



MUNICIPAL BEAUTIFICATION COMMISSION/TREE BOARD

May 7, 2024, Meeting Minutes

Time: Tuesday, May 7, 2024, 1:00 pm

Place: Charleston Municipal Parking Building #1

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

Staff and Guests: Brent Webster, Director of Public Works
Jeff Pierson, Director of Public Art
Mike Davis, City Public Grounds Deputy Director
Sid Gillis, BID Ambassador
Chris Higgins, Spring Hill Cemetery
Ashley Perham, Gazette Mail
Sarah Gaskins, Kanawha Garden Club
Beverly Campbell, Master Gardener & Master Naturalist
Andy Sheets, WV Division of Forestry

Call to Order:

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

Approval of Minutes: The minutes of the March 2024 MBC meeting were circulated to commissioners prior to the meeting and presented for approval. John Casto made a motion to approve, Brenda Craig-Ellis seconded, and the minutes were *approved* as written.

Treasurer's Report: Donna Graham presented the report noting a remaining balance of \$85,347.02 after earmarks. The Treasurer's Report was *accepted* as presented.

MBC GENERAL MATTERS

Public Art: Jeff Pierson reported a 14 x 57-foot mural is in progress. The installation will be at the Recovery Point Addiction and Recovery Center on Stockton Street on the West Side of Charleston. In addition to clients assisting with the underpainting of the mural, a year of artwork and classes will be provided to clients.

“Joy Stx 4 U 2 N Joy”, a sculpture by artist George Snyder supported by a base by artist Jeff Fetty, both of West Virginia, is being erected in Shanklin Park. Bill McKee commissioned the artwork with the assistance of Lisa Fischer-Casto. The sculpture is in honor of his late wife Martha McKee. She was the first full-time executive director of the Sternwheel Regatta and was also deputy secretary of Arts and Education for West Virginia.

A banner has been created and installed for the CVB to promote the upcoming USA Cycling Pro Road National Championships.

Artist Jonathan Cox has been selected by the committee to create a relief sculpture with metal and Blenko glass. This will be installed at the City Center/Slack Plaza in the space between the two sections of the living wall. It is estimated to take 5-6 months to complete.

Ruffner Park Update: Mike Davis reported that boxwoods have been moved and replanted along the back fence line. Beds are prepped and ready for planting after the bike race is over. The plantings should be completed by month end. Benches and trash cans have been received and we are awaiting the fountain. Barbara Rose will reach out to landscape architect James Yost for clarification on 30' raised mounds, which do not seem to be consistent with the approved plan.

Marlene Dial noted that the City Planning Department denied the permit for the construction project at Park Side Place for an unknown reason. Resident Sally Love would like to donate six arborvitaes and it was suggested that they be planted in the far-right back side of the park to create a screen. Additionally, there is an electric box in the park that needs some plants to serve as a screen.

Leon Sullivan Fence Update: Anna Forbes reported that she is working on securing private sector funding for this project. Barbara Rose has found a product with a 5 to 8-year life span, that comes in easy to install and replace squares at an estimated price of \$9,200. Volunteer ideas were suggested: UC, WV State, high school students as well as scout troops to remove remaining plastic pieces and install panels. Additionally, temporary art installations will be possible to incorporate in the greenery. At our next meeting the timing of ordering/delivery/installation should be known.

City Bench Update: We are awaiting the city manager to approve one of the three quotes for the benches for Davis Park.

Bid Update: Lois Crichton reported that BID has ordered planters with an anticipated delivery date of June. BID will need assistance with the selection of plant materials. They are also scheduled to do extensive power washing to clean up the BID area prior to the bike race.

Community Forest: Beverly Campbell a Master Gardner, DNR Master Naturalist and concerned community member made a passionate presentation about needed action to preserve the existing tree canopy in our city. She provided practical, actionable steps to fight invasive species such as grapevines, sweetbrier, and bittersweet. They are strangling tree trunks, prohibiting the trees from absorbing carbon, weakening the trees, stealing moisture from the bark and compromising the root systems. This creates the risk of falling trees especially during the rainy season and in steep locations such as Loudon Heights Road. She recommends using a small electric handheld chain saw to cut vines at the base, vines should not be removed as this damages the bark and makes the trees susceptible to disease. It was also suggested by Andy Sheetz that an herbicide be painted on the stems to kill the roots. It typically takes trees four years to recover, and this of course is an ongoing battle. Chris Higgins added that he and Emmett Pepper have been in conversation regarding Holtz Elementary Park and coordinating volunteers for similar work. In response Anna Forbes called for the creation of a subcommittee comprised of Marjorie Cooke, Beverly Campbell and Chris Higgins to develop a strategy.

Living Wall Update: Jane Powell reported that red, white, and blue petunias arrived today to be planted to celebrate the USA bike race. They will remain for the next couple of weeks then the wall will be replanted.

Public Grounds Report: Mike Davis reported that the 300-foot pollinator garden on the Kanawha Boulevard riverbank near the intersection of Morris Street that was on hold is now approved. This will be done in three phases and some of the work will be outsourced to Terra Care. Phase I: Preparation of the Bed, Phase II: Perennial Planting (Fall) Phase III: Annual Planting (Spring). Donna Graham will give Mike a copy of the plans and plant list she developed for this project. He will cross-reference this with the plant list provided by Terra Care.

The committee asked Mike to inspect the section of MacCorkle Avenue along the train track near the station to determine if dead plantings need to be removed and replaced.

Additional Business: Anna plans on attending the public meeting tonight at 5:30 pm at the library about the Charleston Capital Connector Project. She wants to understand the intersection of this project with MBC. Particularly the plans for the riverbank with thoughts of the underwhelming plantings on the West Side section of the Boulevard.

Anna challenged the group to put some thought into a horticultural aspect that could define our city. An example is the cherry blossom trees in Washington, DC.

Due to concerns regarding the impact to Davis Park by the work being performed at the state-owned building adjacent to the park Brenda Craig-Ellis encouraged Brent Webster to explore if proper permitting requests were made to the city building commission and traffic engineering.

Anna invited MBC members to check out the signage about MBC that is in the display cases in the hallway outside our meeting room.

TREE BOARD MATTERS

Tree City USA and Arbor Day Celebration: The Arbor Day celebration has been rescheduled to Thursday, May 16th at noon at Edgewood Elementary School.

The 100-Tree Initiative Update: Brenda Craig-Ellis reported we have significantly exceeded the goal of 100 trees! The plantings at the Arboretum at Spring Hill Cemetery led by Chris Higgins put us over the top. This initiative supports our Tree City USA status and will allow us to apply for a Growth Award from the Arbor Day Foundation.

Chair Anna Forbes announced the next meeting on **June 4, 2024**, at 1 pm. and adjourned the meeting at 2:00 pm.

Submitted by Lois A. Crichton for
Marjorie Cooke,
MBC Secretary