

Jacksonville Tree Commission
Facilitator Subcommittee

Wednesday June 1, 2022 – 1:30 PM
609 St. John's Bluff Rd, N, Conference Room 1

Commissioners: Chris Flagg, Chair
Curtis Hart, Vice Chair
Ron Salem
John Pappas
Mike Robinson
Rhodes Robinson
Susan Fraser

Advisors: Susan Grandin
Dalton Smith
Justin Gearhart
Jose Regueiro

Staff: Cindy Chism

AGENDA

Order of Agenda is Subject to Change

- 1. Call to Order** – Ms. Fraser
- 2. Roll Call** – Cindy Chism
- 3. Action Items:**
 - a) Role of the subcommittee in support of a Strategic Planning Session for the Tree Commission.
 - b) Review draft Tree Commission Goal and Objectives
 - c) Review proposed plan to implement Objective 1
 - d) Discuss plan to implement Objectives 2-6
 - e) Subcommittee meeting schedule
- 4. Adjournment**

Jacksonville Tree Commission
Facilitator Subcommittee Minutes
Wednesday, June 1, 2022 – 1:30 PM
Approved June 13, 2022

609 St. John's Bluff Rd, N, Conference Room 1

Attendees:

Rhodes Robinson, Tree Commissioner
Mike Robinson, Tree Commissioner
Jameka Smith, City Landscape Architect

Susan Fraser, Tree Commissioner
Justin Gearhart, City Arborist
Lad Hawkins,

Cindy Chism, Staff

1. Call to Order – Ms. Fraser

2. Roll Call – Cindy Chism

3. Action Items – Ms. Fraser

- I. The Commission has said not only do we want to look at the priority system from our legislation but the whole range of activities the Commission is supposed to be doing. For the last few meetings, the discussion has been how can the Commission spend more money, can we streamline the process, or invite more people to bring projects. The Commission needs to take a lead role in either developing programs or identifying projects and just say this is what we want to do and not in essence wait for anybody, non-profits right now, to bring us projects.
- II. There is a month and half gap for decisions made by the Commission, the process is too long. This subcommittee is to facilitate decision making. Decide what type of information needs to be brought to the Commission every month and say if we are going to act on this, read these 4 things, so when we get to the Commission, we can either have an active discussion and vote or send it back to Committee for more information.
- III. Ms. Chism informed the Committee about information from the Procurement Division with regards to paying a Facilitator. Mr. McDaniel emailed the Procurement Division with the question: If a Mayoral appointed Commission gets private money to hire a facilitator do they have to follow the procurement code to hire a firm or individual? The answer from Procurement was the source of the funds doesn't impact whether the Procurement rules need to be followed. If wanted to hire a contractor, 126 still applies. If a Contractor wanted to provide free services, a contract and procurement award would still be required.
- IV. Ms. Fraser asked if there was a way one of the non-profit partners could sponsor a strategic session and invite the Commission. Ms. Chism will email the question and report back. Mr. Robinson asked if there was maybe an existing continuous City contract for a Facilitator. Ms.

Chism will find out. Mr. Hawkins suggested the funds be donated to the non-profit for this purpose. Mr. R. Robinson pointed out that if it was done that way the Facilitator would be working for the non-profit or sponsor and not the Tree Commission making it possible for the sponsor to manipulate the session. Ms. Fraser responded, if that happened then the Commission could reject the outcome.

