

TREE AND BEAUTIFICATION COMMISSION MINUTES
Thursday, September 15, 2022 – 9:30 a.m.
City Hall, Council Chambers, Vero Beach, Florida

PRESENT: Katherine Booth, Chairman; Fran Robinson, Vice Chairman; Members: Rebecca Siplak, and Opal Nelson **Also Present:** John Turner, City Attorney; Nanette Haynes, Grounds Maintenance Manager; and Rita Chartier, Senior Administrative Assistant

1. CALL TO ORDER

Today's meeting was called to order at 9:32 a.m. and the Senior Administrative Assistant performed the roll call.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A) July 21, 2022

Mrs. Booth made a motion to approve the minutes of the July 21, 2022 Tree and Beautification Commission meeting. Mrs. Robinson seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Mrs. Robinson said it was not reflected in the minutes about the status of their fifth Commission member. Her name was not on last month's meeting roll call and nothing was mentioned about her. Can she assume the fifth member resigned and should that be in the minutes.

Mrs. Booth replied she agrees that it should be in the minutes. She was informed of her resignation, but she missed informing the Commission.

Mr. John Turner, City Attorney, said the minutes reflect the general conversation of the members, but if Mrs. Robinson wants to move that the minutes be supplemented with that topic then the rest of the Commission members can approve it.

Mrs. Robinson modified the motion of the approval of the July 21, 2022 minutes to reflect that Mrs. Cindy Roberts resigned from the Tree and Beautification Commission. Mrs. Booth seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

Mrs. Sue Gromis, Main Street Vero Beach, announced that the decorative rock for the bump outs in downtown have been obtained, so when they can be purchased the work will be done. She said they also received a generous offer from the Gold Star Mothers of the Treasure Coast. They offered to donate a dozen American flags to be displayed in the rocks on Federal holidays. When they install the rocks they will also install a piece of polyvinyl chloride (PVC) pipe in the ground to hold the flags. She explained that the Main Street Board has also been looking at replacing the banners on the poles. In light of the fact that the actual poles are going to be replaced they would like to work with the City to have the hardware and banners removed so they can assess what hardware they will need when they replace the banners.

Ms. Nanette Haynes, Grounds Maintenance Manager, suggested that she email Mr. Matthew Mitts, Public Work's Director, with their request to remove the hardware.

Mrs. Booth asked Ms. Nelson if she stays in contact with Main Street Vero Beach and the Economic Development Council.

Ms. Nelson replied yes.

4. NEW BUSINESS

Mrs. Booth informed the Commission that the Indian River County Master Plan was recently revised, which they do every 10 years. They held multiple public meetings and all of the residents, including City residents, who gave their input ranked the environment and the protection of the native tree canopy as their number one (1) concern.

Mrs. Booth stated that she attended a couple of the Planning and Zoning Board meetings and she is pleased to say that the revisions of the Landscape and Tree Protection Ordinances are being done. She believes there will be significant changes made on behalf of the Lagoon, the environment, etc. She hopes it contains what is important as well as the recommendations made by the previous Tree and Beautification Commission.

5. OLD BUSINESS

A) Landscaping Award / Recognition Program

Mrs. Booth said that the dedicatory tree brochure is listed in two (2) places on the City's website and it still remains to be updated along with the dedicatory tree specification list. She would like to get the old brochure removed and have the correct list added all in one (1) spot.

Mrs. Rita Chartier, Senior Administrative Assistant, said she will make sure that the website is updated with the correct information.

Mrs. Booth said since the Tree and Beautification Commission is an Advisory Board she believes the Commission's purpose includes giving advice as to regulations for the Landscape and Tree Protection Ordinances and that includes using incentives. They need to find ways to incentivize behaviors that they want people to do with their landscapes. She said she does not see that the tree canopy is being protected under the Tree City USA designation.

Ms. Haynes explained that the Public Works Department does not have anything to do with privately owned trees. The City only takes care of trees on City property and they are the ones that have allowed them to maintain their Tree City USA status for all these years. Tree City USA does not gather any information on the care of trees that are not on public property. However, she believes that improvements can be made on how people are pruning trees on private property.

