



MUNICIPAL BEAUTIFICATION COMMISSION/TREE BOARD
July 1, 2025, Meeting Minutes

Time: Tuesday, July 1, 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
Lois Crichton (absent)
Marlene Dial
Lisa Dobbins
Jane Powell
Susan Shumate (absent)
John Casto
Barbara Rose
Jason Testman

Staff and Guests: Brent Webster, City Public Works Director
Andy Sheetz, Division of Forestry
Sid Gillis, BID Ambassador

Call to Order

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

Anna circulated a card for Mike Davis, who recently resigned, thanking him for his years of service to the city.

Approval of Meeting Minutes: The minutes of the June 3, 2025, MBC meeting were circulated prior to the meeting. A motion to approve the minutes was made and seconded and the Commission approved the minutes.

Treasurer's Report: Donna Graham presented the May 2025 report noting interest earned of \$981.41 for a total balance of \$184,988.73, which includes a \$100,000 deposit leaving \$284,988.32. Earmarks total \$77,685.51 with a remaining balance after expenses and earmarks of \$201,701.62. Donna will email the June report to commissioners when it is complete.

MBC General Matters

Ruffner Park: Anna Forbes provided an update on recent activity in the park including work on reconfiguration of gravel walking paths and future installations of the trash cans, water fountain, and benches. Commissioners discussed whether the benches should be installed without concrete pads. The consensus was to proceed without the pads, but pads could be installed in the future, if necessary. Brent's crew has been watering the newly planted plants and trees. Anna noted that TerraCare has had to perform work outside the scope of their contract (e.g., transplanting boxwoods). It discussed this in advance with Anna. It will continue to do work implementing the GAI design plan and conduct quarterly maintenance. It will bill MBC for this work. Anna also recommended adding more perennials to the park this fall. Anna advised that Beverly Campbell has offered to work on the invasive vines that are choking several trees in the park. Finally, there was discussion about the Parkside Place boundary line on the park and the landscaping along that edge. Anna will consult with the city and Parkside Place about whether any easement was granted to Parkside Place and, if so, the parameters of any such grant. Landscaping along that border must maintain uniformity, be consistent from end to end, and consonant the passive character of the park.

Cherry/Flowering Tree Initiative: Anna Forbes reported on the Cherry/Flowering Tree Initiative. The city has been kept informed of the details of the initiative. Last month, MBC allocated \$100,000 to seed the initiative. The flowering/cherry tree initiative sub-committee has been scouting planting locations. Planting a tree to replace the dead tree in front of City Hall is planned. Three cherry trees are proposed for the base of Airport Road pending knotweed removal. Jason will submit a simple plan to the Department of Highways. Additional plantings are proposed along the river (to align with the Capitol Connector plan) and at Magic Island. A tree tracker log will be kept to help organize and map the plantings.

The Kanawha Garden Club donated \$500 to MBC for the initiative. Anna suggested Charleston create a tree donation webpage like the one used by the city of Parkersburg. Anna met with The Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation to explore setting up a cherry tree fund. Anna has also contacted two private foundations for possible funding support. She will also contact a major local manufacturer.

Proposed MBC Bylaw revisions: Lisa Dobbins and Brenda Craig Ellis presented proposed revisions to the MBC Bylaws, specifically in Articles II and IV. The changes address the election of officers, terms for the chair and vice chair, duties of the secretary, and committee spending guidelines. Donna Graham moved to approve the revisions, with a second from Jason Testman. The motion passed unanimously. A copy of the amended Bylaws is attached.

Greenbrier Street Garden: The knotweed in the garden needs to be eradicated. The estimated cost of three treatments is \$900, followed by 4–5 lawn treatments for weed control and fertilization at approximately \$250 each. Jason noted that the total cost, around \$2,000, is reasonable. A formal quote will be prepared and submitted to the city. Anna requested Brent's staff to mow the grass in the garden and remove the flags.

City Gardens Committee Update: Barbara Rose provided an update on the planting of the medians on Court Street and the urns in front of City Hall. Anna requested that the city fill in the hanging bunting gaps on the bridge.

Living Wall: Brent Webster gave updates on the living wall, noting it is being watered manually due to issues with the irrigation system.

Local artists' proposals: Anna shared a local artist's proposal for painted flower baskets and/or planters for the city's consideration. After discussion, the Commission agreed that this is not the appropriate time or setting for this artwork.

Anna asked for feedback on railing designs by a local artist for Ruffner Park. (Anna previously emailed the commissioners mark-ups of the designs.) The railings would assist visitors with mobility challenges. The handrail design costs \$2,480 for two installed. After discussion, the consensus was to purchase railings for each of the two flanking sets of steps for the park. Donna made a motion to approve the purchase of four railings (style A), on each side of the east and west entrance steps. Marjorie Cooke seconded, and the motion passed.

Tree Board Matters

Tree Inventory Update: Brenda Craig Ellis reported that the city has been negotiating contract terms with Davey and finalization of the contract is imminent. The city is waiting for Davey's approval.

Anna shared news of Marjorie Cooke's upcoming departure from the commission and thanked her for her years of service.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Marjorie Cooke, MBC Secretary