- V. Ms. Fraser said this process must happen. The Commission must move beyond where it is, which is accepting applications for 1 project or 3 projects a month and trickling away at it. It is not doing the job, there are not enough resources and the direction to determine how to do the work. The Duties listed in the legislation cannot be done in a monthly 1.5 hour long meeting and 1 staff person. To accomplish the duties listed what kind of resources are needed to do it. The resources need to be determined and requested.
- VI. Mr. M. Robinson pointed out that duty (g) from the Ordinance requires the Commission to conduct studies etc., how is that to be funded? Perhaps Ms. Grandin could determine if the either of the funds could cover this. Ms. Fraser said, it's not so much trying to find the money its more the procurement process which is the sticking point.
- VII. Ms. Fraser said let's proceed with finding a Facilitator and the funding, in the background, and anticipate the session will happen in September, October, whenever we can get everything lined. Now, what steps does this Committee need to take to keep the Commission moving forward to ensure the necessary background data and resources are available.
- VIII. Mr. R. Robinson reflected on where the Commission started, at zero. However, whenever it tries to get anything done, it seems to take a long time. This is a great start but based upon past performance it will take a couple of years to get this in place. To report back to the Commission effectively decisions must be made on a few things the Committee must accomplish. Small bites of the bigger picture, accomplish something or put it in a box so we can set it aside and start narrowing down the list and every month we might take 1 or 2 of these and work on them. The Committee will meet and then report back to the Commission and we know, no matter how neatly we try to tidy it up there will always be discussion. For instance, we met, we discussed the pros and cons, this is what we need to do; there are 2 ways to go after a Facilitator that we see. Mostly like John Pappas and Susan Grandin are both going to lean toward the City process to keep our nose clean. Which is agreeable. It may take longer or not. A couple of Objectives need to be established that we want to be able to take back to the Commission.
- IX. Mr. R. Robinson said sometime in the last year there was a discussion about meeting with each of the City Council members and discussing what was going on in their districts and what type of projects we could help them with. And then nothing happened. That's the source for a lot of work, they all want money for their districts. Some probably don't understand what the Tree Commission is about. The Commission member should divide up and every Council member should be met with.

- X. Mr. M. Robinson said this Committee cannot accomplish the first item on the Agenda. This Committee was to determine what to look for in a Facilitator, then at that strategic planning session it would be determined how to accomplish the objectives.
- XI. Ms. Fraser responded, let's assume we will have a meeting, even if we Facilitate it ourselves. The monthly Commission meeting is already so full, trying to assemble any of the data requested in Attachment G is impossible during the Commission meetings. This Committee was going to be in the background assembling the data, this item requires new data, this data is available, this data is collectible, here's who we think should collect it, here's a timeline for how long it will take to collect, in other words, do the "grunt work." Whether the meeting has a paid Facilitator, or we facilitate it ourselves, someone will still have to educate everyone in the room about the tree canopy we have, the one we want, do what kind of objectives does the City have for resiliency and sustainability and what other Departments in the City have goals which dovetail with ours.
- XII. Mr. R. Robinson suggests not waiting and flesh out a plan. A question may be do we need a Facilitator. There is discussion in the Commission meetings if this Committee brings back pieces of information. Working with a Facilitator is great, but it is creating a bureaucracy that is going to take an enormous amount of time and an enormous amount of work and organization and information, a lot of which is nuts and bolts. We don't need someone to tell us we need to sit down with Council members.
- XIII. Ms. Fraser said going to a Council person is going to an elected office who was elected to represent their community. The only brownie point we get with the Tree Fund is "green side up." We are putting a green think in the ground and come back in a year and it's still living. Getting brownie points for planting strategically for flood plain management, for sustainability of forests, for replenishment of, do more. Go to a City Council person and ask where do you think trees should be planted and smart people who know their community will say, I think 5 trees here.
- XIV. Ms. Fraser continued; how can we get bigger bang for our buck. We need more information from professionals to tell us if there are projects which would be facilitated and undertaken by Public Works if they had the funds to do it. Let's expand from projects which are 150 trees per month, with the staff we have, even if the City Council came up with a list to spend the 25 million it would take us 25 years to spend it because there is 1 staff person. If you take away the non-profits as sponsors of a project, somebody must draw the drawing, get the permit, let the contract. We don't have that in place. This could be an education tool to show people if you want big things your structure and support must be there.
- XV. Ms. Chism pointed out that Mr. Leon had a study of the Stormwater done a few years ago. Ms. Fraser mentioned the Resiliency report was fully facilitated and had all City Departments in it. It created a whole document of goals for the City, but just reading it isn't enough, there must be a presentation and highlights. Every department in the City should be asked "what would you do with some of the 25 million we have?" There are ideas and projects waiting to happen which no one knows about. Ms. Chism said the Resiliency Chief is scheduled to speak at the

July Tree Commission meeting. Ms. Fraser suggested having a special Tree Commission meeting for her presentation because 90% of the meeting time is spent on what's the budget, what's the balance, a new project, ok 4 minutes left for new business, it's very frustrating. We must make room for these discussions, lengthen the meeting; meeting closes at 11:30, the presentations are from 11:30-12:30, bring your lunch. Scenic Jax and Greenscape both want to come. If we asked, what would they do if they were queen for a day and listened to the answer. We need to hear all of that before the Commission can decide the priority for a list of 20, for instance.