Mrs. Booth asked Ms. Haynes if she has any ideas on how to educate those who are trimming trees.

Ms. Haynes said unfortunately, she believes it has to be addressed on a Countywide basis. Short of having stricter regulations and requiring tree trimmers to take training classes to get a license, there is not much they can do.

Mrs. Robinson asked if there is any training for trimming trees through the Agricultural Extensions like there is for using fertilizers and pesticides.

Ms. Haynes said she does not believe so and not everyone can do that type of work. To trim a tree properly you need to actually climb the tree and that is very physical work. If they use a bucket truck then they need a commercial driver's license. People have to go through the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA), or receive private training.

Mrs. Booth asked if the County were to have a type of a certification program would that supersede the City's Code if it was not as stringent.

Mr. Turner said generally speaking, the City's Ordinance would prevail in the City boundaries and that is because Indian River County is not a Charter County.

Mrs. Booth read a portion of the pruning section of the City Ordinance. She said it does not have much meat to guide people on what is acceptable and what isn't. It does not even mention the American National Standard Institutes (ANSI) standards.

Mrs. Siplak said she appreciates this conversation they are having, because it helps to clarify the purpose of the Tree and Beautification Commission. She believes that as a Commission their only option is education and use incentives. Florida State Law dictates that they cannot create more Ordinances or Codes that would affect a private home owner. She would encourage the Commission to move forward with creating an educational pamphlet and have information on the City's website. Her question is, what level of ability do they have to create things like a brochure without putting a burden on City staff.

Mrs. Booth said the brochure would be educational, so it seems to her that is something they could proceed with. She would take it to City Council and explain that this is the kind of educational materials they want to produce for City residents.

Mr. Turner said he is not exactly sure what they want to bring to City Council.

Mrs. Booth replied it would be an educational brochure about best management practices for landscaping and tree care.

Mr. Turner recommended that she check with the City Clerk.

B) Beautification Weekend

Mrs. Booth said that Mrs. Siplak submitted some good recommendations for the Beautification Weekend. She asked if the Commission wants to move ahead with having a Citywide event, but partner with Keep Indian River Beautiful (KIRB) for supplies and volunteers to conduct clean-ups and beautification projects in various neighborhoods. She asked Mrs. Siplak if she knew of other neighborhoods, other than her own, that would be interested in spearheading a project like this.

Mrs. Siplak replied that she does not know of any others, but she hopes that they could stir up more interest. She suggested they approach some of the local churches, because they seem to have good groups of volunteers who might be interested in this.

Ms. Haynes asked if the various Garden Clubs might be interested.

Mrs. Robinson said the Garden Club also struggles with educating the public, getting the word out, and getting volunteers. Some of the Garden Club members are still able to do clean ups, but they are an aging group.

Ms. Haynes stated that they could see about putting it on a City Council agenda prior to the date so a Commission member can attend and talk about the event.

Ms. Nelson stated that she will speak to the Presidents of the Rotary Clubs to see if they would like to participate.

Mrs. Booth asked Ms. Nelson if she had any information on the Hibiscus Festival.

Ms. Nelson said she cannot speak on that yet, but she will make a phone call today about it.

Mrs. Siplak asked if they want to set a date.

Mrs. Siplak made a motion that their Beautification Weekend include other activities such as neighborhood clean ups, possibly making a brochure, making improvements to the banner and signs and setting a date in the future. Mrs. Booth seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Ms. Haynes asked if it does not work out to have it in conjunction with the Hibiscus Festival, what about the weekend of the Garden Fest.

Mrs. Robinson stated that the Garden Fest is the first weekend in February and if they shoot for that weekend they would not get any help or cooperation from the Garden Clubs because they are totally consumed.

There was a brief discussion on how to determine what neighborhoods are in the City and if they are defined with boundaries.

Mrs. Booth made a motion that they include more educational information on their new Beautification Weekend yard signs and banner that promotes the health of the Lagoon by planting native plants, following fertilization guidelines, following irrigation guidelines and things like that.

