

Jacksonville Tree Commission

Minutes

Wednesday June 18, 2025, 9:31 AM- 10:31 AM

Via Zoom Platform & In Person

*Recording of Meeting can be obtained by sending requests to
Joe Rainey [jrainey@coj.net]

For approval July 16th, 2025

Commissioners:

Curtis L. Hart, Chair (Council Appointee; 2021-0033-A)
William Burke Vice Chair (Mayor Appointee; 2023-0695-A)
Susan Fraser (Council Appointee; 2022-0063-A)
Vacant (Mayor Appointee; 2023-0696-A)
Alden Howell (Council Appointee; 2024-0388-A)
Chris Miller, Council Liaison
Nina Sickler, Director of Public Works

Advisors:

Justin Gearhart - City Arborist
Laura Hartung - Office of General Counsel
Jose Regueiro - Accounting

Staff: Joe Rainey

1. Call to Order

Conducted by Chair

2. Roll Call and Verification of Quorum

Conducted by Vice Chair, Commissioners present:

William Burke
Susan Fraser
Alden Howell
Chris Miller
Nina Sickler

Quorum present (4, in person): yes

3. Call for Public Speakers (online & card): No pre-meeting speaker cards were submitted. Persons have deferred to speak on agenda items as they are presented.

MacGillis clarified that the Call for Public Speaker is the time for the public to speak in an allotted 3 minutes on any topic for Tree Commission, which is not the same as being called upon by a member of Tree Commission related to any agenda item.

MacGillis clarified that after the Public Speaker portion of the agenda, audience participation is at the pleasure of the members of Tree Commission. MacGillis also requested that any time a

member of the public speaks, for the speaker to state their name prior to comments and speak up for the purpose of maintaining an accurate record of the session.

Action Items:

4. Prior Meeting Minutes.

Issue: Minutes from May 21 Meeting need to be approved.

Fraser: Requested to amend the minutes regarding the Parks Department agreement to include protective tree rings being added to solicitations moving forward.

Motion: Approve, as modified by Fraser.

Moved by: Nina Sickler

Second: Susan Fraser

Vote: approved as modified, unanimous.

5. Financial Report for Ordinance Tree Fund (15304), Charter Tree Fund (15305) and BJP (Attachment D) - Jose Regueiro

Combined revenues: Combined Revenues for Fiscal YTD are \$5.14M compared to \$4.01M May -24. An increase of \$1.53M year-on-year. Combined Expenses for Fiscal YTD are \$2.4M compared to \$4M on May -24. A decrease of \$1.6M year-on-year.

Combined Revenues for May -25 were \$627.6K compared to \$586.7K for Apr -24, an increase of \$40.9K.

Meanwhile, expenses were \$49.1K and \$40.9K on May -25 and May -24, respectively. Total unallocated funds were \$26M for May -25.

6. Fund Status of 630-CITY, Remove & Replace and Level 2 Programs (Attachment E) - Justin Gearhart

Total funds not appropriated at \$33.94M. Remaining in the three pools in public works \$984K (630-City \$2.11M; Level 2 \$2.52M; and Level 3 \$2.36M).

Total obligated funds \$3.36M as of May, 2025.

7. Level 3 Project Proposals: NONE

8. Level 2 Project Proposals:

- i. Centennial Oak-Alexandria Park - Kathleen McGovern

McGovern: the tree is for the 100th anniversary of San Marco. Preliminary assessments of site variables, including JEA, have been done. There is a water main on the site and potential other trees impacted. **Scott Souder** discussed some site variables.

McGovern: The size of the tree requested and installation variables were discussed. The quote provided in the materials does not include all installation cost variables. The estimate is from one vender.

Hart: Point of Inquiry: Is there any money being contributed by the requestors?

Sickler: Point of Inquiry: Is the subject tree already identified in stock (by a grower)?

McGovern: explained the tree selection process through a grower, generally.

Motion: Move to approve, as presented

Moved by: Chris Miller (for the purpose of discussion)

Second: Curtis Hart (for the purpose of discussion)

Discussion:

Hart: Voiced concerns regarding high cost of single tree vs multiple trees.

Burke: Voiced concerns this could set a precedent.

Hart: Explained that because each project is considered on its own merit, precedent is not an issue.

Fraser: Has concerns the location is not representative for a signature tree such as requested to warrant \$100,000. As planned, it would be a tree in a forest of trees instead of what would be expected for an anniversary memorial site.

