



MUNICIPAL BEAUTIFICATION COMMISSION/TREE BOARD
September 5, 2023 Meeting Minutes

Time: Tuesday, September 5, 2023, 1:00 pm

Place: Charleston Municipal Parking Building #1

Commissioners: Anna Forbes, Chair
Brenda Craig-Ellis, Vice Chair (joined via phone)
Marjorie Cooke, Secretary
Donna Graham, Treasurer (absent)
Lois Crichton
Marlene Dial
Lisa Dobbins (absent)
Jane Powell
Susan Shumate
John Casto
Alex Franklin (absent)

Staff and Guests: Mike Davis, Public Grounds Deputy Director
Brent Webster, Public Works Director
Lewis Payne, BID, business owner
Sid Gillis – BID Ambassador
Sara Gaskins, Kanawha Garden Club
Mark Tabbert, Citizen's Climate Lobby
Andy Sheetz, WV Department of Forestry
Ashley Perham, reporter
Mary Ellen O'Farrell, resident

Chair Anna Forbes called the meeting to order at 1:00 pm.

Approval of Minutes: The minutes of the July 2023 MBC meeting were circulated to commissioners prior the meeting and presented for approval. John Casto made a motion to approve, Susan Shumate seconded, and the minutes were ***approved*** as written.

Treasurer Report:

Anna Forbes presented the report for Donna Graham, noting that little has changed from last month other than additional interest (the total balance of \$111,807.66). She noted that the account does not reflect the additional money (\$100,000) that will be coming for the 2023-2024 year. The report was accepted as presented.

MBC General Matters:

Nominating Committee Formation - Ms. Forbes noted that the MBC annual meeting was moved from November to October, according to bylaw revisions. A nominating committee has been formed with John Casto, Lois Crichton, and Jane Powell serving. A slate will be presented at the October meeting.

Ruffner Park Update - Susan Shumate reported signing an MOU between Kanawha Garden Club and the City to cover the cost of the stone entry work. Kanawha Garden Club member, Sarah Gaskins, confirmed that KGC will soon pay \$12,000 to the City, half of the total invoice of \$24,000. Scott Means will start work soon, coordinating with Mike Davis and Brent Webster. Mike indicated that a plant list had been sent to multiple vendors. Anna will work with Brent to establish a park implementation timeline. Marlene Dial communicated with Parkside residents about the volunteer Ruffner Park Gardening Association.

BID Update – Lois Crichton introduced Sid Gillis, a property owner in the BID and the new BID Ambassador who will be attending our meetings. Sid started his work with an inventory of trees to be removed (or planted), specifically a tree in front of Truist Bank, dead bushes in front of First Watch, and a tree in front of Black Sheep Burrito, among others. Lewis Payne asked if species can be suggested, noting that the library trees look great and the Summers Street trees do not.

Lois gave a recap of the BID Public Meeting that she, Susan Shumate, and Jane Powell attended in late August. She shared topics of discussion including Capitol Connector details, Live-Work-Play concept, GAI's presentation, reconfiguration of lanes and parking, safety improvements, pedestrian linkages, streetlights, art installations on parking garages, a "City of Roses" theme, ZMM consulting on building/vacant lot usage, trees, and a safety open house.

Anna Forbes welcomed Sid Gillis, and thanked Lewis Payne for his work on the BID district.

Tree Board Matters:

WV State University Tree Inventory Update - Brenda Craig-Ellis noted the amended MOU with WVSU sits with the Director awaiting approval. She reported that the tree inventory can start soon and has a 2-3 year timeframe for completion for the entire city.

The 100-Tree Initiative - Brenda Craig-Ellis, Lisa Dobbins, and Donna Graham have identified 78 locations to plant trees across the city, with low-income neighborhoods a priority. Some planting locations belong to the City, some belong to the DOH. Kinds of trees being considered include oak, dogwood, serviceberry, and maple, among others. Mike indicated his goal is to plant the trees by year end.

Tree City USA Application - Anna Forbes is hoping to complete the application over next two months, after which the City can hopefully gain status and access funds for more tree planting. There are annual requirements to maintain Tree City USA status, including hosting an Arbor Day ceremony, planting trees, and documentation to meet a certain threshold of trees planted and money spent.

Public Grounds Report - Mike reported his hopes to finish up summer maintenance soon to transition to fall planting and work at Ruffner Park. Mike agreed to Lois' request for a meeting prior to next month's meeting to discuss recently planted downtown beds.

Jane Powell read an email written to her in late August with a complaint about the overgrowth of trees on the riverbank, between the South Side bridge and University of Charleston. It was reported that this is not a new citizen concern. The property is owned by the State and the Army Corps of engineers is responsible for riverbank stabilization, which is done by barge, making it expensive. The City would need the State's assistance and significant funding to clean this up. Anna Forbes suggested a letter to the DOH engineers from the MBC regarding this issue.

Additional Business

Brent Webster shared the police department's issue with KGC bike rack covers, recently funded by friends and family of Sandy Thomas. The city prefers to use sawhorses as barriers because they are easier to maneuver than

the heavy bike racks. Also, the covers should be brighter to alert drivers that a roadway is closed off. The covers have been used around city for aesthetic reasons and have generated many positive comments. Kanawha Garden Club will work with the city to create a new approach to beautifying temporary street closure equipment.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned with an announcement of the next meeting on **October 3rd** at 1 pm.

Submitted by Marjorie Cooke,
MBC Recording Secretary