



MUNICIPAL BEAUTIFICATION COMMISSION/TREE BOARD

December 6th, 2022 Meeting Minutes

Time: Tuesday, December 6, 2022, 1:00 pm
Place: Charleston Municipal Parking Building #1
Commissioners: Anna Forbes, Chair
Brenda Ellis, Vice Chair
Donna Graham, Treasurer
Marjorie Cooke, Secretary
John Casto
Lois Crichton (Excused)
Marlene Dial
Anna Forbes
Alex Franklin
Jane Powell
Susan Shumate (Excused)
Staff and Guests: Lori Brannon, City Planner
Mike Davis, Public Grounds Deputy Director
Brent Webster, Public Works Director
Barbara Rose, Kanawha Garden Club
Andy Sheetz, WV Department of Forestry

Municipal Beautification Commission (MBC) Chair, Anna Forbes called the meeting to order at 1:00 pm. The meeting was recorded for the purpose of capturing accurate minutes.

Approval of Minutes for November 2022 Meeting:

Donna Graham made a motion to approve minutes of the November 1, 2022 meeting, which was seconded by Marlene Dial and approved by a voice vote of the commissioners present.

Treasurer's Report:

Donna Graham presented a treasurer's report, noting that \$127,057.18 was the MBC's starting monthly account balance. With a \$1,000 payment made to GAI and added interest in the amount of \$392.85, there was a remaining balance of \$125,450.03 at the end of November. With earmarks set aside for Davis Park Benches (\$18,000), Ruffner Park Implementation (\$45,000), and Contingency (\$16,000), there is a working remaining balance of \$46,450.03. The report was accepted as presented.

2023 MBC Year – Review of MBC statutory functions:

Anna Forbes distributed a packet to all commissioners, which included newly revised draft of the MBC's ByLaws and a summary document which highlights potential discussion points and recommendations by the ByLaws Committee, comprised of Alex Franklin and Anna Forbes. Alex and Anna did an extensive

review and update of the antiquated (1987-era) MBC ByLaws, summarized certain issues to consider, and drafted a new article to summarize the Commission's Statutory authority and purpose, which Ms. Forbes challenged us to evaluate. She noted that revised ByLaws would not only be helpful to current commissioners, but also to new ones moving forward.

The Commission discussed the possibility of expanding the authority of the MBC beyond maintaining the four City parks designated in the City ordinance. Possible areas of expansion might include City Center Plaza (Slack Plaza) and the Mary Price Ratrie Greenspace park. Expanding our authority would require a change to the City ordinance. After discussion, it was generally agreed that it is necessary to alter the ordinance, so the "cleanliness" of the City is no longer a responsibility of the MBC. Ms. Forbes agreed to discuss possible ordinance changes with City officials.

Ms. Forbes asked for thoughts about considering Davis Park as a 2023 signature project. There was consensus that this idea made sense since Davis Park is a major part of MBC's official mission. One idea was to hire a firm to help with park improvement ideas. A major overhaul of the park may not be necessary; a variety of smaller improvements may be sufficient. The MBC will explore this project in the coming months.

Ms. Forbes shared that she plans to meet with Mayor Goodwin and Vice Chair Brenda Ellis. She will ask for an ongoing budget for the commission, possibly \$250,000. There is general consensus to continue the flower basket project next year, as well as oversee the Living Wall, and possibly taking on Davis Park.

Ms. Forbes noted her managerial goal is to ask individual commissioners to work on various projects, spearhead various initiatives in order to utilize the skillsets and interests represented. As an example, Mrs. Ellis has been tasked with overseeing the Tree Inventory project and the weeding of public beds with Master Gardeners, who need ongoing volunteer hours. Working with Anna, Susan Shumate and Marlene Dial have agreed to serve as MBC point persons for the Ruffner Park project.

Major Projects:

Ruffner Park:

Ms. Forbes reported on a recent meeting at Ruffner Park with James Yost from GAI, Susan Shumate, Marlene Dial, and Barbara Rose of Kanawha Garden Club. The group discussed the redesign of the entrance to the park, a project that Kanawha Garden Club has offered to fund. James Yost agreed to obtain a cost-estimate for the work.

Mike Davis commented that the large elm tree in Ruffner Park was diseased, covered with ivy, and was scheduled to be cut down. Plant estimates were being prepared.

Special Projects - Mary Price Ratrie Gateway Greenspace:

Alex Franklin plans to meet with Clay Center's Al Najaar in January about possible maintenance of the neighboring park. It was generally agreed that this park needs attention, and that MBC will consider taking on this park. Brent Webster and Mike Davis were open to this idea, and commissioners shared possible ideas for improving the greenspace, including adding playground equipment, an Asian rock garden, and new programming. There was a desire to make the park more welcoming, safer, and add deterrents to the homeless population. It was hoped that the Clay Center might expand its footprint and programming into this greenspace.

By-Laws Committee Report:

Ms. Forbes noted the main highlighted changes to policy decisions in the draft ByLaws. She encouraged commissioners to look over the summary which explains all of the suggested changes and be ready to discuss at the next meeting. The goal is to approve all changes made to the Bylaws hopefully at the January meeting. It was suggested to ask the City to add a tab to the website for the revised Bylaws. Ms. Forbes will email to the commissioners the current (circa 1987) MBC Bylaws so that they can compare them to the revised ones presented.

Public Grounds Director's Report:

Mike Davis reported that he has spent days upon days getting Christmas decor up around town. He noted that his tree crew were removing the elm at Ruffner Park and removing a tree on Venable Avenue in Kanawha City. The City will soon start on demolition and pathways at Ruffner Park. City is half-way through working on Edgewood brick sidewalk project. The City will soon remove and replace a tree near Noah's downtown. Mr. Davis noted that the wind was causing havoc with Christmas trees.

Tree Board:

Ms. Forbes reported on her work on a Tree City USA application, but the City wants to postpone the submission to next year. City Council will have to approve a resolution and the City was not yet ready to move forward. It was discussed that April of 2023 was a good goal for MBC to complete the requirements for a complete application, including a detailed analysis/review of expenses, an Arbor Day Ceremony, and a proclamation for 2023. Status of Tree City USA allows grantees to have access to federal funding.

There are two new openings on the MBC. Please submit names to Ms. Forbes if you have suggestions. She will ask the Mayor if she would like to receive recommendations.

A Tree Inventory Project decision has not yet been made. Further discussion with the City and Liz Moss is necessary. Brenda Ellis is working on these issues and will report on progress at the January meeting.

The next meeting of the MBC/Tree Board is scheduled for Tuesday, January 3rd at 1 pm. Please email Ms. Forbes if you will be unable to make the January meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,

Marjorie Cooke

Marjorie Cooke, MBC Secretary