



MUNICIPAL BEAUTIFICATION COMMISSION/TREE BOARD
May 2, 2023 Meeting Minutes

Time: Tuesday, May 2, 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
Susan Shumate
John Casto
Alex Franklin

Staff and Guests: Mike Davis, Public Grounds Deputy Director
Brent Webster, Public Works Director
Emmett Pepper, Charleston City Council
Maurice Graham, BID Ambassador
Rick Cavender, Charleston Main Street
Lori Brannon, City Planner

Chair Anna Forbes called the meeting to order at 1:00 pm and thanked all those who came to the Arbor Day celebration, a wonderful event that may help Charleston become a Tree City USA.

Approval of Minutes: The minutes of April 2023 meeting were circulated to commissioners prior the meeting and presented for approval. Donna Graham made a motion to accept the minutes as written, Brenda Craig-Ellis seconded, and the motion was ***approved***.

Treasurer's Report: Treasurer Donna Graham presented Treasurer's report for April of 2023. Ms. Craig-Ellis made a motion to accept the report as presented, Jane Powell seconded, and the motion was ***approved***.

Public Land Access and Protection Bill: City Councilman Emmett Pepper shared some background on the bill he introduced on Earth Day that supports biodiversity and aims to improve access to public parks. The bill sets goals that 5% of City land be reserved for public parks and 75% of all residents have a public park within a ten-minute walk of their homes. In

addition, the City would commit to utilizing native plant species in landscaping and minimize pesticide usage, and seek to protect endangered species.

This year is a reauthorization year for the city's comprehensive plan. Mr. Pepper would like us to be supportive of these efforts to support biodiversity and access to public parks. The Bill has been introduced and will go to committee next.

Charleston Main Streets/Elk City Streetscaping Presentation: Main Street Director Rick Cavender gave overview of Main Street's efforts over past 5 years to improve lighting on Washington Street from Pennsylvania to Maryland Avenue for enhanced safety and aesthetic improvement. The project will remove all light poles and replace them with new poles and new white lights. Funds have been raised from the Appalachian Regional Commission, American Electric Power, The McGee Foundation, and The Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation, among others. Goal for completion is mid-fall.

Mr. Cavender was asked about the West Side planters, and he shared that Main Street pays for plant material and the business owners are to maintain the plant in planters. New plants are expected soon. Commissioners noted that the planters did not look so good at present.

Public Arts Report – Possible Sculpture Proposal in Ruffner Park: Public Arts Director Jeff Pierson and art consultant Lisa Fischer Casto sought input from the MBC on a possible installation of two George Snyder Stick sculptures (15 sticks each) for Ruffner Park. The art and installation would be paid in full by Bill McKee, in honor of his wife, Martha McKee.

After discussion, the MBC decided to oppose the Snyder statue in Ruffner Park. Several members had the view that this statue was incompatible with the character of the park, a burial ground. Many also raised concerns that timing of the proposal was inopportune. More specifically, the MBC has spent time and energy over the past year working on a plan that did not envision the inclusion of art. While plans may and do often change, several Commissioners voiced the sensible view that we first need to implement our plan before we consider whether a work of art fits into the design plan. It was noted that the suggested placement of the Snyder sculptures fails to take into consideration the large trees the MBC's landscaping plan envisions for those same spots. Others voiced the more practical concern that MBC had not been contacted earlier in discussions about the possibility of sculpture in the park. It was agreed that Ms. Forbes would write a letter to Jeff Pierson and Lisa Fischer Casto stating the MBC will not support the installation of the Snyder sculpture in Ruffner Park.

The Marie Price Ratrie park was suggested as a possible place for the George Snyder sculptures. There was robust support from MBC for this idea, in part because MBC has adopted the park as a special project for the coming year. Alex Franklin agreed to investigate this idea with a subcommittee.

MBC General Matters:

Ruffner Park Update: Marlene Dial and Susan Shumate noted that planting would start soon and that they and Anna Forbes would be meeting with James Yost to discuss details.

MBC Flower Basket (Phase II) Van Trip: Marjorie Cooke reported on a van trip with Mike Davis, Anna Forbes, Lisa Dobbins and Brenda Ellis to select locations for Phase 2 of the Hanging Baskets project. MBC has approved 100 hanging flower baskets, 50 of which were installed last year, with an additional 40-plus to be installed this year.

Phase 1 (installed or are already planned to be installed):

1. Five Corners - 5 baskets
2. Haddad Park -12 baskets
3. Amtrak Station -10 baskets
4. Leon Sullivan - @ 5 baskets
5. Quarrier Street - @ 5 baskets
6. Spring St. Bridge - 6 baskets
7. Greenbrier Street - @ 7 baskets

Phase 2 Proposal: (to be implemented during 2023 Spring/Summer)

1. Kanawha Blvd Bridge - 10 baskets (5 on each side) of the bridge;
2. Kanawha Blvd (River Side) – approx. 31 baskets from Patrick Street to the bridge.

The Committee discussed various other locations for possible future beautification phases including Littlepage Terrace, Greendale & Washington Streets, Delaware, and Randolph Streets.

Ms. Graham made a motion to approve Phase 2, Alex Franklin seconded, and the motion **was approved**.

BID Update: Maurice Graham shared that the BID district is considering 20-30 planters for the BID district and will send an email with proposed options. Maurice will help water these planters. BID is interested in the tree inventory project.

Tree Board Matters:

Tree City USA Update: Ms. Forbes reported that we have been given the green light to apply as we have held an Arbor Day celebration and the City is supportive. Bob Hannah tells us we have a good possibility of receiving tree funding from two different sources. Ms. Forbes asked for emails with ideas for ways to spend money on City trees, with this anticipated funding.

WV State Tree Inventory Project Update: Ms. Craig-Ellis reported on WVSU extension office's proposal to complete a tree inventory of the city. She noted we are getting back on track to link the inventory with the City's GIS system. The inventory will begin with some training on May 16 from 8-10 am at Spring Hill Cemetery. This training is for both city tree workers and the general public. Anyone can help us complete the inventory which will take a long time as we have thousands of city trees to document. Ms. Craig-Ellis noted that Eden is the extension agent working on this project.

Public Grounds Director's Report: Brent Webster reported for Mike Davis that planting will begin soon at Ruffner Park, and that city crews are busy yet with tree work. They will remove some trees resident Beth Robey reported as dangerous months ago. The City will start mowing

the riverbank. The first perennials were planted in the redesigned beds on Court Street, annuals will be planted next. Mr. Webster noted the goal to get living wall flowers planted before Mother's Day.

The next MBC/Tree Board meeting is scheduled for **Tuesday, June 6th at 1 pm.**

Submitted by Marjorie Cooke,
MBC Recording Secretary