



MUNICIPAL BEAUTIFICATION COMMISSION/TREE BOARD
June 4, 2024, Meeting Minutes

Time: Tuesday, June 4, 2024, 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
Barbara Rose

Staff and Guests: Mike Davis, City Public Grounds Deputy Director
Chris Higgins, Spring Hill Cemetery
Sarah Gaskins, Kanawha Garden Club
Andy Sheetz, Urban Forester, WV Division of Forestry
Renata Pore

Call to Order:

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

Anna reported that Alex Franklin has asked to resign from the Commission. She thanked him for his service to the MBC and the city and circulated a card to send to him.

Approval of Minutes: The minutes of the May 7, 2024, MBC meeting were circulated to commissioners prior the meeting and presented for approval. Susan Shumate made a motion to approve, Marlene Dial seconded, and the minutes were *approved* as written.

Treasurer's Report: Donna Graham presented the financial report noting that after the earmarks, the Commission had a remaining balance of \$85,832.20. The Treasurer's Report was *accepted* as presented, with an amendment to the Ruffner Park Implementation Fund Balance, which will be reported as \$12,299.11.

MBC General Matters

Leon Sullivan Fence Update: Barbara Rose received three bids from three companies, and they ranged from \$10,000 to over \$60,000. The Fence Screen product costs approximately \$9,200 (plus extra additional panels for future repair, etc.) for 20" x 20" size panels to cover the whole fence facing Leon Sullivan Way. The panels will have to be installed. Anna Forbes reported the good news that The Elliot Family Foundation will fully fund this product. Barbara shared samples of the various green screen products, with one more sample still expected—greenery with small white flowers. There was brief discussion of the pros and cons of various samples, with general consensus that the thicker, lush green screen would provide better coverage to hide the post office trucks and parking lot. Barbara Rose made a motion to approve the purchase of a green screen product to be chosen by the subcommittee (Barbara, Anna, Marjorie, and Susan). Ideally, the greenery would be installed this summer prior to the Regatta, if possible. Susan Shumate seconded the motion. The motion carried by a voice vote of commissioners present.

BID Report: Anna Forbes reported for Lois Crichton that four sets of planters were expected for a mid-June delivery for the Business Improvement District, which has asked for the city's assistance with the plantings for these planters. She shared that there was recent damage to the Summers Street parking garage and that the BID was currently exploring various solutions for shading City Center.

Ruffner Park Update: Mike Davis surveyed the commission about whether to lower the elevated mounds in the park. Pros and cons of the elevated mounds were discussed. A compromise was reached to reduce the height of the mounds. Barbara Rose made a motion to revisit the previously designed approved park plan and take elevated mounds down from 30 inches to 12 inches. Lisa Dobbins seconded the motion, which was approved.

Tree City USA Update: Donna Graham thanked Anna Forbes for arranging great press coverage for a successful Arbor Day celebration at Edgewood Elementary School and MBC's 100-tree planting initiative. She noted that the subcommittee is eager to encourage others to plant trees in their own yard. Donna shared the subcommittee's goal to secure federal grant funding for additional tree planting.

Davis Park Benches: Mike Davis reported that the approved park benches had been ordered and were expected to be delivered in 4-6 weeks' time. The water fountain is also on order.

Tree Inventory Update: Brenda Craig-Ellis reported on her progress to date on seeking estimates and evaluating companies to hire for our city-wide tree inventory. Anna Forbes commended Brenda for her exceptionally hard work to date on this project. Brenda noted that the city, through John Butterworth and the Planning Commission, had provided GIS shape files to three companies for inventory bids. Kanawha City has its own shape file, and the federally designated areas of Kanawha City that are deemed disadvantaged will be the first areas that will be inventoried.

Brenda advised she would send out all the proposals electronically to all commissioners after the meeting.

The question was raised as to who would administer the ongoing maintenance of the tree inventory, once it is completed. Mike Davis suggested that his administrative assistant would be able to be trained on the software to maintain the inventory moving forward.

Regarding how to pay for the Tree Inventory project, Anna Forbes advised a \$50,000 Equitree federal grant could be applied for. A second \$50,000 grant could be applied for later this summer. Anna made the

motion for MBC to seek grant funding for the project through the Equitree grant program. John Casto seconded her motion, which was approved by a voice vote.

Public Grounds Report: Mike Davis reported that the city crew is starting Regatta preparations, continuing to plant hanging baskets (81 are hung presently), and it plans to plant Court Street beds in the coming weeks.

Community Concern: Renate Pore, a community resident of Parkside Place addressed the Commission and shared her concerns about the redevelopment of Ruffner Park. She was dismayed at the length of time the park has been torn up. She also was very interested in the history of the park and cemetery and expressed her wish that it be shared with the community in some way. She shared her disappointment with what she described as ugly mounds in the park, the paths coming too close to the building, and her desire for the work to be completed as soon as possible. Commissioners assured her that the city was working on designing appropriate historical panels to be installed at the park. Renate Pore was pleased to hear this part of the planning and it was agreed that she would receive the contact information for Lori Brannon, the city employee who was leading that particular effort. Anna Forbes shared that last year MBC authorized the formation of a private sector Ruffner Park association for the purpose of allowing private citizens to participate in the landscaping of the park. Anna recommended that Renata might work within this framework to formulate a plan and present it to MBC for its review and approval.

Adjournment: Anna Forbes concluded the meeting at 2:05 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Marjorie Cooke, MBC Recording Secretary