority of importance (baskets and flowers). He would like for us to give suggestions on where to plant these baskets (25 wraparound hay baskets) and 50 hanging baskets for the best visual impact. The expected timeline for the plants to come and the baskets planted will be near the end of May and Ms. Ellis will coordinate with the Master Gardeners to help with planting them.

Ms. Dial asked about Cato Park and what’s going on there. Mr. Pierson said that there will be a walking path, biking path and disc golf in addition to golf.

Additional Business – Ms. McLaughlin shared that Mr. Laury has given his resignation so we are now down 1 commissioner. She passed out a Charleston Population Distribution & MBC Representation report, which indicated that the obvious lack of representation is the West Side area. Historically we have always offered suggestions to the mayor for who to fill the spots and ultimately it is up to the mayor to make the appointment. We can make any recommendations that we want but we need to do it with open eyes and understanding with how we are functioning. Ms. McLaughlin asked us to think about this and email suggestions soon so that she can report the vacancy soon.

Ms. McLaughlin distributed parking passes to put on our car dashboards for free parking at our meetings.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:30 pm.