- XVI. Ms. Chism suggested this subcommittee have those meetings and then bring the condensed versions to the Commission. Ms. Fraser agreed that would keep it "bite size" for the Tree Commission action. We could inform the Commissioner's which presentation was scheduled they could join the meeting or not.
- XVII. Ms. Chism asked could this committee assign a City Council member to each Commissioner with a timeline of please schedule a meeting the Council member before the next Tree Commission meeting, here is your presentation or FAQ sheet. Ms. Fraser said they saw the previous Council presentation; we should provide them with new information. It also probably should not be a cold call; they should be informed prior to the meeting if the Council member has any planting priorities in their district. That is a piece of the puzzle, but the Council members don't have a broad enough view. We could do big projects that have economic development investments, that can change the character of a community. Let's do more than 7 trees on a right-of-way and 4 trees in a parking lot. But we don't know what we don't know. Maybe the first stop is the Resiliency Report. The people who might help us spend the money outside our current list of partners, don't even know what we want. If there was a priority list which said perhaps, the priority is to create urban spaces with shade, etc., there maybe someone out there to sponsor it. We don't have programs broader than "green side up" and "save a tree".
- XVIII. Mr. M. Robinson suggested using the inventory and Plan-it GEO to get us the umbrella of what percentage the canopy coverage is broken down by Council district. It may be a little dated but if the percentage is less than the number we want. That is a specific priority which can be refined even further by the districts which are even lower than the average. That Council member could be contacted and an offer to help bring the canopy coverage percentage up. Mr. R. Robinson suggested requesting a meeting with the Council member a time in the future but in the interim please keep a lookout for these items to discuss. Having the really big plans is great but the bite is too large. Let's focus on getting better at what we are already doing then determine where we can scale up. If we start on the big plans, there is risk the small stuff will get lost.
- XIX. Ms. Fraser said if there isn't something "sexy" though, if there isn't 1 sexy spot in your sky, that we'll go to the City Council member, we prioritize and they give us their list and then we turn to Justin and say, your job just doubled but you don't get any help because we are scaling up what we've got without adding resources to accomplish it. Mr. R. Robinson suggested adding staff is

an obstacle we don't know anything about, if the City says they are not hiring any more people we have to go with what we have. Ms. Fraser said that's why when you go to a Council member I have a bright shiny project you want, I'm going to spend \$5 million at the end of the year you'll have a shiny project and a ribbon to cut and I need 2 people to do it. That's the only way you get people if you have shiny objects. Mr. R. Robinson said there are a lot of moving parts before you get there and we don't have the money or the wherewithal to make those kinds of things happen.

