



MUNICIPAL BEAUTIFICATION COMMISSION/TREE BOARD
June 3, 2025, Meeting Minutes

Time: Tuesday, June 3, 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 (absent)
Lois Crichton
Marlene Dial
Lisa Dobbins
Jane Powell
Susan Shumate
John Casto
Barbara Rose
Jason Testman

Staff and Guests: Brent Webster, City Public Works Director
Mike Davis, City Public Grounds Deputy Director
Billy Joe Peyton, History Professor WVSU
Sid Gillis, BID Ambassador
Andy Sheetz, WV Division of Forestry
Renate Pore, Friends of Ruffner Cemetery & Park
Lisa Reed

Call to Order: Anna Forbes called the meeting to order at 1:03 pm.

Approval of Meeting Minutes: The minutes of the May 6, 2025, MBC meeting were circulated prior to the meeting. **A motion to approve the minutes (with one correction) was made and seconded and the Commission *approved* the minutes.**

Treasurer's Report: In Donna Graham's absence, the report was deferred until the July 2025 meeting.

MBC General Matters

Ruffner Park Update: Billy Joe Peyton reported on work with City Planning Department employee, Lori Brannon. The first two interpretive historic markers are complete and ready for installation at Ruffner Cemetery and Park. Work is also underway on a third marker that will provide a comprehensive historical overview of the park. Mr. Peyton is seeking an estimate for repairs to the marble monument

and has provided a preliminary cost range of \$6,000 to \$10,000 for a 28" x 48" bronze plaque for the park.

Anna Forbes reported that Terra Care has been planting in the park according to the GAI landscape plan, and the transformation is underway. She noted that boxwoods have been replanted on the east side of the park, though more perennials still need to be added. Some plants remain on order, and MBC should consider whether smaller urns are needed for the front of the park.

Renate Pore commented that the park looks beautiful. She expressed interest in planting two memorial cherry trees behind the monument, if possible. Renate also researched handrails and found a reasonably priced, well-suited option with fast shipping on Wayfair. A discussion followed about whether the park would be better suited to a straight or curved railing. Jane Powell suggested Bennet Life with Life Forge as a potential artisan to craft custom railings.

Marlene Dial pointed out that the bushes on the right-hand side of the park are overgrown with vines and poison ivy. Anna clarified that this type of weeding is not included in Terra Care's current contract.

New concrete pads will be poured for the new park benches and installation of the water fountain and trash receptacles should occur in the coming weeks.

Post Pro Bike Race/2026 Planning: Bunting and American flags will remain in place through the Charleston Regatta. There was a suggestion to add bunting to the Quarrier Street side of the parking garage, and Wertz Avenue was noted to have looked especially nice. Lois plans to request additional Capitol Street banners for next year. The group discussed the need to fix the bunting weight issue and consider solutions to keep them from flying up.

Cherry/Flowering Tree Initiative: Anna reported on the extensive planning work of the MBC Flowering Tree Initiative Sub-Committee, noting its mission is to beautify Charleston by planting approximately 1,000 flowering trees—primarily cherry—beginning with a ceremonial planting of 10-20 trees along the downtown riverfront and expanding citywide in phases continuing into 2028 and possibly beyond. The project seeks to enhance the city's image, support conservation, and also boost tourism and local business through a potential annual cherry tree festival. It also emphasizes community engagement through volunteer planting efforts and educational urban forestry programs. The plan envisions that a private-sector tree firm will be hired for planting and maintenance, with a possible long-term maintenance endowment fund to be established. Preliminary budget estimate of \$400 per tree, with funding to come from MBC, corporate sponsors, nonprofit organizations, private donors, and various grants. Anna, Brenda, Donna, Lisa, and Jason currently serve on the committee. Anna encouraged all members to join in tasks related to any component of the project.

Brenda Craig-Ellis made motion to approve adding \$80,000 to the \$20,000 already earmarked for the now completed MBC 100-Tree Initiative, taking the total to \$100,000. Lisa Dobbins seconded, and the Commission *approved* the motion unanimously.

Greenbrier Street Garden: Jason Testman updated the group on efforts to treat the invasive knotweed in the garden. He is seeking estimates from Davey Tree and is coordinating with the WV Department of Highways. Cherry trees were suggested as a possible planting in front of the existing arborvitae.

City Gardens Committee Update: Lois Crichton reported that Court Street beds will be planted once the plants arrive and offered the committee's assistance to the city. Several plants in the living wall died due to a temporary water shutoff and will be replanted.

Street Banners Project Update: Anna shared tentative plans and pricing for production and installation of artistic Art Nouveau-style Charleston WV banners on streetlights along Greenbrier Street as part of a beautification project. The estimated cost is \$7,500 for double-sided banners. With over 50 lamp posts on this state road, larger signs may be needed for visibility. Anna and Babara Rose are planning to meet with state officials regarding the project. Next steps are pending.

Dickinson Street Garden: Marjorie Cooke reported that she planted red geraniums and creeping jenny at her own expense before the bike races due to a delay in plant delivery. Anna noted that MBC bylaws are being revised to address expense provisions for subcommittees.

BID Update: Lois Crichton gave a financial update on the Business Improvement District (BID) Master Plan, highlighting the value leveraged through business assessments downtown. She noted that BID asked MBC to follow up on Chris Higgins' tree inventory, which identified 7 trees needing pruning, 6 needing replacement, and 10 requiring health reassessments.

Tree Board Matters

Tree Inventory Update: Brenda Craig Ellis reported that the tree inventory contract still has not been signed. She hopes to have a signed contract by next meeting.

Public Grounds Report: Mike Davis reported that his crew has completed work for the bike race and has begun preparations for the Regatta. It was noted that there are 148 flowering hanging baskets around town, which require a full 8-hour day to water them all. The commission agreed the city has enough baskets at the present time. If an area in the city is identified in the future as needing some baskets, we can revisit this. Mike and his team were commended for their efforts and the beauty of the baskets.

With no further business, Anna Forbes concluded the meeting at 2:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Marjorie Cooke, MBC Recording Secretary