



MUNICIPAL BEAUTIFICATION COMMISSION/TREE BOARD
November 4, 2025, Meeting Minutes

Time: Tuesday, November 4, 2025, 1:00 PM

Place: Charleston Municipal Parking Building #1

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

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

Approval of Minutes: A motion to approve the minutes of October 7, 2025, was made and seconded. The Commission approved the minutes.

New Staff: The Commission welcomed Tim Hartwell who is the new Deputy Director of Public Grounds. Tim has 25 years of experience with the Charleston and South Charleston Fire Departments. He will strengthen management and supervision within public grounds, addressing current gaps, and enhancing team direction.

Treasurer's Report: The MBC currently has \$275,625.21. Earmarks for Ruffner Park, The Appalachian Spring Project, and Davis Park total \$148,097.01 leaving a remaining balance of \$127,528.20 for other projects.

Tree Board Business

Edgewood Drive Park: Brent Webster addressed the recent removal of the large tree from behind the tennis courts on Edgewood Drive. A property owner adjacent to the tennis courts, Jonathan Friend, voiced his concern that the removal of the tree and brush created a lack of privacy for his property. He asked that the city consider replanting the area to restore a privacy screen. Brent advised that there were several maintenance projects that need to be addressed before replanting including

investigating a possible drainage issue and maintenance of other trees. MBC will recommend suitable plants for the area.

Tree Inventory Update: The tree inventory has been rapidly mapped with over 2,435 sites across Kanawha City, the East End, downtown and adjacent areas. To date, this includes 595 trees, 127 planting sites, and 26 stumps. Prioritization is shifting to Edgewood due to frequent maintenance requests. 5,000 sites are included in the current contract.

The commission is applying for a second phase grant to extend the tree inventory work into next year and increase the area covered. This second phase will include recommendations for new tree planting sites for The Appalachian Spring Tree Project to ensure success of the new trees.

MBC General Matters

Public Arts Project: Jeff Pierson presented a concept for a mural on the pollinator wall, a 4-ft by 100-ft space on the lower walking path on Kanawha Boulevard by the river. The wall is visible from across the river on MacCorkle Avenue so should be bold enough to be noticeable. The national standard for mural costs is \$20 per square foot. Jeff advised that costs could reach \$80,000 depending on the complexity of the mural, but costs can be kept down with community and corporate involvement.

Additional public arts projects include on-going mural installations and exploratory discussions with Thomas Dambo for installation of his work to increase tourism and cultural engagement.

Ruffner Park: Based on Chris Higgins' recommendations, the Ruffner Park oak tree's suckers should be left intact to protect against stress and sun scald. The Department of Forestry recommended minimal pruning to maintain tree health and reduce recurring maintenance.

Planting schedules have been adjusted due to rhododendron sourcing issues and rosemary suitability due to zone hardiness.

The handrails on the left entrance have been installed.

The Appalachian Spring Tree Project: Planning for 100 trees to be planted late fall and early winter including serviceberries, dogwoods and redbuds, focusing on the three-mile stretch of Kanawha Boulevard is under way by the TASP sub-committee. The ultimate goal is to plant 1,000 trees to be enjoyed by the residents and visitors of Charleston over the next few years.

The TASP committee has expanded its vision of the project with private-sector funding coming in. A private family foundation has donated \$200,000 to The Appalachian Spring Fund at The Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation. The primary purpose of that charitable fund is to support TASP and its related activities. Should that fund grow significantly it is conceivable that earnings from that fund might help support the hiring of a horticulturalist or arborist to care for the trees. Anna noted she has been approached by several individuals and companies who have expressed interest in supporting TASP.

The newly planted trees by the river must have protection from beavers with metal cages.

There was some discussion to use a goat wrangler service to control the weeds along the lower part of the lower walkway near the Kanawha River.

Greenbrier Street Garden: Five Yoshino cherry trees have been planted in the Greenbrier Street garden space.

City Gardens Update: Seasonal planting efforts which include tulip and allium installations have been completed.

Coordination is ongoing with Public Grounds to ensure a smooth transition from fall to winter landscaping.

BID Update: 50 new lights accessible for hanging baskets or banners is being planned. BID noted the increasing attendance by 200% in City Center from 2400 people in 2022 to 13,316 in 2025. This demonstrates effective community engagement and may help with the transformation of Davis Park.

Public Grounds Report: Brent Webster discussed the removal of the tree in Edgewood and ongoing maintenance there. Christmas decoration setup is set to begin November 12, aiming for completion by Black Friday and the Holly Jolly Brawley event.

The USA cycling is scheduled for June 17-24. this will allow for flowering baskets to be fully in bloom for visitors and residents to enjoy.

Additional Business: The Tree City award was given at the Mid Atlantic Conference in Maryland. Only two awards were given, marking a significant achievement. The award will be displayed at City Hall.

Jason Testman has created a naturalized landscape program for the banks by the river in certain areas. This will be reviewed by the Public Grounds Staff working with the MBC with the goal to reduce maintenance needs and provide a more naturalized environment.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 2:15 pm.