

Savannah Park and Tree Commission
Minutes of Meeting – Tuesday, July 10, 2018

Present: Commissioners Ron Melander, Ken Barthels, Sean Mannion, Philip Perrone, Audrey Platt, Randy Tate, Mary Todesca, Cealan Clifford, Director Gordon Denney, and visitor Joe Thomas (from the Savannah Tree Foundation - STF).

The meeting was called to order at 1 p.m. by Chair Ron Melander and was held at the Massie Heritage Center

1. The commissioners accepted the agenda for the day's meeting.
2. The commissioners accepted the June minutes.

No council members were available to attend today's meeting.

Gordon delivered his report. Highlights include-

- The tree removal list, some trees are on this list for quite some time, Gordon explained that this was because 'non-hazard' trees are lower on the priority list than trees that could cause damages. He also said that when a 'significant tree' or a group of trees, e.g. the White bluff trees, will be removed - he will email the commissioners to give them notice. YTD – 278 trees have been removed.
- Plantings – in '15 we planted 231 trees, in '16 492 trees were planted, and in '17 the count was 127. Gordon said that these counts are approximate and that he is working on more definite numbers.
- Tree inventory, Gordon said that we are behind in compiling this and said it was due to a lost staff position.
- GDOT has granted the city the right to do median plantings and irrigation along some streets, e.g., DeRenne.
- Victory Drive work continues, the city has contracted with a vendor to mulch the median from Waters to Bull. The vendor utilizes a 'quick blow method' to distribute the mulch. If the work is successful, the city may use the vendor in some parks. In addition, the city will irrigate and plant on Victory between MLK and Ogeechee.
- Mulch discussion – some commissioners asked to be informed as to what the mulch will be made of, and to verify that the dye used on the mulch was not harmful to the environment. Commissioner Platt requested that we note her strong opposition to the use of dyed mulch and there was some discussion that the city ought to utilize its own made mulch as much as possible. It was also mentioned that we avoid cypress mulch for all uses. Gordon replied that he would investigate what the composition of the mulch was and if a non-dyed mulch was available. He also did say that many people like 'uniformly dyed mulch.'

Old Business

Chair Melander mentioned that a man named Mike Carr is interested in becoming a commissioner and that the commissioner opening will be announced in January or somewhat earlier.

Comm. Platt announced that she was going to retire soon and that she hoped to find a person from the Trustees Garden Club to replace her on the commission.

Comm. Todesca reported that she had talked to Ted Buckley (a landscape architect employed by the city) and that there was going to be new landscaping planned near Hunter AAF. She also mentioned that the new tree lawn on the Walburg and E. Broad apt. project was successful. She also said that Mary Landers from the Savannah Morning News will soon write an article about tree lawns.

Chair Melander motioned to hold future meetings at the Massie Center, this motion was seconded. Comm. Perrone said that he would confirm that we can meet there for the next 12 months.

Comm. Mannion said that he will see if Council-Member-at-Large Carol Bell can attend our next meeting

Comm. Tate said that he is investigating tree diversity on the city's tree planting list. It was mentioned that some trees on the list are not planted because they are hard to procure. We asked Gordon if he could share the vendor list with us so we could see if we knew any other available tree vendors.

New Business

Chair Melander mentioned that he felt that city residents be allowed and encouraged to 'snip' crepe myrtle 'sucker' branches on tree lawns. Gordon replied that he was investigating ways to implement this. He explained that current rules block residents from touching tree lawn trees. At this point, Joe Thomas from the Sav. Tree Foundation, said that he would like to see the foundation aid the city in the tree pruning efforts. Comm. Tate suggested that the city make a video detailing what ordinary citizens are allowed to do to tree lawn trees. Comm. Perrone suggested that we consider setting up a program to sponsor the planting of new trees on new or rehabilitated tree lawns created by residential property owners and to seek ways to work with STF

The commissioners voted to not allocate any commission monies for a restaurant luncheon. Comm. Melander mentioned that there is about \$30 thousand dollars in the commission fund. Ideas were mentioned as to how to utilize these funds. Mention was made to sponsor tree plantings, and to do this in conjunction with the Savannah Tree Foundation.

August meeting will not be held, instead, a volunteer lunch will be held at the Vault on Bull Street, at noon on August 14. Each attendee will pay for their own meal.

An invitation was extended to Joe Thomas, from the STF, inviting him to attend our future commissioner meetings, he accepted.

The meeting was then adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ken Barthels (acting recorder)