



MUNICIPAL BEAUTIFICATION COMMISSION/TREE BOARD

March 7, 2023 Meeting Minutes

Time: Tuesday, March 7, 2023, 1:00 pm
Place: Charleston Municipal Parking Building #1
Commissioners: Anna Forbes, Chair
Brenda Craig-Ellis, Vice Chair
Marjorie Cooke, Secretary
Donna Graham, Treasurer
Lois Crichton (absent)
Marlene Dial
Lisa Dobbins
Jane Powell (absent)
Susan Shumate
John Casto
Alex Franklin

Staff and Guests: Mike Davis, Public Grounds Deputy Director
Brent Webster, Public Works Director
Andy Sheetz, WV Department of Forestry
Maurice Graham, BID Ambassador
Elizabeth Kerns, Charleston City Council Member
Emmet Pepper, Charleston City Council Member

Call to Order & Agenda:

Ms. Forbes called the meeting to order at 1:00 pm and warmly welcomed Lisa Dobbins as a new commissioner from Charleston's West Side.

Approval of Minutes:

The minutes of February 7, 2023 meeting were circulated to commissioners prior the meeting and presented for approval. John Casto made a motion to approve, Brenda Craig-Ellis seconded, and the motion was **approved**.

Treasurer's Report:

Treasurer Donna Graham presented draft Treasurer's reports for December 2022 and January and February 2023. She would like to recheck her numbers and bring revised report to April's meeting for approval. She noted that in January we made the final payment to GAI for Ruffner Park. Ms. Graham asked for guidance on how the City will invoice MBC for the purchase of Davis Park benches. Ms. Forbes noted that in September 2022 MBC authorized the purchase of ten benches for up to \$12,000, plus shipping. Because of quantity discount pricing, Public Grounds purchased fourteen benches. Discussion ensued about MBC reimbursing Public Grounds

for the four additional benches. Ms. Forbes and Mr. Webster will discuss this and invoicing procedures in the coming weeks and report back to the commission.

Tree City USA update:

Ms. Forbes reminded the commission that submitting our Tree City USA application had been delayed by changing city managers, but that progress is being made on hosting an Arbor Day event in mid-April, (one of the four requirements for a Tree City USA application). A sugar maple (WV state tree) has been ordered. Subject to the City's approval, it will be planted somewhere in the City at a public event where the Mayor will read a proclamation. City Council Member Emmet Pepper noted that he would share his support for these plans with the Mayor at a meeting soon. Forrester Andy Sheetz noted that this will be a 70–80-foot tree, so we need to find a suitable wide-open space.

MBC General Matters:

Potential Ordinance Amendments—Ms. Forbes distributed copies of the MBC code sections and Charleston's Tree ordinance.

1. Beautification Commission Code: Ms. Forbes asked commissioners to read two ordinances carefully and redline with suggested edits, with respect to the scope of our duties. Ms. Forbes suggested adding the Mary Price Ratrie Park on a provisional basis. We will be working on this in the coming months.
2. Tree Ordinance Code: Ms. Forbes noted the Tree Ordinance needs to be updated. She asked for commissioners to read carefully and email her with suggestions.

West Side Beautification Ideas:

Ms. Forbes asked commissioners for ideas for West Side beautification projects. Lisa Dobbins brought some concerns from West Side businesses including a request for more LED lighting, increased safety for pedestrians from protruding tree roots on sidewalks, and Lee St. businesses feeling ignored. Ideas circulated about wrapping or painting ugly utility boxes, mini murals, and small pocket park planting ideas. Brent Webster agreed to check on West Side lighting. Barton Street Park was identified as a possible space to be planted. Ms. Dobbins and Ms. Graham will investigate the idea of a pollinator garden for the West Side.

After discussion of timing and location of next 25 hanging flower baskets, Ms. Forbes suggested a van field trip in March to determining locations for next 25 hanging flower baskets, with particular emphasis on the West Side. Mr. Davis noted that the hardware for the hanging baskets is ready to install.

Living Wall Update:

John Casto provided a brief update on his meeting with Jane Powell to consider various plants for the living wall. Suggestions so far include color splashes with coleus and sweet potato vine, looking for a variety of color and texture. Mr. Casto and Ms. Powell will meet with Mr. Webster and Mr. Davis for further planning.

Public Grounds Director's Report:

Mike Davis reported having the elm stumps ground down in Ruffner Park. He will soon place the plant material order with the lowest price vendor (Cline in Lake County, Ohio) who is ready to dig. Mr. Davis said his crew will lay out walkways and prep ground soon, and power wash the monument area. The sycamore tree will be watched. Mr. Davis noted his crew will be planting Court Street beds soon, a wildflower bed in Kanawha City,

Ruffner Park plants, cutting grass, repairing Carriage Trail steps, and finishing up the Edgewood Bricks this month.

Consideration of Gifted Benches:

Ms. Forbes shared that Stuart and Lyle Smith have offered up 10-14 wooden and iron benches to the MBC. The hefty, classy, old, 8-foot benches have been in storage and need to be refinished. Ms. Forbes noted that they might be excellent for Ruffner Park, with some expressing concern for sleeping homeless issue. Ms. Dial suggested no more than four benches for Ruffner Park.

Tree Board Report

Ms. Forbes reported that Beth Robey brought to her attention of public safety of some trees on Loudon Heights Road. Mr. Webster offered to drive with Ms. Robey and look at trees in question. City agreed to make a visual inspection of the trees identified and determine the health of the trees with a forester. If the trees are on private property and pose a risk of harm, then the matter may be pursued under the City's nuisance ordinances.

WV State University Tree Inventory Update:

Brenda Craig-Ellis will work with new City Manager on the Tree Inventory project. Mr. Webster has sent along the basics of a Memorandum of Understanding to the City Attorney. The extension office has offered a two-hour tree inventory training in May for the City crew, but also for anyone who wants to learn how to properly inventory city trees.

The next MBC/Tree Board meeting is scheduled for 1 pm, April 4, 2023.

Submitted by Marjorie Cooke,
MBC Recording Secretary