

Jacksonville Tree Commission
Wednesday May 17, 2023 – 9:30 AM
For Approval June 22, 2023
Via Zoom Platform & In Person

**Commissioners
Present:**

Chris Flagg, Chair
Curtis Hart, Vice Chair
Susan Fraser
Rhodes Robinson

Staff:

Public: Scott Sauder, JEA
Tracey Arpen, Scenic Jax
Mike Zaffaroni, Liberty Landscape
Kelly O’Leary, Liberty Landscape
Dave McDaniel, COJ
John November, Public Trust
Jill Enz, COJ
Nikki Evans, COJ
Jameka Smith, COJ
Kathleen McGovern, COJ
Nancy Powell, Scenic Jax
Jennifer Grable, COJ
Fred Pope, Scenic Jax
Susan Caven, Scenic Jax

Advisors:

Susan Grandin, OGC
Justin Gearhart, City Arborist
Jose Regueiro, Accounting
Jonathan Colburn, Urban Forestry Manager

1. **Call to Order** – Chair
2. **Roll Call and Verification of Quorum** – Chair
3. **Submittal of Speaker’s Cards** – Chair
 - a) A raised hand icon as well as waving at the screen will be acknowledged by the Chair.
 - b) For those attending in person, paper speakers’ cards are available.
4. **Action Items:**
 - a) Approval of Minutes from April 19th, 2023, Meeting – Chair
 - i. Motion made by Mr. Hart, seconded by Mr. Robinson to approve the minutes, none opposed, motion passed.
 - b) Approval of Urban Forestry Master Plan Meeting Minutes from April 20th, 2023, meeting – Chair
 - i. Motion made by Ms. Fraser, seconded by Mr. Hart to approve the minutes, none opposed, motion passed.
 - c) Proposed Level 2 Project(s)
 - i. Gator Bowl Tree Planting Project (Attachment A) – Justin Gearhart
 1. Presentation – This is in District 7 and is a smaller project. This project was initiated by public works to add canopy and aesthetic to the stadium area.

2. Public Comment – Mr. Pope pointed out with new construction a soil test should be conducted. Mr. Gearhart stated several trees are already growing in this median and some soil cores were taken, he doesn't believe it will be a problem. Ms. Fraser stated this project isn't big enough, that 8 trees is too little for this piece of land. Mr. Gearhart stated the small number of larger size trees is due to the underground utility and traffic sight line issues at this site. Ms. Fraser also worried that the design isn't connected as part of the larger scope of the area. Mr. Gearhart stated there is a mixture of land ownership that makes it possible to have a concise design across the whole neighborhood. Mr. Pope stated the canopy of the existing trees and proposed trees should be shown on the map, not just as a dot. Mr. Flagg said that while the 30-foot spacing between trees is fine, he would like to see clusters of trees in this scenario to improve aesthetic and canopy coverage. Mr. Flagg agreed with Mrs. Fraser that more trees are needed. Mr. McDaniel confirmed he initiated this project and talked about the aesthetics of the Arlington Expressway exits. Ms. Caven disagreed with Mr. McDaniel, saying the cluster of trees is much more aesthetically pleasing. Ms. Powell emphasized the importance of design, stating how the proposed plan should tie in with future renovations of the stadium. Mr. Gearhart re-stated by going with less trees but bigger sizes, the plan is to make an aesthetically pleasing landscape that is easy to maintain, with less trimming and utility conflicts. Mr. Robinson agreed with the need at this location but also would like a more comprehensive design. Mr. Pope agreed with the need for a comprehensive design, stating the area floods. He suggested getting with the Jaguar consultants. Mr. Arpen wants the existing trees in the median removed as they do not fit in with the proposed design, even if it means the city must pay mitigation for them. Ms. Grandin asked Ms. Enz about related parks projects in the area. Ms. Enz stated there is some potential for collaboration as there is a now existing path.
 3. Vote – Mr. Hart made a motion to amend the project to double the number of trees, seconded by Ms. Fraser, none opposed, motion carried.
- ii. Fletcher and Hollywood Parks Tree Planting Project (Attachment C) – Kathleen McGovern
 1. Presentation – This project is encompassing Fletcher Park in San Marco and Hollywood Park in Riverside. These projects were requested from residential requests.
 - i. Mr. Flagg was concerned regarding Fletcher Park about the selection of the plant material. Ms. McGovern stated the plants were selected by the requesting entity and for the most part there were no issues. Mr. Pope would like the canopy shown on future submittals and proposed 15-foot spacing in the future from existing canopy. Mr. Flagg stated that the commission should trust the staff and experts. Mr. Hart would like to look at the canopy 15 years down the road. Mr. McDaniel is familiar with the area, says there is enough sun for healthy trees to be established.
 2. Vote – Mr. Hart made a motion to approve the project, seconded by Mr. Robinson, none opposed, motion carried.

