

**VERO BEACH TREE AND BEAUTIFICATION
COMMISSION MINUTES
Thursday, June 20, 2019 – 9:00 a.m.
Council Chambers, City Hall, Vero Beach, Florida**

PRESENT: Vice Chairman, Cynthia Schwarz; Members: Fran Robinson, Neal Roe (arrived 9:05 a.m.), and Katherine Booth **Also Present:** Senior Administrative Assistant, Rita Hawkins

Excused Absence: Marilyn Black Dussault

1. CALL TO ORDER

Vice Chairman Schwarz called today's meeting to order at 9:01 a.m. and the Senior Administrative Assistant performed the roll call.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A) May 16, 2019

Mrs. Robinson made a motion to approve the minutes of the May 16, 2019 Tree and Beautification Commission meeting. Mrs. Booth seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

None

4. NEW BUSINESS

Mrs. Booth stated that she came across a couple of lots on the ocean side that looked like they used to have homes on them. She took several pictures of the trees that are left, which she showed on the monitors (on file in the City Clerk's office). She said one (1) lot was on Tulip Drive and per their discussions at previous meetings, she was not sure if there was anything they could do to preserve any of these trees. This subject goes back to the pictures that Mrs. Dussault showed them a couple of months ago of a lot that was almost completely cleared and it was done legally.

Ms. Schwarz said she believes they discussed that the Planning and Development office would have the most substantial impact on things like this.

Mrs. Booth continued by showing pictures of another lot on Greenway Lane that only has trees around the edges of the property.

Mrs. Schwarz asked Mrs. Booth if her thought is to have the property developed within the footprint that is currently there. She stated that they already discussed that their Commission cannot tell private property owners what they can do with their property. Mrs. Booth thought that maybe as an Advisory Commission they could take it to the City Council to let them know they noticed these lots and they want the City Council to be aware of them. They could find out if the City has any interest in protecting these trees as the properties are developed. Ms. Schwarz stated that the decision on what happens goes through Planning and Development and the Planning and Zoning Board.

Mrs. Robinson said she just went through the process of removing a tree from her property and she had to make her case. She explained that the Planning and Development Department will either make a site visit, or you have to provide pictures and have a rational reason for removing the tree. Mrs. Booth said that the City's Landscaping and Tree Protection Ordinance does not include single-family homes, so she is curious why she had to go through any kind of process. Mrs. Robinson replied that you have to get a permit in the City of Vero Beach to remove a tree. If a company is doing the work, they can only remove 50% of the tree without a permit.

Mrs. Booth stated that she will take this matter to Planning and Development to find out what they do to protect trees.

Ms. Schwarz said that when people get their homeowner's insurance that is the first thing they look at. They want to see what trees are near or overhanging on the house. The insurance companies will make people remove any limbs that are hanging over the roof.

Mr. Roe said that a neighbor of his is building a home for his father and he had a tree contractor come out and they trimmed about 25% of the tree canopy and they might have to remove more. What is dangerous is the new homeowner who moves in and just starts cutting everything back without knowing what is required. They need to target the homeowners and educate them.

Mrs. Robinson said Mrs. Booth wants to go to the Planning Department to find out information, but can she do that as a representative of the Tree and Beautification Commission. Ms. Schwarz said she can go and ask questions as an individual, not as a representative of the Commission. Mrs. Booth asked if they could have a person from Planning and Development come to a Tree and Beautification Commission meeting to educate them.

Mrs. Robinson referred back to the photos that Mrs. Booth took and asked if those were permit signs that she observed. Mrs. Booth replied yes, they both had permits posted. She said these properties were previously developed, but not redeveloped and she would like to know what will happen to the trees.

Ms. Schwarz said she is not sure what percentage of the trees on these properties were grown by nature. It is not as if they were intentionally planted to provide for a perfect spot for development. She said they will invite someone from the Planning Department to attend a meeting to answer their questions.

