



Municipal Beautification/Tree Board

Tuesday, September 2, 2025

Time: Tuesday, September 2, 2025, 1:00 pm

Place: Charleston Municipal Parking Building #1

Commissioners: Anna Forbes, Chair
Brenda Craig Ellis, by phone, Vice Chair
Donna Graham, Treasurer
Lisa Dobbins
Lois Crichton
Marlene Dial
Mimi Dinsmore
Jane Powell
Barbara Rose
John Casto
Jason Testman
Susan Shumate

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

Approval of the Minutes: The minutes of the July 1, 2025, minutes were previously circulated prior to the meeting. A motion to approve the minutes was made and seconded and the Commission unanimously approved the minutes.

Treasurer's Report: Donna Graham presented the report with a total of \$278,264.81. There is \$154,198.01 in total earmarks for projects. A \$500 donation from Kanawha Garden Club goes to the cherry trees. There is a \$12,528.35 fund at The Greater Kanawha Foundation for city beautification.

MBC General Matters

Ruffner Park: Ruffner Park is reaching completion. Terra Care is managing maintenance and planting successfully. The city is doing an excellent job of watering. Four Eastern Pines and

eleven Rhododendrons are being sourced. 46 Tuscan Blue Rosemary are under review for cold hardiness.

The concrete pad installation has been delayed. The Bennett Life railings are progressing through the city procurement process with engineering oversight planned.

Cherry Tree Initiative: The MBC cherry tree sub-committee reported on its progress. The major flowering tree program has launched with a fall 2025 implementation targeting 20-22 trees across three high-visibility downtown locations. Casey Trees secured at a competitive \$175 per tree pricing for 10-12-foot trees with 15–18-inch root balls, ensuring immediate visual impact and spring flowering capability. The goal is to plant 1,000 trees over the next couple years beginning next spring with the planting of 200-300 trees. Davey Tree will advise on site selection. The trees will be planted in all sections of the city. The working initial budget estimates a unit cost of \$400 per tree, which accounts for tree cost, shipping, planting, maintenance, and potential replacement costs. The unit price may need to be adjusted as we go through the competitive bid process.

There will be a species diversification strategy which will include but is not limited to cherries, flowering plums, serviceberries, and dogwoods to prevent monoculture risks and extend seasonal interest. City Hall will likely receive spring snow crabapples due to space constraints.

The ceremonial planting will be coordinated with the mayor's office for late October.

The tree initiative will be funded by a variety of sources. The commission has designated \$100,000 for the project. A \$40,000 grant was awarded from the Jacobson Foundation distributed in two phases. Kanawha Garden Club donated \$500. Additional applications for funding are being explored.

There will be an April 2026 educational programming coordinated with peak cherry blossom season for maximum community impact and tourism potential. Kanawha Garden Club has expressed interest in helping develop this programming.

Private donations will be accepted at The Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation via The Appalachian Spring Fund, a new fund whose primary purpose is to support the flowering tree project.

A memorial tree purchase system is being explored. The city does not currently have an online mechanism that would allow people to purchase a tree honoring a friend or family member. The sub-committee will continue to work to find a solution.

There was no objection to the sub-committee's report.

Greenbrier Street Garden: The treatment for knotweed has been successful. It will be closely monitored before fall planting. There will be three to five flowering trees planted.

City Gardens: The large reservoir hanging baskets were very successful. They provided super sustainability and visual impact. The partnership with Gritts Nursery, who planted the baskets prior to hanging, was very successful. The red wing begonias were the strongest performers.

BID Update: BID is advancing multiple projects. A \$35,000 trash can project, funded through BID resources and city grants will allow for 13-15 new trash receptacles with weather protection and side loading access. There will be a new wrap for electrical boxes.

The City Center stage is being redesigned. The redesign will address the issues of too much sun exposure and weather protection. This is being led by Lewis Payne and a subcommittee.

Security lighting installation has been contracted with GAI creating a safety corridor from City Center to the Riverfront.

Nominating Committee: Barbara Rose, John Casto, and Susan Shumate agreed to be on the Nominating Committee. Anyone wishing to serve as an officer should reach out to them.

Tree Board: There is movement in the tree inventory contract with Davey. The contract with the city is about to be finalized.

Public Works: Brent Webster reported 32 applications for the City Publics Grounds Deputy Director has been narrowed to 4 applicants. The final applicants will be interviewed by Mayor Goodwin.

Brent Webster and the Public Grounds staff have managed watering and the public spaces with excellence.

Additional Business: The International Society of Arbor Culture of WV, MD, VA, and DC vice president Amy McMillan informed the Commission was nominated for the Gold Leaf Award for Aboriginal Day programming and ongoing beautification efforts. The awards ceremony is on October 6 in Ellicott City, MD.