- XX. Mr. R. Robinson asked who is going to push a project like what you are talking about. Ms. Fraser said the Tree Commission. Mr. R. Robinson but who brings it to the Tree Commission? Ms. Fraser replied the Tree Commission. At one of the meetings a few months ago, it was stated that the Commission wanted to direct how funds are spent, there are 2 ways to do that, you identify priorities and programs and or the Commission has identified a project which we want as our charter project this year. So the Commission can be either a project specific identifier or a program descriptive identifier and then people come to the Commission and say under that particular program, we have 2 ideas.
- XXI. Mr. Gearhart said a big project does make things more attractive for outsiders to pitch their ideas. However, a big limiting factor with anybody using those Tree Funds can do is only plant trees so it really does limit the ability to do these big standing projects that really get the attention. For use to plant that many trees 1) we'd have to rely on infrastructure that's already there, and 2) and then we would need a large piece of property which has empty space. The reason most of the projects are small is because that is the space available for the City.
- XXII. Ms. Fraser suggested encouraging a non-profit to expand their project because the Commission could pay for the trees, thereby freeing up funds for other items. Identifying priorities for the Tree Commission which dovetail with priorities from other departments of the City. Now we can say we are looking for projects like this instead of waiting for people to come to our door.
- XXIII. Ms. Fraser asked if we wanted to use the Resiliency Report as a starting point? Should this Committee begin to collect data on potential priorities? Mr. M. Robinson asked if perhaps we could ask the Resiliency Chief to direct her presentation to how can the Tree Commission help her achieve some of her goals. Ms. Fraser suggested asking all the Departments. Mr. M. Robinson said that canopy coverage and public health data already exists somewhere. The Commission should make those deficient areas a priority over areas with a high percentage of canopy already. Those Council members as well as Parks Department, Real Estate, Engineering on if there is some master plan coming up. Now that the priority has been identified, the non-profits can then say, ok, the priority is to plant trees in low canopy areas, where can we help with that.
- XXIV. Ms. Fraser said the goal is to expand what we've got, at some point say we need 2 Mr. Gearharts or we need something. If we spend the money and the Council members are happy with how it's being spent and we know on the door and request a second staff person, we may have a good chance of getting one. Mr. R. Rhodes added, it may be more effective to say we have a basket full of projects, money to fund them but we can't process them due to lack of

staff. Mr. Hawkins said Prosser had just been awarded a contract so many of these projects could be given to them.

XXV. Mr. Hawkins continued part of the problem is the public land is a skinny strip which run through with power lines, sidewalks, etc. and then there are those who don't want a tree. FDOT owns 90% of public land in Jacksonville, we could start planting on FDOT roads. The reason we are not doing it now is FDOT does not have to mitigate for trees they cut down. If we plant Live Oak trees 40 ft apart, have all the permits and maintain them for the first 2 years, Ken Cheek, FDOT Landscape Architect and his supervisor Jim Knight, said, in an email, they would take over the maintenance after that.

XXVI. Mr. Gearhart said planting on FDOT land is a legal grey area, if FDOT is maintaining it, then we are planting trees for the State. Mr. M. Robinson said the caution on FDOT property is two-fold. In times past FDOT did not want to take on any maintenance, and then if FDOT decides to remove the trees, they don't have to pay any mitigation. Ms. Fraser suggested putting a condition on planting trees from the Tree Fund is they cannot be removed before, say 15 years, or FDOT must pay mitigation. Mr. Hawkins said they will not do that, FDOT doesn't want to set a precedent Statewide. Just be mindful when selecting your areas to plant to places which will not be widened, for instance, in several years. If they do cut down a few, FDOT has spent \$18 million dollars on planting trees in Jacksonville, which is more than we are spending. Mr. M. Robinson pointed out that we've seen what FDOT does at I-10 and Roosevelt; City Funds through Greenscape landscaped that interchange, shrubs, and crepe myrtles, but 10 years later, it's torn up because they are adding new roads.

XXVII. Mr. Hawkins said if we want to change what Jacksonville looks like we've got to deal with FDOT roads. Every road you drive on is a FDOT road. Ms. Fraser continued, our goal then could be to enhance the rights of way in the City. We meet with FDOT to decide where to plant which would have the longest life. For instance, the area when you come into San Marco, the ramps, the hospital, and big concrete cave where TPO used to be. That could all be planted, come off those ramps to the Southbank of the City and have a beautiful landscape program there. We aren't here to pick the projects, we're here to say we have some goals and then investigate if they are achievable. What are the overarching, we aren't doing enough in rights of way or we cannot penetrate 90% of the right of way because its FDOT, can we create a partnership with them where both of us win. Do we as a committee want to start the collection of information to go back to the Tree Commission about what other departments in the City are doing, what other programs are out there, do we want to be the data collectors. Mr. R. Robinson said to assign the data collection. Ms. Fraser asked to whom? This is the dilemma.

XXVIII. Ms. Chism pointed out we already have some of the data in Plan-it GEO by Council district which can tells us which districts the canopy is deficient. Then assign a Commissioner to meet with the Council members who's districts have the lowest percentage of canopy first followed by the rest in order. This takes care of objective 1, the first bullet and begin on objective 1 the second bullet. Then add the Resiliency report. In July when the Resiliency Chief addresses the Commission, determine if there is anything the Tree Commission can do with her upcoming

projects. Also, perhaps Mr. Hawkins could meet with FDOT and find out where their projects are going to be for the next 5 years and determine any places we may plant.