5. OLD BUSINESS

A) Discussion of the Arbor Day Foundation Community Canopy Program and/or Collaborating with the Audubon Society on a Tree Giveaway Program

Ms. Schwarz stated that she has not done any more work on this, but she thought the consensus was that they wanted it to be more hands on with the Commission members rather than just having a tree delivered. Mrs. Robinson said she thought they were going to hold off making a decision until they found out more about the Port St. Lucie tree giveaway. Ms. Schwarz stated that they will table this item and discuss it at the July meeting when they have more information.

B) Follow up on the logistics of the Port St. Lucie Tree Giveaway

Ms. Schwarz stated that this item goes along with item 5-A), so they will also table this until the July meeting.

C) Review Dedicatory Tree Specification List from Resolution 2015-07 – Ms. Nanette Haynes, Grounds Maintenance Manager

Ms. Schwarz stated that since Ms. Nanette Haynes, Grounds Maintenance Manager, is not present today, they will table this item until their next meeting.

Mrs. Booth asked the Commission members to look through the packet that she prepared, which is a culmination of her ideas and the other two (2) lists they received (on file in the City Clerk's office). One (1) is the current list that is part of the City Resolution and the other is a draft list from Ms. Haynes.

Mrs. Robinson said there is a published list of trees that are considered invasive and the Purple Orchid on this list is a category one (1) invasive species.

D) Update on Participation in the Centennial Parade – October 26, 2019

Mr. Roe announced that they have a truck to pull a trailer for the parade and the theme will be Tree and Beautification. In terms of education, he has been speaking with Ms. Nicole Holman, STEAM Fest, which happens every year. STEAM Fest is a program at the Vero Beach Academy, which is a small private school. The purpose is not to talk about the school, but the STEAM Fest event. The former Superintendent of Schools always praised this program and the educational event. It is a good way to get the STEAM project promoted in the community and it gives all the schools an opportunity to participate. They want to allow STEAM Fest to display their signage on the float as well. His thought was to also include a landscaping company. He reached out to DIGG Garden and Aiello Landscaping, but neither one has responded. He also went to Busy Bee and they seemed interested, but the decision maker is out of town until next week. The idea for the float is to have a small canopy of two (2) or three (3) trees down the middle of the trailer and surrounded by plants and flowers to promote trees and beautification. To incorporate the STEAM project they would like to have some type of water feature, but not actual water. They also thought about posting some type of scientific information about the value of trees. He said Dr. Richard Baker, Pelican Island Audubon Society, came to mind and he thought it would be an opportunity to hand out tree seedlings as they walked the parade route. He was thinking that they could get a landscape company to loan them the trees and plants and return them after the parade. He said he does not see any expense involved at this time other than some signage that could be made by the participants. Ms. Schwarz said she thinks it is a wonderful idea to involve the children from the STEAM program, because they can have unbelievable ideas.

Mrs. Schwarz asked Dr. Baker for an update on the 100,000 trees that they want to plant.

Dr. Richard Baker, Pelican Island Audubon Society, explained that most tree planting projects fail, because people do not look after them properly. They are trying to make their project a success. In order for a person to receive a tree they require them to take a 45-minute course about the value of trees, how to plant a tree, and how to take care of it. They also have them sign a commitment form agreeing to take care of the tree for a year. The people give them the exact location that they are planting the tree and then it is added to their GPS tracking system. This allows members of the Audubon Society to go by and follow up on the care of the tree. He does not believe that handing out trees during the parade without taking the educational course would be a good choice, but maybe they would consider a small plant. He explained that it takes over one (1) year for an acorn to grow to three (3) to four (4) feet tall, so that requires a lot of watering and care.

Mr. Roe asked Dr. Baker if he had any other ideas of what could be presented on a float that would help spread the message about the Audubon Society's program. Ms. Schwarz stated that she would like to see the educational aspect of the STEAM program promoted. Dr. Baker said he likes the idea of the trailer and the signage about trees to help get the word out.

Dr. Baker explained that the Audubon Society is working with the Environmental Learning Center and developing a program at the schools. It teaches the children the value of trees and then the children can take the trees home, or they can plant them at the school and they will take care of them for a year.

Mrs. Booth said that she was at McKee Botanical Garden for the waterlily event and they had a demonstration area where people could sit down and learn how to plant a waterlily. She thought that perhaps Dr. Baker could have a table at the parade in October where he could demonstrate how to plant trees. Dr. Baker said that might be a good idea.

