



MUNICIPAL BEAUTIFICATION COMMISSION/TREE BOARD
January 14, 2025, Meeting Minutes

Time: Tuesday, January 14, 2025, 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
Barbara Rose
Jason Testman

Staff and Guests: Mike Davis, City Public Grounds Deputy Director
Sid Gillis, BID Ambassador
Renate Pore, Friends of Ruffner Cemetery & Park
Chris Higgins, City Arborist, Spring Hill Cemetery
Carolyn Sue Young
Andy Sheetz, WV Division of Forestry
Emmett Pepper, Charleston City Council

Call to Order: Anna Forbes called the meeting to order at 1:05 pm.

Approval of Meeting Minutes: The minutes of the December 3, 2024, MBC meeting were circulated prior to the meeting. A motion to approve the minutes was made and seconded and the Board *approved* the minutes.

Treasurer's Report: Donna Graham presented the report with a \$200 copying fee for annual report printing and interest earned of \$752.92 for a total balance of \$198,426.47. Earmarks total \$96,230.89 with a remaining balance after expenses and earmarks of \$102,195.58. Anna Forbes made a special announcement that the mayor has given MBC \$100,000. The source of the funds is from the mayor's discretionary fund and is subject to city council approval.

MBC General Matters

BID Update: Sid Gillis announced getting approval for a \$25K grant from TGKVF for trash receptacles for the BID district, noting that the style of receptacle still needs to be determined, in consultation with MBC. Sid noted a MOU will be signed soon and by next meeting, a decision will be made. MBC expressed appreciation for Sid Gillis, the BID ambassador.

Ideas for 2025

Anna Forbes then led a brainstorm discussion of beautification project ideas for 2025:

1. **City Hall Urns** (Jason Testman, Lisa Dobbins, and Barbara Rose have agreed to serve on a committee tasked with maintaining the urns' plant décor and design over the course of the year. The committee will map out a schedule with six or so change outs. The committee will coordinate with Mike Davis and his crew.)
2. **Dickinson Street Garden** - (Donna Graham and Marjorie Cooke subcommittee formed)
3. **Kanawha Boulevard** - (Marlene Dial noted that beautification projects on the Boulevard are needed. Anna agreed, but noted that we need to coordinate with the Capitol Connector project.)
4. **North Charleston Medians** - (State ownership does not necessarily preclude MBC improvements)
5. **Marie Price Ratrie Park** – (Jason Testman and Susan Shumate subcommittee formed)
6. **Greenbrier Street Garden** – (Marlene Dial and Barbara Rose subcommittee formed)

Subcommittees were tasked with doing some research and reporting back at later meetings. Committees will keep Anna advised of their activities.

Other Ideas:

7. **Filling empty tree wells in Elk City on the West Side**
8. **Create and post city garden/tree walks to the walking tours and heritage trails on the CLIO website, that hosts many other Charleston points of interest.** Chris Higgins offered up a list of parks/gardens for the walks.
9. **Invite the local chapter of the Rose Society to plant a rose garden in Davis Park.**
10. **Carriage Trail Wayfinding System** – Mike Davis will ask Brent to consider signage options for the bottom of the trail.

Tree Board Matters

Community EquiTree Grant (Tree Inventory) Update: Brenda Craig-Ellis reported that finally the RFPs have been posted, with a deadline of Feb 5 to receive proposals from vendors. Anna has been working with our WV Division of Forestry partners, who have been patient and helpful. We have been awarded the \$50,000 grant from the Inflation Reduction Act and administered by the WV Division of Forestry. Bob Hannah (WV DOF) has advised that MBC can apply for a second \$50,000 after the first contract has been awarded. With a new federal administration, it is possible that these funds will not be available. We hope to have a vendor chosen and that the work can get started soon.

Tree City USA: Anna Forbes reported that she has applied for a second year of Tree City USA funding, Andy Sheets suggested applying for a Growth Award, for those cities that go above and beyond the basics. Tree City USA Arbor Day April event needs planning. Brenda Craig Ellis offered to take over the Tree City USA annual renewal and the planning of the Arbor Day ceremony. There was agreement among members that Riverview Park on Wertz Avenue was a good location for the next Arbor Day celebration.

Public Grounds Report: Mike Davis reported that Public Grounds is working on snow clearing and taking the last of the Christmas décor down. It was agreed that the city would again plant showy begonias in the hanging baskets this spring. It was suggested that we might try to plant larger plants, if possible.

Additional Business

Renate Pore reported that the residents of Park Place were very happy with the two holiday trees and the wreath installation in Ruffner Park. She noted that the Friends of Ruffner Cemetery & Park did receive approval of the TGKVF \$5,000 grant for Ruffner Park and that private donations were holding at \$9,500. Renate also noted that the East End community association has been resurrected, and it has a beautification committee. Mike and TerraCare should be able to work on edging for walking trails soon and finish planting by early spring.

The next MBC meeting is set for February 4, 2025, at 1:00 pm.

With no further business, Anna Forbes concluded the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,
Marjorie Cooke, MBC Secretary