- XXIX. Mr. M. Robinson added Mr. Gearhart can use Plan-it GEO for Objective 2 which the data is already available. Mr. Gearhart said he believes Plan-it GEO uses a percentage to determine what is deficient but can't remember the cut off number. Its color shaded as what's above the percentage and gives an overall. Perhaps a presentation on Plan-it GEO data to this Committee, how old is the data, what Mr. Gearhart believes it can tell us without asking for any revisions to the software. Mr. M. Robinson also asked what the cost was for Plan-it GEO to do the original survey. Which could give us a baseline of what it was then, we need to update it because the new trees are added but none are being removed from the program.
- XXX. Ms. Fraser suggested partnering with the Planning Dept. every time a permit is issued, that information goes to Mr. Gearhart, and he notes if trees are being removed. Mr. Gearhart said the inventory which was done was approximately 7% actual in field and the rest extrapolated from aerial imagery. For us to have the most accurate information for developments we would probably need an annual aerial survey. Ms. Fraser pointed out that Google Earth does an annual aerial frequently. How do we integrate data that's already out there? Mr. M. Robinson said Plan-it GEO uses Google data. Mr. Gearhart said he would investigate if there was an update for Plan-it GEO for tree inventory. There would still need to be, every few years, some sort of "in field" verification of the data to ensure the model is working correctly. Ms. Fraser suggested that inventory could be done using volunteers. If we can engage the community, especially in areas that don't have trees.
- XXXI. Ms. Fraser said are we talking about quantity trees or tree coverage. With an aerial, software is available to say there is 40% tree coverage. Mr. M. Robinson said there were discussions about using citizen inventory and Plan-it GEO identifies the tree species, and citizens cannot be expected to know that information. If we could just make the distinction between hardwood and softwood that might make it easier. Mr. Gearhart pointed out that if we focus on the general only, we will have to account for it in some way, we don't want to have a monocultural canopy. If it's planned for, the initial data is general and then some sort of verification afterwards, that could work.
- XXXII. Ms. Fraser pointed out that we need to decide what our measure is going to be; is it quantity, is it quantity and diversity, is it coverage? Mr. Gearhart said we have the breakdown of what's been planted, via Plan-it GEO, the inventory of what's existing is much hard to show without constantly updating data. Mr. M. Robinson said years ago JEA hired Davey Resource Group to do a tree inventory. They looked at the whole system, on average 80 trees per mile were touched by line clearance trimming throughout the City. They also did some species identification, Laurel Oak and Water Oak were the number 1 species that line clearance touched. Then Pines, there was no differentiation between the species, then Live Oak. Somebody over at JEA Forestry should have that report. Mr. Gearhart asked if JEA was a public entity. If so, that is a huge resource if we could work with them in that sense, not too many public utilities will have that type of information.