Mr. Roe asked if there are any more comments or questions about the parade. Ms. Schwarz suggested that they have some type of sign on the float for the Tree and Beautification Commission and being a Tree City USA member for 38 years.

Ms. Schwarz read an email from Mrs. Dussault, which asked the Commission member to discuss and vote on whether or not they would need electricity at their table at the Centennial finale on October 26, 2019 (on file in the City Clerk's office). She said she was not sure, but if they requested it and then they decide it is not need they can contact them ahead of time.

Mrs. Booth made a motion that they have electricity provided for their table at the conclusion of the parade on October 26, 2019. Mr. Roe seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

E) Recap of the Founder's Day Tree Dedication Ceremony

Ms. Schwarz said the tree dedication was fabulous and there was a great turnout.

Mrs. Robinson said she was pleased that there were more than five (5) people there on such a hot afternoon and the tree was lovely. A friend showed her pictures of them at the tree dedication that were published in the Vero Beach 32963 newspaper. She will try to bring a copy of it to the next meeting. She thought that was good publicity for them. Mr. Roe said it was an awesome event. Ms. Schwarz stated that Ms. Haynes did a good job on the benches too. Mrs. Booth suggested that when they do advertisements for their events or tree plantings that they provide a map or directions to the location.

Ms. Schwarz said at the dedication Mr. Monte Falls, City Manager, made a comment about having enough money left over to possibly put up a fabric sunshade over the benches, so she might follow up on that.

F) Discuss Possible Tree Planting in the Triangle at Atlantic Boulevard and San Juan Avenue

Ms. Schwarz stated now that the City Ordinance has been changed they could probably look at planting a tree or trees in that triangle on Atlantic Boulevard. She asked that this item be placed on next month's agenda for further discussion.

6. TREASURY REPORT

Ms. Schwarz reported that the Tree Replacement/Mitigation Fund has a balance of \$65,371.51 and the Tree Planting Application Fund had a balance of \$869.21.

Mrs. Booth said that she is still gathering her questions for Planning and Development about mitigations and how many and what types of trees are being removed.

7. CHAIRMAN'S MATTERS

None

8. MEMBER'S MATTERS

A) Review Article for Lemmon Lines – Ms. Cynthia Schwarz

Ms. Schwarz stated that she provided the Commission members with a copy of an article that she would like to submit to Lemmon Lines (on file in the City Clerk's office). She also contacted News Weekly and they can submit a periodic guest column with updates on the Tree and Beautification Commission and their events. She will hold off writing that column, because she wants to do another Library session and she would like to include the date and subject. She asked if anyone has other ideas on any changes for the Lemmon Lines article. Mrs. Booth stated that she would be interested in writing an article for any of the publications. Mr. Roe stated that if the article will be published digitally she might want to include some links to other pages like the City's website, the Library, etc.

Mr. Roe stated that he attended the Memorial Day service on Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary and he noticed how the people gathered around all the trees. When they know there is going to be an outdoor event it would be appropriate to have information about the Tree and Beautification. It would be a great way to promote that many of the trees are not there just by accident, but they were planted for the benefit of the community. Even if they had a temporary sign stating this project is supported by the Tree and Beautification Commission. He knows that they are involved in a small way with periodically paying for trees to be replaced on the Island. He thought maybe they could use that information in their articles and press releases. Ms. Schwarz said that she was also at the Memorial Day Ceremony. She is not sure on the legality of handing out information about the Tree and Beautification Commission at events, so she would like to defer this discussion to next month when Mrs. Dussault is present.

Ms. Schwarz welcomed Mr. Jason Jefferies, Planning and Development Director, to their meeting.

