



MUNICIPAL BEAUTIFICATION COMMISSION/TREE BOARD

September 6, 2022 Meeting Minutes

Time: Tuesday, September 6, 2022, 1:00 p.m. - 3:05 p.m.

Place: Charleston Municipal Parking Building, # 1

Commissioners: Amy McLaughlin, Chair
Brenda Ellis, Vice Chair
Donna Graham, Treasurer, excused
Bobbi Holland, Recording Secretary, excused
John Casto
Marjorie Cooke
Lois Crichton
Marlene Dial
Anna Forbes
Alex Franklin
Jane Powell
Susan Shumate

Staff and Guests: Mike Davis, Public Grounds Deputy Director
Brent Webster, Public Works Director
Lori Brannon, City Planner

Susie Salisbury, Vice President & Community Development Director, and
Maria Belcher (Leadership Kanawha Valley), Charleston Area Alliance
Lewis Payne, President, City Center Business Improvement District Board
("BID")

Maurice Graham, BID Area Ambassador
David Gilmore and James Yost, GAI Consultants, Inc.
Andy Sheetz, Partnership Coordinator, WV Division of Forestry
Robert Hannah, Urban Forestry Coordinator, WV Division of Forestry
Deno Stanley, local business owner
Ditsy Keightley, concerned citizen
Louisa Swift, Ruffner Park area resident

MBC Chair, Amy McLaughlin, called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

Prior Meeting Minutes

The minutes of the MBC's August 2, 2022 regular monthly meeting and the August 9, 2022 special meeting were previously emailed to the commissioners; there were no objections to either set of minutes and both were approved.

Treasurer's Report

In the absence of Donna Graham (MBC Treasurer), Amy McLaughlin read the following financial report prepared by Donna:

\$133,184.97	August 1, 2022 Balance
- 3,100.00	GAI Payment
<u>+ . 264.63</u>	Interest
\$130,349.60	September 1, 2022
5,900.00	Liability for GAI/Ruffner Park Design
\$124,449.60	Working Balance
Earmarks	
\$18,000.00	Davis Park Benches
\$45,000.00	Ruffner Park Implementation
\$16,000.00	Contingency
Remaining Balance	
\$45,449.60	

City Center Business Improvement District ("BID") – First Phase Concept Presentation

Susie Salisbury, Vice President & Community Development Director, Charleston Area Alliance presented an overview of the first phase of the City Center BID plan, noting that the 35 participating business owners pay an assessment of approximately \$95,000 annually that is used to help fund the BID's expenses. Safety and cleanliness ranked as high priorities for the group. Maurice Graham was recently hired to serve as the BID "Ambassador". Mr. Graham's responsibilities include serving as a liaison amongst the City Center business owners, stake holders, the police, and City Hall, as well as weeding, watering, and other tasks. Through a program sponsored by Senator Capito's office, the group applied for and received a \$600,000

grant to assist in the BID plan implementation. Upon finalization of the conceptual plan, the project will move into the implementation phase.

James Yost, GAI Senior Landscape Architect, presented a power point overview of the BID district plan. The presentation depicted a future street scape scene encompassing an area surrounding Slack Plaza (City Center) extending from Virginia Street up to Washington Street and Summers Street to Court Street and onward to Clendenin Street, although Clendenin Street technically lies outside the BID. Mr. Yost's presentation stressed the importance of street design, noting numerous considerations such as variable and expansive sidewalk size, innovative street parking, bike lanes, light fixtures and bench design, public art projects, and raised planters for flowers and other plants. The plan is phased from Phase 1 through Phase 7A & B. The estimated costs run from \$13 – 16.4 million. Commissioners raised concerns about vagrancy and whether the hardscape structures could be kept clean.

Following the conclusion of the BID presentation, Anna Forbes raised the concern that many of the BID plans implicated beautification issues within MBC's purview and proposed that a member of MBC serve as a liaison or BID board member. Amy McLaughlin volunteered to reach out to Lewis Payne to see if the BID board would be open to this proposal. Lois Crichton was tasked to serve as the MBC-BID liaison.

