



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

Time: Tuesday, March 4, 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 (absent)
Barbara Rose
Jason Testman

Staff and Guests: Brent Webster, City Public Works Director
Mike Davis, Deputy Public Grounds Director (absent)
Sid Gillis, BID Ambassador
Chris Higgins, City Arborist, Spring Hill Cemetery
Lisa McDavid
Andy Sheetz, WV Division of Forestry

Call to Order: Anna Forbes called the meeting to order at 1:01 pm.

Approval of Meeting Minutes: The minutes of the February 4, 2025, MBC meeting were circulated prior to the meeting. A motion to approve the minutes was made and seconded and the minutes were approved.

Treasurer's Report: Anna Forbes reported that Treasurer Donna Graham will present the February report at the April meeting.

MBC General Matters

Greenbrier Street Garden - Anna Forbes reported on behalf of the subcommittee (Barbara Rose, Marlene Dial, and Chris Higgins) that she has applied for the permit required to work on the garden at the bottom of Airport Road. The goal is to have the garden improved by the time of the bike races in May. As reported last month, funding from the private sector has been obtained. Approval to proceed with the project is anticipated soon. Jason Testman will provide Barbara with an estimate for clearing the area, and the committee in the coming weeks will assess potential plant materials and develop a plan.

Greenbrier Street Banners - Anna Forbes suggested adding double-sided color banners to the light posts to improve the gateway along Greenbrier Street. The banners could provide a visually appealing welcome to Charleston. Large-scale, simple designs were discussed, and Anna shared possible mock-ups. Permission from the state will be needed. She and Barbara Rose will explore costs and feasibility for production and installation.

City Hall Urns – Jason Testman, Lisa Dobbins, and Barbara Rose shared various options. Jason proposed planting a blue princess holly in each urn for year-round greenery with seasonal decorations. Lisa suggested purchasing all décor at once for efficiency. The décor can be stored and re-used.

City Gardens Committee Update/Ideas:

The subcommittee (Lois Crichton, Lisa Dobbins, Donna Graham, Barbara Rose)

- met twice to brainstorm and discuss improvements.
- identified high-traffic areas for possible enhancements.
- sourced red, white, and blue bunting for the May bike races and Fourth of July.
- proposed continuing the living wall (and other beds) with patriotic color plantings.
- proposed bike race welcome signage along Leon Sullivan faux green fence: "Charleston is on a roll" with bike wheels or "Charleston, WV" as a gateway to the city. There was much discussion on this topic and possible designs, whether to include words or not on wall.
- **Flower Baskets:** 100 baskets of red begonias planned; Barbara Rose may add 200 flags.
- **Wertz Ave Park:** Seeking small planters and bunting; gathering community input.
- **Elk River Bridge:** Exploring nighttime lighting, baskets on railings, and bunting.
- **Parking Garage Planters:** Switching to red, white, and blue petunias instead of pink.
- **Ruffner Park:** Adding concrete planters with flowers to stone pillars on new stone wall.
- **Butterfly Garden:** Considering red zinnias for added visibility.
- **Court Street Beds:** Adding Hellebores to reduce excess mulch.

The subcommittee plans to come to the next MBC meeting with specific recommendations and pricing.

Dickinson Street Garden –Marjorie Cooke reported on her discussion with Donna Graham about improvements to the small garden at Quarrier and Dickinson Streets, which needs maintenance before the spring and the bike race. A subcommittee will meet and recommend new plants and possible architectural elements. Marjorie requested the city remove a storm-damaged magnolia. She will email Mike Davis about its removal and inquiry about whether tulips had been planted in the garden.

Mary Price Ratrie Greenspace - Jason Testman and Susan Shumate have talked with Susie Salisbury about park status and improvement ideas. Fountain does not work. Adding plant material and color to the space were discussed.

BID Update

Lois Crichton provided an update from the February 18th BID meeting. The search for a citywide trash can style is ongoing. It was suggested that we work toward standardizing citywide trash cans with the mayor's approval, ensuring all new city cans follow a uniform design. Lois will speak with James Yost of GAI to request a single trash can model for the BID, the city overall, and the future Capitol Connector.

Ruffner Park Update

Brent Webster presented a report on behalf of Mike Davis. Flowers and two concrete urns for Ruffner Park have

been ordered and hanging basket flowers have arrived. Work is underway on spring flower beds, mulching, and cleaning up the lower Kanawha Boulevard area following recent flooding.

Tree Board Matters

Community EquiTree Grant (Tree Inventory) Update:

Brenda Craig-Ellis reported that three tree inventory firms gave presentations that included software demonstrations. Attendees included City Manager Ben Mishoe, Anna Forbes, Chris Higgins, Donna Graham, Mike Davis, and Brenda Craig-Ellis. Davey Resource Group received the highest evaluation score, and the committee will attempt to negotiate a lower price. The software contract is offered for three years. Anna is pursuing alternative grant funding for the \$125,000 tree inventory project. Anna noted the federal funding remains uncertain in the wake of the recent federal executive orders.

With no further business, Anna Forbes concluded the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,
Marjorie Cooke, MBC Recording Secretary