Mr. Jason Jefferies, Planning and Development Director, said that he received an email informing him that the Commission would be discussing the Landscape Ordinance, so he came to the meeting to provide some information and to answer any questions. He explained that the City is going to be doing a more comprehensive review of the City's Tree Ordinance and some of the other environmental regulations as they pertain to development. They will be diagnosing the City Code and putting together a broad list of suggestions of where they should make improvements. They will look at current practices being used by other communities, especially the communities they benchmark. He should be able to have this ready to present to the Tree and Beautification Commission in August or September. He said they will ask for the Commissions feedback on the areas that the City staff recommends for improvement. He explained that there are a lot of discussions about the development regulations and protecting the Lagoon. When amendments are made to the Tree Protection Ordinance the recommendations come from the Planning and Zoning Board to the City Council, because they are the

Local Planning Agency. Like the last Ordinance change, the Planning and Zoning Board has to make a finding that is consistent with the City's Comprehensive Plan and then it goes to the City Council for their approval.

Mrs. Booth asked Mr. Jefferies if clearing permits are required for general clearing of lots. Mr. Jefferies said he believes there is a clearing permit, but if it is not from the City's Planning and Development Department then it is issued by the Indian River County Building Department. He explained that the City has a joint permitting office with the County, which is unique to Vero Beach. When people are issued a permit by Indian River County and the property is in the City limits they are directed back to the City for the zoning approval to be signed off on. A demolition permit is a building permit and the City has to sign off on them as well.

Mrs. Booth said it looks like the City landscape Ordinance does not apply to single-family homes. Mr. Jefferies replied that is correct and it is very common in most cities. The landscape requirements are normally for the parking lots, multi-family units, and commercial properties and that is to make sure the commercial projects are putting in landscaping. However, the tree protection aspect applies to all properties. He said that there are new concepts out there for landscaping and he believes they could update the City's Code to incorporate some of them.

Mrs. Booth asked if they change the landscape portion would it be possible to decrease the amount of turf on residential properties. Mr. Jefferies replied that is something they could look at and that goes along with the protection of the Lagoon by decreasing the amount of fertilizer that is being used.

Mr. Jefferies said that the City Council approved the design of a rain garden on the City Hall property and they are in the process of developing that now. They are also looking at developing some of these rain gardens along 14th Avenue. At the City Council meeting they talked about the concept of the rain gardens and encouraged private development to also incorporate them. He said that when they bring the Tree Ordinance changes to the Tree and Beautification Commission for review he will include the rain garden information. Mr. Roe said that he likes the idea of rain garden projects and having the information on this would be an informational and educational tool for the Tree and Beautification Commission members to share with the community.

Mrs. Booth stated that in the Landscape and Tree Protection Ordinance, it refers a lot to the Planning Director's position as having final decisions in variances, modification, mitigation, etc. and sometimes it is in consultation with the Public Work's Director. Mr. Jefferies replied that he does not review every single application and his staff handles a lot of them, but overall he is responsible for the decisions that are made by his staff. Mrs. Booth asked if she could receive some data from Mr. Jefferies about the number and type of trees that have been mitigated over the past 12 months. Mr. Jefferies explained that they do not track that kind of data and they review the permits on a site-by-site basis. They do not keep documented records on each one (1), so it would take a lot of research and work to extract that information. Ms. Schwarz asked if keeping a database on what type of trees are being removed is something they should institute in the future. Mr. Jefferies said that is something he could look at and see how much staff time it would take. Ms. Schwarz asked if he has ever seen this being done by other cities he has worked with. Mr. Jefferies replied no.

Mr. Jefferies explained that as they start looking at and modifying the Land Development Regulations they have to balance it with the City's Comprehensive Plan, which has statements about the efficiency development review process, protection of property rights, and other policies. They cannot tighten the policies so much that the owner is unable to develop the property. There are also State laws they have to

comply with that protect private development rights. Over the last decade or so, the laws have changed from more planning and growth management to protecting private development. There is a State law that might pass which states no City can deny issuing a tree removal permit as long as they have a Certified Arborist report stating the tree needs to be removed. If it passes then this is something else that will have to be taken into consideration.

Ms. Schwarz thanked Mr. Jefferies for attending their meeting and providing them with information. She asked what would be the possibility of having someone from Panning attend their meetings in the future. The Senior Administrative Assistant stated that if they had an item to discuss or needed to get information from the Planning Department she will check with them to see if they are available and put it on the agenda.