Sickler: Inquired whether there is a timing concern related to the anniversary.

*** Out of Order (the following comments occurred after the UFMP Update but are reflected in this section due to the subject matter for convenience):**

Susan Grandin, ScenicJax (audience member called upon) voiced opposition for spending \$100,000 for a single tree. Grandin noted that it would be difficult to defend to a court the use for \$100,000 of developers money for one tree (alluding to prior litigation regarding the use of tree mitigation funds).

Hart: noted that the sponsors of the request should produce a portion of the requested funding.

Susan Kaven (audience member called upon): has concerns regarding the price of the project and as a 50-year San Marco Resident feels the ask would reflect poorly on the neighborhood. Use of Palm trees was discussed.

Vote: No Vote; **Deferred** by Chair to the next scheduled Tree Commission meeting.

ii. Oreily Dr West - Justin Gearhart

Fraser: Point of information/Inquiry: Fraser pointed out the continuing issue of how tree planting sites are found, noting that this planting project is due to the City Arborist stumbling upon it. Fraser applauded Mr. Gearhart for finding the location but noted that there needs to be a better way to find planting locations, noting that Tree Commission cannot spend \$30million by stumbling upon planting sites.

Motion: Approve, as presented for \$54,563.22

Moved by: Susan Fraser

Second: William Burke

Vote: approved as presented, unanimous for \$54,563.22

Hart: How do we find more of these projects? Suggests working with developers to find these projects. A discussion ensued regarding retention ponds as potential planting sites.

Fraser: Engineers have concerns regarding stormwater pond projects due to storm water ditches and ponds as easy locations but problematic.

Miller: Inquired about how does the tree commission recruit developers, HOAs and neighborhood groups actively engaged in tree planting programs.

Fraser: Asked if City Council can facilitate calls for planting sites in their respective districts?

A general discussion ensued regarding ideas for engage citizens as part of the process in finding tree planting sites. Ideas included involving CPACS, Greenscape and similar entities, neighborhood associations, etc.

Miller raised the point that the City Council 100 Tree Challenge was an effort to get movement in involving citizens to participate in finding planting sites.

Concerns regarding the need for adequate staff to move planting projects were voiced, generally.

Gearhart announced that almost all of the Districts have met the 100-tree challenge through plantings or planned plantings thus far. Gearhart highlighted the importance of engaging residents that are affected by planned tree plantings.

iii. South Shores – Justin Gearhart

Gearhart explained that this project involves City owned lots purchased with FEMA money as sites to plant trees on former residential lots.

Motion: Approve, as presented **for \$24,279.75.**

Moved by: William Burke

Second: Chris Miller

Fraser: Questioned the land involved, acknowledging that this is not a park.

HART: Asked about the future of this property?

McDaniel: This property cannot be developed due to restrictions from the FEMA funding.

Vote: approved as presented, unanimous for \$24,279.75.

10. Status of Level 2 Projects: May was dry month which delayed planned plantings and created a backlog of plantings.

11. Parks Department Project Update: No updates on parks.

12. UFMP Update, Valerie Feinberg: Announced that UFMP was continuing to workshop and bring in citizen comments. Plan is developing further as data and comments are collected. Scope/Workplan has been provided with typo to be disregarded as it pertains to Attachment A.

Nancy Powell, ScenicJax: suggested to Feinberg that there be a way to update the public about the ongoing pivotal points and milestones of the UFMP.

Feinberg: there is an intended addition to the website for updates.

13. Old Business:

- A. Taskforce Update, Fraser:** The Task Force continues to work and move forward.

14. New Business:

- i. **Annual report 2024**, presented by Gearhart (exhibit):
Fraser: recalled the PowerPoint presentation by Tree Commission that went to standing Committees in prior years; also and requested that the financial report break outs for review by Tree Commission to be presented to City Council.
Miller: suggested to get presentation time at full City Council, as it would provide a full period of time and would also reach the larger public.
Chair deferred further consideration on Annual Report pending corrections to next month's meeting.
- ii. **MacGillis:** praised Joe Rainey and Charles Hayes for the great redesign of the Tree Commission website, as it is very easy to use and full of material.
- iii. **Chris Miller** expressed appreciation for the experience he had as liaison to Tree Commission and notified the Commission he may or may not be the Council Liaison moving forward. Miller praised the work of Tree Commission.

END OF MEETING 10:31 AM

APPROVED

ATTACHMENT 1+