

TREE COMMISSION MINUTES

October 20, 2015 - 5:30 P.M.

PARKS AND RECREATION HEADQUARTERS

MEMBERS

X	Dr. Maurice Holt, Chair
X	Terry Plauche, Vice-Chair
X	Ben Cummings, Secretary
X	William Rooks, Treasurer
X	Dr. Rip Pfeiffer
X	Cleve Formwalt
X	Jesse McDaniel

STAFF

X	Parks and Recreation	Matthew Capps
X	Urban Forestry	Gerard McCants
	Alabama Power	Blake Jarrett
X	Planning	Richard Olsen
X	Legal	Melissa Mutert

The Chair called the meeting to order at 5:30 PM and confirmed that there was a quorum by visual count.

TREASURER'S REPORT: A motion was made by Mr. Cummings and seconded by Dr. Pfeiffer to approve the Treasurer's Report with a balance of \$10,454.57, with no income or expenditures.

The motion carried.

Mr. Olsen discussed the need for changing the signatories on the checking account as the people currently authorized to sign checks are no longer on the Tree Commission. He provided letters for Dr. Holt to sign authorizing the bank to make the changes and copies were given to Dr. Holt, Mr. Plauche and Mr. Rooks to take to the bank to sign the bank's signature cards.

PERMIT REQUESTS:

1	<u>P-2015-18</u> Volunteers of America 1204 Hillcrest Road (West side of Hillcrest Road, 10'± North of Hillcrest Crossing South) Remove one 12" and one 8"-10" twin trunk Live Oak Henry Creel of Volunteers of America stated that they had asked Bobby McCants of Rowe Engineering to express in the narrative that VOA would be willing to replant trees wherever the City required them to: either in the ROW, on their private property or make a contribution to the Tree Bank.
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Tree Commission Minutes

October 20, 2015

Page 2

The narrative that was submitted showed only that they would replant trees on their private property if required.

Mr. Creel continued by saying that Hillcrest Road Baptist Church gifted their property at 1204 Hillcrest to VOA with the condition that the Church could continue to worship in the Sanctuary as long as they need to. The Church has a dwindling congregation and resources, and the Church and VOA have partnered on community projects in the past. VOA plans to build 3 more buildings on the property and move their corporate office to the site.

Mr. Creel stated they are not asking for the trees to be cut simply so that people can see their sign. The sign has an electronic message board, and a variance has been approved for it. VOA is a church that is a faith-based non-profit 501c3 agency. They incubate other churches; they currently have another church, Hope of the Nations, meeting there now. They have a two-year limit to incubate each church for them to strengthen and grow their congregation. Then, that church moves out to their own location and another moves in. They have AA meetings in the building four nights a week. They have senior adult fairs, they do blood drives, and it is a voting center. They have partnered with the City to help produce low to moderate income housing, and they provide free financial education classes and credit score improvement classes for these families. They do disaster response and training. They do food and toy drives. They want to have the message board for community notification for all the activities at the site.

Dr. Pfeiffer said that the reason they want to cut the trees down is for sign visibility.

Mr. Rooks asked where the sign was located in reference to the Church sign that is there now.

Mr. Creel answered that the current sign is to the south, and they plan to center it on the property by moving it north and keeping it the same distance from the road.

Dr. Pfeiffer asked why the sign couldn't just be left in its current location.

Mr. Creel replied that it was also due to the construction that they will be doing. They were encouraged by the City and have applied to close the existing driveway and install a new driveway to the north. This is to help ease the traffic congestion where Hillcrest Crossing comes into Hillcrest Road. It has to be designed where a fire truck can access the property, and they also will have some landscaping issues.

Dr. Pfeiffer stated that the Tree Commission does not have a precedent for

Tree Commission Minutes

October 20, 2015

Page 3

<p>approving removal of healthy trees in the right-of-way for sign visibility.</p> <p>Mr. Rooks asked how high the new sign would be.</p> <p>Mr. Creel replied that the new sign would be almost exactly the size of the current sign.</p> <p>Mr. Rooks stated that the current position of the sign seems to work well with the trees. He didn't see how they would be able to plant trees within 25' of the road due to the grade, and there would be a void in that section of Hillcrest Road that has good character as it is now.</p> <p>Dr. Holt stated that when the Board makes decisions, they don't want to set precedents that they can't live with.</p> <p>Mr. Olsen stated that Mr. McCants has created an SRO to trim the trees in this area.</p> <p>Mr. McCants stated that the limbs on these trees are under four feet so they do need to have their canopies raised. This would help improve visibility.</p> <p>Mr. Rooks made a motion to deny the request, with second by Dr. Pfeiffer.</p> <p>The motion passed with Mr. Plauche recused.</p>
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OTHER BUSINESS: Mr. Rooks asked how the tree fund works. District 6 is looking at doing some work in the medians to replace some trees that have been damaged by cars or storms. He asked if that would be something that the Tree Commission would consider helping to fund.