Mrs. Siplak said what Mrs. Booth is listing are some of the nine (9) principles of Florida Friendly Landscaping and there is an excellent website that covers this.

Ms. Haynes suggested they see if an informational board could be displayed on an easel in City Hall that would cover the Florida Friendly Landscaping principals prior to the Beautification Weekend.

Mrs. Robinson suggested that they keep the signs and banner simple. They need to be careful about how much information they put on them, because if people cannot read them they are wasting their money.

Ms. Haynes reminded them that if they are going to spend Tree and Beautification funds they will have to ask permission from City Council.

Mrs. Booth commented that the suggestion to use the easel to advertise their event and information was a good idea. She asked how does the City publicize events or what is taking place in the City.

Mrs. Chartier said that they put the events on the City's website.

Mrs. Booth said in the past, there have been articles in the newspapers about their events. She asked if any of the Commission members have any contacts with the newspapers or press.

Ms. Nelson stated that she is familiar with most of the press and she will speak with them about advertising their Beautification Weekend event. She asked if they are allowed to build a facebook page for the Tree and Beautification Commission to promote their events and regulations.

Mr. Turner said he is not aware of the City having a facebook page, but that would be a question for Mrs. Tammy Bursick, City Clerk.

Mrs. Siplak said she sees where the Recreation Department has their events listed on a facebook page which allows people to share the information.

There was a brief discussion regarding facebook.

Mrs. Booth said that she would get in touch with Mrs. Bursick about using facebook.

Mrs. Chartier stated that there is a motion on the floor and she restated the motion.

Ms. Nelson seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Mrs. Booth said the Champion Tree awards were recognized in the past, so it is unlikely there would be trees now that could be designated as champion trees especially with all the development that is taking place.

Mrs. Booth stated that attached to the agenda was a table she prepared listing the possible award programs (on file in the City Clerk's office). She went over the various programs.

The Commission members and Ms. Haynes discussed the Florida Friendly Landscape Award program and how it works. Mrs. Robinson said that it takes volunteers to make it work, but she will try to find out more information on that program.

Mrs. Booth continued going over her list of award programs and discussed the Florida Friendly, Lagoon Friendly, and the Alachua programs.

Mrs. Siplak reported that the Alachua County program is operated by paid employees of the University of Florida.

Mrs. Siplak suggested that they encourage the residents to self-nominate for the Florida Friendly and Lagoon Friendly awards, so that way the Commission would not have to manage an awards program. They could ask that the homeowners notify the Tree and Beautification Commission if they receive an award so the Commission and the City could recognize them. This is something they could possibly put on a facebook page.

Mrs. Booth asked if people self-nominated properties, wouldn't the Commission still like to do an on sight visit.

Mr. Turner explained that they cannot do an on sight visit if there are two (2) or more of their Commission members present.

Ms. Haynes stated that there would be a lot involved with evaluating Florida Friendly lawns. It would involve interaction with the homeowner to have them turn on their irrigation, they would need to find out what chemicals they do or do not use, and how they are fertilizing.

Mrs. Booth said she revisited the minutes from the prior Tree and Beautification Commission meeting regarding the Beautification Weekend. There were a lot of good ideas, but they were never implemented due to COVID. One (1) idea was to conduct a plant swap within City neighborhoods. This might be something they could implement in the future.

C) Goals 2022

Mrs. Booth suggested that they table their 2022 goals discussion until their next meeting.

6. TREASURY REPORT

This item was not discussed.

7. CHAIRMAN'S MATTERS

A) Organic Tree Care Presentation – Mrs. Katherine Booth

This item was discussed after item 5-C).

Mrs. Booth gave a Power Point presentation on organic tree care (on file in the City Clerk's office).

8. MEMBER'S MATTERS

None

9. NEXT MEETING DATE

A) October 20, 2022

The next meeting of the Tree and Beautification Commission is scheduled for October 20, 2022 at 9:30 a.m.

10. ADJOURNMENT

Today's meeting adjourned at 10:59 a.m.

/rc