Ms. Schwarz stated that they should also invite the City Attorney to a future meeting.

At this time Ms. Schwarz invited an audience member to come forward to speak.

Veronica (no last name given), said that she is a resident of Vero Beach and lives in Gulf View Estates which is around the Vero Beach Country Club. She said she came to the meeting today to ask what she can do if she wants to promote tree plantings in her neighborhood. Ms. Schwarz asked if this is her own personal goal, or is it a homeowner's association project. Veronica explained that there is land of open grass along the canal, so she assumed the land belongs to Vero Beach. Ms. Schwarz stated that first they would need to find out who owns the land. Mr. Roe explained that if it is along the canal it probably belongs to the Indian River Farms Water Control District. Indian River Farms controls the canals and they are a separate entity from the City. Most likely Indian River Farms owns the berm above the canal and that area is open to accommodate the large equipment they use to clean out the canals. Veronica asked how does she find out who it belongs to. The Senior Administrative Assistant replied that the City Planning and Development office or the Indian River County Property Appraisers office would be able to tell her who owns it. Ms. Schwarz stated that if it belongs to Indian River Farms then they have jurisdiction of that property and they purposely do not plant trees along the canals. Mrs. Booth said that Indian River Farms Water Control holds regular meetings and if they own it then she would need to address them.

B) Recap of the May 16, 2019 Library Informational Seminar – Mrs. Katherine Booth

Mrs. Booth said that she is asking permission to give the presentation that she gave at the Library on May 16, 2019 to other organizations as a representative of the Tree and Beautification Commission.

Ms. Schwarz replied that she does not have enough information or know the legality of it, so she recommends they put it on next month's meeting agenda to get feedback from Mrs. Dussault.

C) Trees for Life Program – Mrs. Katherine Booth

Mrs. Booth stated that in documentation and flyers from the Trees for Life program it lists that the City of Vero Beach GIS division is committed to providing the location of the trees that are given away. Since that is the case, the Audubon Society can determine if trees go to City of Vero Beach residents. She believes that the City Council should approve the Commission's participating in the program since the City is already involved. She said that for the past several months they have been discussing whether they will get involved with the Arbor Day Foundation for their tree giveaway or partner with

the Audubon Society as a source for the trees. Since they have not made a decision and the City is already involved it would make a clear path for them to go with the Trees for Life as their provider.

Mr. Roe excused himself from the meeting at 10:38 a.m.

Dr. Baker said he would like to clarify that he is not sure if the City is committed to the program personally, but the person doing the GPS is a City employee who has volunteered to do it for the Audubon Society. He is not sure if it is on City time or his own time, but this person has agreed to help them. Ms. Schwarz stated that it sounds like there are other entities for using GPS to track the trees to determine they are going to City residents other than going through the Arbor Day Foundation.

Dr. Baker stated that the Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge has some land and they are interested in getting trees from the Audubon Society. Very soon they will be having a meeting with the 26 organizations that are on board. The project is moving slowly, but it is a big project. He said that the Audubon Society is strictly growing native trees except for some fruit trees they are incorporating into areas in the County.

Mrs. Robinson said that she makes a point to check on the Simpson Stopper Trees along 19th Street that they funded. She said the rain has helped, but they are not looking very happy. She is not sure how much attention they are getting, but some look better than others. They need a little more attention with pruning, and possibly some extra nutrients. Ms. Schwarz said she is not sure how much they can do other than being the gatekeeper. Mrs. Robinson said this was a big investment and since there is not irrigation they need to make sure to keep an eye on them especially since they had such a dry spring.

Veronica reported that she spoke with the Planning office and they said most likely the property belongs to Indian River Farms. She asked if her next step would be to contact Indian River Farms. Ms. Schwarz replied that she can contact them, but the area along the canals are intentionally left open.

9. NEXT MEETING DATE

A) Next Meeting Date – July 18, 2019

The next meeting of the Tree and Beautification Commission is scheduled for July 18, 2019.

10. ADJOURNMENT

Mrs. Robinson made a motion to adjourn today's meeting at 10:52 a.m. Mrs. Booth seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

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