Mr. Olsen stated that it would have to come before the Commission. A few months ago, the Commission did approve to help with the trees planted at Airport and Hillcrest.

Mr. Capps added that if Mr. Rooks could provide a list to him by October 30th, he would submit it to Keep Mobile Beautiful. He couldn't guarantee that they would help, but he could ask.

Mr. Olsen stated that it would be good if KMB would approve it so it wouldn't appear that all Tree Commission funds were going to District 6.

Dr. Holt stated that they must treat all areas the same and prioritize where the trees are planted.

Tree Commission Minutes

October 20, 2015

Page 4

Mr. Cummings stated that they are not going out seeking where to put these trees. They are responding to requests made to the Commission.

Dr. Pfeiffer suggested that the Commission should ask City Council members if they have any tree planting projects.

Mr. Cummings agreed that was a good idea.

Mr. Capps stated that Councilman Richardson is wanting to have trees planted along Springhill Avenue and in Figures Park. They want to maximize funding from grants in constructing sidewalks.

Mr. Cummings stated that he is in favor of using Tree Bank money for those purposes, but he added that Councilman Richardson had not requested any help from the Board in the past three years.

Mr. Olsen stated that someone requesting money from the Tree Bank should have a designed project to present to the Commission.

Mr. Cummings added that the Mayor's concern regarding sidewalks is just, and they should require that any trees planted in the right-of-way have that device that deflects the roots downward.

Mr. Capps said that he was aware of some specific projects that they are ready to move on and that he would prepare a list of them.

Mr. Olsen stated that the Tree Commission's fund is different from the City's 500 fund which comes from Private Property Tree Requests.

Mr. McDaniel asked how much these projects cost.

Mr. McCants replied that it depended on the type, number and size of trees.

Dr. Pfeiffer said that the trees would probably run \$200-\$300 each.

Mr. Capps referenced the trees they just planted in Sage Park, and stated it was about \$250 each for willow trees to be installed.

Mr. Cummings thought that the \$200 per tree donations to the Tree Bank may not be enough if they aren't covering the cost of the trees.

Mr. Olsen stated that the \$200 was put in place to cover the cost of the tree, not the planting. If the intent is to cover the cost of the tree and planting, then the amount would need to be increased.

Tree Commission Minutes

October 20, 2015

Page 5

Mr. Capps stated that he could purchase the trees for a lot less and have his guys install them, but if a contractor is planting them, the cost would be more.

Mr. Cummings asked if the tree itself cost less than \$200.

Mr. Olsen said that the oaks that were purchased for the Airport/Hillcrest project came in at about \$130-\$150. They were planted by Forestry and some volunteers.

Mr. McDaniel asked if they had a project like this before them, whether the money would be paid to Keep Mobile Beautiful, or to a contractor or if the City would handle it.

Mr. McCants stated that he had seen it handled in each of those ways.

Mr. Olsen said that for the Airport/Hillcrest project, the check was made out to Parks and Recreation, but the Tree Commission had the actual plan in front of them so that they could vote on the species and number of trees that were requested.

Dr. Pfeiffer asked if there was any money allocated in the City's budget to plant trees.

Mr. Capps replied that there was none.

Mr. McDaniel asked how they would go about changing the amount of money required for tree bank donations should they desire to do that.

Mr. Olsen stated that it is in the Tree Commission's Standing Rules Item #4, but he also needed to verify if it is part of the landscape and tree planting requirements in the Zoning Ordinance as well. If it is only in the standing rules, they could vote to change it at a meeting. If it is in the Zoning Ordinance, that would require an amendment to the Zoning Ordinance which is roughly a 90-day process and has to ultimately be approved by the City Council.

Mr. McDaniel asked if the consensus was that \$250 was a more realistic price for covering the cost of buying and planting a tree and if that was something they wanted to consider changing.

Mr. Cummings stated that the cost of labor can vary greatly, and they should just cover to the cost of the tree.

Mr. Olsen stated that the \$200 fee was put in place prior to 1995.

Mr. McDaniel replied that they needed to wait and see if it is an option for them to change it easily and then discuss whether or not they have a desire to do that.

Tree Commission Minutes

October 20, 2015

Page 6

Mr. Rooks stated that each of the Commission members represent different districts, and they should each bring shovel ready projects to the Commission. He planned to do that in his District and they could use it as a test case.

ANNOUNCEMENTS: None

ADJOURNMENT: With no further business before the Commission, the meeting was adjourned at 6:18 PM.