- XXXIII. Ms. Fraser said it doesn't seem likely we will reach a point where trees will be removed because of diversity. Our whole goal is when we plant, we have diversity. Mr. Gearhart said we focus on our plantings to make sure of that. For instance, a project may be dominated by Live Oak but if the next project in a similar area isn't also Live Oak, the diversity is increasing. Just being cognizant of your plantings on a project level and the great scale of district or City level. Ms. Fraser added, that's where we need a planting plan checklist, do we have 25% palm trees, did we review the species diversity at a district, neighborhood level and confirm we are not reinforcing a monoculture.
- XXXIV. Ms. Fraser asked, how much work does the subcommittee want to do? Can this be a working committee where we become a resource for knowledge, perhaps scheduling meetings with people to collect that knowledge. Are you both, Mr. M. Robinson, and Mr. R. Robinson willing to make time available? If we don't do it, it's not going to happen. Mr. R. Robinson said we need to make decisions and carry them to the Commission and not carry all the water ourselves. The Commission needs to buy into what we're doing, we should not be volunteering to do all the groundwork. Perhaps every Commissioner could get involved with 1 or 2 of the City Council members. Ms. Fraser agreed, each Commissioner should get their 4 City Council members to meet with, that's a piece of the data collection we are going to do. If we are going to say to Mr. Gearhart, come present to us Plan-it GEO so we are the repository of a better knowledge of Plan-it GEO than other Commissioners, it's deficiencies, the things it focuses on. If we then say, Greenscape would you talk to this Committee and tell us what your wish list is. We would then become the subject matter experts about the status of what the City is today and the list of hopes and dreams of the organizations which are invested in these types of projects. Then we come back to the Commission with the report. We don't have to be reticent about asking the other Commissioner's for help if they have the resources. Until we start putting the puzzle together, there is so much we don't know.
- XXXV. The Resiliency Chief will be at the July Tree Commission meeting. Between now and then there is no reason we can't read the Resiliency report ourselves, Mr. Gearhart can brief the Committee on Plan-it GEO. Do we want to tell the Tree Commission that we would like to set up a schedule of meetings with the City Council members to start them thinking about projects which are eligible in their districts? If the Commissioners say yes, then the question is which Council members would you like to speak to? Mr. R. Robinson said that should be established as an objective. We haven't talked about all the different departments in the City, and how much they have been touched about the opportunity to spend money on City lands. If they are covered, that's fine, somebody just needs to tell us. But when we meet with the Council member, we need to have some discussion about what information do we take with us, how do we prepare, so a meaningful discussion; can we give them a map of the public owned lands where the deficiencies are, where their district sits; basic information to get them thinking and the fact that we have 25 million dollars to spend on viable projects.
- XXXVI. Ms. Fraser said maybe our role is to activate and engage with the City Departments. Maybe we need to meet with say the School District, do you want trees, why don't you want trees, how

can it be easier to get you to accept trees? If they say we are not interested, that door is closed, we move on. Everyone is busy, but if we don't call and say can I come and have a cup of coffee and talk to you about what you do that we may be able to help with. Could we, this Committee, would take on between now and July? Mr. R. Robinson said we should probably schedule a meeting to plan how to do that, what the talking points will be, a FAQ sheet what the Tree Commission is, what its funds are and what the limitations are. It would also be helpful to have a list of districts where the money has already been spent. Ms. Chism noted that information was in the City Council presentation which she will email to the Committee members after the meeting. Some districts shown in presentation had not requested much nor had they received much, and they were the ones with the largest need.

- XXXVII. Ms. Fraser said, if the Tree Commission sets up a policy that says Council Districts which have 20% above the average in tree coverage, don't get any funding. Districts which have are average and below are priority. Mr. R. Robinson said that's political, and we don't need to get into that. Mr. Hawkins pointed out there is a lot of money, we shouldn't tell anybody no. Ms. Fraser suggested then how do we increase the requests from the districts which are in need.
- a) Role of the subcommittee in support of a Strategic Planning Session for the Tree Commission
 - b) Review draft Tree Commission Goal and Objectives
 - i. Using the enabling legislation, Ms. Fraser grouped the duties from Section 94-106 from the Ordinance Code into Objectives. At previous Commission meetings it was said the Commission needs to set some priorities, what kind of projects does the Commission want to direct attention too.
 - c) Review proposed plan to implement Objective 1
 - d) Discuss plan to implement Objectives 2-6
 - e) Subcommittee meeting schedule
 - i. For the next meeting Ms. Fraser will take a stab at a script to meet with a City Department; say things like the Tree Commission was fund by; here's what we do; here's the revenue we have; and then we can determine if these are the things, we feel comfortable presenting to City Departments. Ms. Fraser will speak with Ms. Grandin.
 - ii. Mr. R. Robinson asked about the City Council Presentation information. Ms. Chism will email the presentation to the Committee members as well as the dates of the presentations so the video can be accessed.
 - iii. Mr. Gearhart will do a presentation on Plan-it GEO so we know how it can be represented and not misrepresented. Ms. Fraser asked Mr. Gearhart how much time he will need to really explain how Plan-it GEO.
 - iv. Ms. Chism will send out a doodle poll for the last week of June to schedule the next meeting. Ms. Chism will bring a list of relevant Departments.

4. Adjourned.