Ruffner Park Redesign Plan - Second Draft

GAI's James Yost also presented his firm's work on the redesign plan for Ruffner Park. Mr. Yost handed out a proposed landscape design plan and plant list, noting that the plan was not final and served to show an overall design concept. Mike Davis noted that the plan alleviated some of his concerns. Ruffner Park area resident Louisa Swift stated inclusion of annual and bulb plantings would be a welcome addition. Final plans are expected by next month. The project will not be put out for a bid until MBC approves the final plan.

Kanawha Boulevard Monarch Waystation

In the absence of Donna Graham, Amy McLaughlin gave Donna's report about her involvement with the Monarch butterfly waystation planned for the river side of Kanawha Boulevard between Brooks and Morris Streets. The project entails the use of organic materials and pollinator plants. Discussion ensued about maintenance, traffic, tidiness of the area, and environmental considerations issues such as refraining from trimming the area when caterpillar eggs are laid, and larvae are feeding. The MBC unanimously voted in favor of Lois Crichton's motion to adopt and support the Boulevard Monarch Waystation plan as presented; Alex Franklin seconded the motion.

Purchase of Davis Park Benches

[Discussion of the purchase of metal park benches with anti-vagrancy features for Davis Park occurred during the MBC's July 12, 2022 meeting. At that meeting a plan to replace the wooden benches throughout Davis Park was discussed. Because of cost considerations this plan envisioned two phases. The first phase included removal of the large "C-style" benches in the park, as well as the three 7'8" straight benches on the Capitol Street side of the park. The second phase would address additional bench replacement on the Summers Street side of the park; in the interim the wooden benches on that end of the park would be repainted. Mike Davis was tasked with researching the costs of the metal benches.]

Mike Davis reported that he located six-foot, black metal park benches with a center dividing bar at a cost of \$1,200, plus shipping. This price was significantly lower than a product he previously considered. The center-divider is not pre-installed in the less expensive bench. Mike stated the City can install the divider resulting in substantial savings to the City. Anna Forbes moved that the MBC authorize the purchase of ten metal benches at a cost of \$12,000 plus shipping for installation on the Capitol Street side of Davis Park; Brenda Ellis seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Public Grounds Report –

Mike Davis gave a brief report on his department's activities, including tree removal, the time-intensiveness of maintenance of bike trails, and his research on bulb purchasing.

Tree Board

4600 Venable Avenue, Kanawha City Petition

Amy McLaughlin recapped the timeline and events concerning the petition filed by residents of the 4600 Venable Avenue block in Kanawha City. Despite multiple inquiries, Mike Davis has not been able to obtain a WV Division of Forestry report assessing the state of the pin oak trees in the 4600 block. Discussion ensued about whether a commercial firm such as Davey Tree might be qualified to make an assessment. The hearing on the petition is tentatively deferred until next month.

Tree Inventory Recommendations from the WV Division of Forestry

Recommendations from Robert Hannah, Urban Forestry Coordinator, WV Division of Forestry for a tree inventory for the City were presented. The plan is a multi-year plan targeting aging trees within the City. The benefits of a formal tree inventory include: assuring the public that the City is attentive to the management of and structured planning for its aging trees; eliminating the need for some individual tree inspections; and assisting in budget planning. A

quote from an arborist for the cost of the inventory can be obtained. Mr. Hannah recommended inviting an arborist from a tree care company to attend one of our meetings to get a better understanding of what we need. A possible grant with a 1-1 match in man hours was discussed. Andy Sheetz, Partnership Coordinator, WV Division of Forestry, explained that to be eligible for the grant, the City needed to be a member of the Tree City USA program. Because MBC is the entity that serves as the Tree Board, the MBC should be the applicant for Tree City USA status. Mr. Sheetz reviewed the criteria for membership, which the City of Charleston should be able to meet. January is the time for application for this program.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:05 pm.

Prepared by:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Anna Forbes". The signature is stylized with a large, looped initial "A" and a cursive "F".

Anna Forbes, on behalf of
Bobbi Holland, Recording Secretary