



## MUNICIPAL BEAUTIFICATION COMMISSION/TREE BOARD

February 4, 2025, Meeting Minutes

- Time: Tuesday, February 4, 2025, 1:00 pm
- Place: Charleston Municipal Parking Building #1
- Commissioners: Anna Forbes, Chair (by phone)  
Brenda Craig-Ellis, Vice Chair  
Marjorie Cooke, Secretary (absent)  
Donna Graham, Treasurer  
Lois Crichton  
Marlene Dial  
Lisa Dobbins (by phone)  
Jane Powell  
Susan Shumate (absent)  
John Casto  
Barbara Rose  
Jason Testman (absent)
- Staff and Guests: Brent Webster, Director of Public Works  
Mike Davis, City Public Grounds Deputy Director  
Andy Sheetz, Urban Forester, WV Division of Forestry  
Sidney Gillis, BID Ambassador  
Lisa McDavid  
Carolyn Sue Young, West Side Advocate  
Ashley Perham, Charleston Gazette Mail reporter  
Audrey Conn, City Small Business Liaison  
Taryn Wherry, Director of Charleston's CARE Team  
Trace Harless, Outreach Specialist CARE Team  
Charleston Police Department members:  
Deputy Chief Jason Webb  
Corporal Jonathan Koerber  
Sergeant Travis Bailes

**Call to Order:** Vice Chair Brenda Ellis called the meeting to order at 1:00 pm.

**Approval of Minutes:** The minutes of January 14, 2025, MBC meeting were circulated to commissioners prior to the meeting and presented for approval. Lois Crichton 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 after the recent \$100,000 funds allocated by the City and, after the earmarks, the remaining balance was \$202,928.67.

**Presentations:**

**Taryn Wherry**, Director of Charleston's CARE Team (Coordinated Addiction Response Team) made an informational presentation to the commission. She detailed the structure of her eight-person team and the services they provide to our city. Director Wherry was accompanied by three members of the Charleston Police Department, Deputy Chief Webb, Corporal Koerber and Sergeant Bailes, with whom her team works very closely. Also attending from her team was Trace Harless, Outreach Specialist. She provided an overview of the areas the CARE Team can help: Substance Use Disorder (SUD) related incident response and follow-up, mental health crisis response and follow-up, outreach to unsheltered/vulnerable individuals and connections to appropriate services/treatment. After a discussion and some questions, the commissioners expressed gratitude for the work and time to present to the group.

**Carolyn Sue Young**, West Side resident and advocate for her community shared with the commission all the different groups and initiatives she is involved in on the West Side. Several initiatives of the Commission overlap with areas of interest to Ms. Young - from tree planting to invasive species control. The commissioners thanked her for her efforts and look forward to having her collaborate with them.

**MBC General Matters:**

**BID Report:** Lois Crichton reported that the selection of new larger garbage cans for the BID district is underway. Sid Gillis shared images of the containers being considered.

**Elk City Trees:** Mike Davis reported for Chris Higgins there is a lighting restoration project to convert to LED lights and this requires conduit to be run through the tree wells. Therefore, coordination with the traffic engineers and the representatives with the WV State Road for West Washington Street is ongoing and will delay this initiative. They are currently working on identifying the appropriate species of trees to plant.

**City Hall Urns:** Barbara Rose and Anna Forbes reported for Jason Testman that the plan is to work with the City Manager's office to purchase plants and decorative items to refresh the urns 6-7 times per year for the season and holidays.

**City Gardens:** Mike Davis and Barbara Rose have been working with Gritts Midway to negotiate pricing and timing of the planting of hanging baskets. The goal is to plant red-winged begonias in March in the greenhouse, so the plants are more mature when installed.

Barbara Rose reported that the parking garage planters will be planted in May.

Jane Powell and John Casto suggested that the Living Wall in City Center be planted in the red/white/blue flag pattern again this year. This suggestion was well-received by all commissioners.

Barbara Rose and Anna Forbes shared a new initiative for a redesign/replanting of what is known as the "Her Garden," a garden space initially created in 2016 by Tom Vasale in memory of his wife. The site is located on Greenbrier Street near the intersection of Airport Road. Because Greenbrier Street is a state

roadway, permission is needed from the state to allow this project to proceed. Anna reported that a private donor has agreed to help fund this project. The intention is to put this project out to bid to local landscape companies for design/installation/maintenance with the city ordering the plant materials.

**Mary Price Ratrie Greenspace:** Susan Shumate and Jason Testman have a meeting on February 14, 2025, with Susie Salisbury to discuss an updated plan for this park.

**Ruffner Park:** Mike Davis reported plant materials will be shipped in early April and the planting should be completed this spring.

### **Tree Board Matters:**

**Community EquiTree Grant (Tree Inventory):** Brenda Ellis reported February 2, 2025, is the deadline for tree inventory companies to submit proposals for the tree inventory.

Anna Forbes discussed the impact of the pause in federal grant funding due to the recent Executive Orders. This is a fluid situation and will continue to be monitored. There may be an impact on the Capitol Connector Project and other projects funded by the Inflation Reduction Act.

**Tree City USA:** Brenda Ellis reported that there will be an Arbor Day tree planting event at Riverview Park off Wertz Avenue on April 25 at 3:00 pm. The unofficial “mayor” of Wertz Avenue, Jim Harris is proud of this well-utilized community park.

**Public Grounds Report:** Mike Davis reported that the dramatic wind, snow, and ice events in January resulted in extensive response to fallen trees and cleanup. Marlene Dial noted that the loss of pine trees on the lower level of the bank on Kanawha Boulevard was dramatic and replanting needs to be considered.

**Other Business:** Andy Sheetz shared the West Virginia Division of Forestry Urban Tree Recommendations as a resource for the commission. Jane Powell shared the availability at local libraries of free gardening calendars created by the WVU Extension Service.

**Adjournment:** Brenda Ellis concluded the meeting at 2:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Lois A. Crichton on behalf of Marjorie Cooke, MBC Secretary