5. Old Business

- a) Strategic Planning Subcommittees (Attachment G) - Commissioners please select a subcommittee to be chair of and make your selection known.

- i. Urban Forestry Master Plan (Strategy #3) – Susan Fraser
 - 1. Ms. Fraser said progress is coming along with this subcommittee, a draft of the scope of work is in progress.
 - ii. Landscape Ordinance Review (Strategy #9) – Susan Grandin/Curtis Hart
 - 1. A meeting will be scheduled between Ms. Grandin and Mr. Hart to review how far along the revisions have come.
- b) Commission’s Palm Tree Ordinance Revision – Susan Grandin
- i. Ms. Grandin will continue the revisions.

6. New Business

- a) Mayport Level 3 – John November
- i. Mr. November requested a variance regarding the need for the Acknowledgement of Intent form. Stated due to form needed to come from Pentagon, the form could not be completed until the project is approved by the Tree Commission. Mr. Flagg and Ms. Grandin saw no issues with this request.
- b) New trees for approved species list- Justin Gearhart
- i. Mr. Gearhart gave information regarding the need for diversity and issues with finding small trees. Mr. Flagg mentioned in it is better to include written descriptions of these trees and would need to see them for any new requests in future. There was a talk between Mr. Gearhart and Mr. Flagg about availability, and the benefits of these trees. Mr. Pope was concerned regarding the inclusion of Willow Oak as it is on the fringe of its range. Mr. Gearhart stated how it has been used to success thus far in the city. Mr. Arpen mentioned how the charter fund isn’t being used and should be for some projects. Mr. Gearhart replied by stating how staff is developing plans to use it.
 - ii. Vote- Mr. Robinson made a motion to approve the change to the approved species list, seconded by Ms. Fraser, none opposed, motion carried.

Reports:

- c) Fund balance and encumbrance report for 15(F) (Ordinance Tree Fund), 15(N) (Charter Tree Fund) and BJP (Attachment D) – Jose Regueiro
- i. Mr. Regueiro stated how there was a decrease in contributions to the Tree Fund, suggesting it could be seasonal.
 - ii. Mr. Hart brought up needing to spend Better Jacksonville Plan (BJP) money. Mr. Gearhart reminded everyone that as it is written right now, the money can only be spent on limited projects. Mr. Hart asked Mr. Regueiro to get details on how the money can be spent, and how to reclassify the funds for broader use.
 - iii. Mr. Arpen brought up again the Charter fund and how it needs to be spent. Ms. Fraser was concerned about making sure the money being spent was properly documented. Ms. Grandin brought up the idea of separate pots of money.
 - iv. Ms. Fraser asked where the report from Lee Dupree is. Mr. Gearhart agreed to follow up with this.

- d) Fund Status of 630-CITY, Remove & Replace and Level 2 Programs (Attachment E) – Justin Gearhart
- e) Status of Pending Level 2 Tree Projects (Attachment F) – Justin Gearhart
- f) Parks Department Project Update – Kathleen McGovern/Jill Enz

7. Public Comment

- 8. Adjournment** – the next Tree Commission meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, June 21st, 2023, at 9:30am and will be a Hybrid/Zoom meeting in Ed Ball Building, 10th Floor, Public Works Office, conference room 5.

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