

**TREE AND BEAUTIFICATION COMMISSION MINUTES**

**Thursday, May 19, 2022 – 9:30 a.m.**

**City Hall, Council Chambers, Vero Beach, Florida**

**PRESENT:** Chairman, Katherine Booth; Members: Rebeca Siplak, Opal Nelson and Cindy Roberts **Also Present:** Assistant City Attorney, Jenny Flanigan; Grounds Maintenance Manager, Nanette Haynes and Deputy City Clerk, Sherri Philo

**Excused Absence:** Fran Robinson

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Today’s meeting was called to order at 9:30 a.m. and the Deputy City Clerk performed the roll call.

**2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**A) April 21, 2022**

Mrs. Booth referred to page three (3) of the April 21, 2022 Tree and Beautification Commission minutes where it states, “Mrs. Booth reported that the application for the 2021 Tree City U.S.A. Certification with expenditures was not on today’s agenda, but it appeared to her that the expenditure showed three (3) times more money spent for new trees than any other activity.” She said “new trees” should be “pruning trees.”

**Mrs. Booth made a motion to approve the minutes of the April 21, 2022 Tree and Beautification Commission meeting as amended. Ms. Nelson seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.**

**3. PUBLIC COMMENT**

None

**4. NEW BUSINESS**

None

**5. OLD BUSINESS**

**A) MainStreet Plantings: Ms. Nelson to Speak with Mrs. Elaine Jones and Mrs. Sue Gromis, MainStreet Executive Director**

Mrs. Sue Gromis, Executive Director of MainStreet, reported that the irrigation from the planters have rusted the electric poles and they were told that the hanging baskets were so rusted to the poles that if they tried to take them down the poles would fall apart. She said their volunteers are at an average age of over 70 years old so she would not have them climb a ladder to try to do something with the baskets. She said if they can’t be maintained there is no reason to have them. It was also her understanding that the electric poles were going to be replaced. She said MainStreet is in a position where they don’t know how to proceed. She said that the City recently cleaned out and replanted all the street level beds, which is a good step in the right direction. She said what they are

looking to do is to have color and if they can't do it with the hanging baskets they could have hanging banners and have the plantings at the street level. She asked the City to work with them on funding, manpower, design, etc.

Ms. Jenny Flanigan, Assistant City Attorney, reported that the Economic Downtown Zone Committee (EDZC) is currently working on the lighting project. She felt it would be a good collaboration between the EDZC and this Commission because there is some overlap between the lighting and the plantings.

Ms. Nanette Haynes, Grounds Maintenance Manager, reported that the new poles would be concrete and not hollow like the current poles so if they were to have hanging baskets they would have to be manually watered. She said that she spoke with Mrs. Gromis a few weeks ago about different alternatives for getting more color in the bulb out beds. She said they discussed removing the ground cover and replacing it with decorative rocks and bringing back the concrete pots with colorful plantings in each of them. She said they also could have artists paint the pots to add more color.

Mrs. Booth said it seemed like City staff and MainStreet were working well together in regards to what they might replace the hanging baskets with. She said the Commission would now step away from the project because there would not be any funding coming from the Tree Fund. She felt their next step would be to state in a motion that the Tree and Beautification Commission would no longer be involved with the beautification of Downtown in regards to making any recommendations or provide any funding.

Mrs. Gromis said MainStreet is always open for suggestions. They don't want the Commission to step back completely and not be involved. They want the Commission's feedback. She asked that the Commission not step back completely.

Mrs. Siplak hoped that the Commission would stay involved in the project. She said moving away from hanging baskets was huge because she did not think Florida was the home for them unless they had a bucket truck that could come in and water the plantings every week. She felt that they should consider making the pots look great during season and during the hottest part of the summer that they possibly could be empty. She liked the idea of painting the pots, but she was not sure what type of paint would last on cement. She said it could degrade over time so it might be appropriate not to paint them.

Mrs. Booth said that she misunderstood because it sounded to her that the City, MainStreet and the EDZC knew what direction they wanted to move in. She asked how the Commission could be included in the discussions from a legal standpoint.

Ms. Flanigan recommended that any suggestions from the Commission should go to the EDZC.

Mrs. Booth questioned if a member on the Commission wanted to attend the EDZC meetings and possibly provide some input.

Ms. Flanigan said because the EDZC is a different Committee, they could attend their meeting as long as they were not representing themselves as the Commission. It would comply with the Sunshine Law because the meetings are noticed and open to the public. However, she would recommend that only one (1) Commission member attend the EDZC meetings. She said one (1) Commission member could also work with MainStreet.

Mr. Joseph Coakley, Vice President of the Board for MainStreet, said there are flower pots on the beachside that have colorful plantings and are very attractive. That is what he would like to have in the Downtown area. He said there are a lot of people who are coming to Downtown and in order to keep that going they need to be more and more attractive.

Mrs. Booth thought when the Commission previously discussed this that there was something mentioned about the planters being difficult to maintain.

Ms. Haynes did not think they would be difficult. The planters that Mr. Coakley was talking about located in Sexton Plaza have Firecracker plants in them. She felt that type of plant would be great in the Downtown area.

Mrs. Elaine Jones, President of the Board for Mainstreet, said that a customer recently told her that there were people climbing up a tree in the back of the building in order to get on the roof of the Vero Prime building to hang out. She said that they collected over 200 beer cans from there and the customer wanted to cut down the tree.

Mr. Jason Jeffries, Planning and Development Director, did not think that the tree was owned by the City. He suggested that they get in touch with the Police Department and ask them to do a safety analysis.

Mrs. Jones reported that they used to have a Design Committee that operated a Baskets to Banners program and the Garden Club used to maintain the baskets. She suggested that they approach the Garden Club to see if they would again be interested.

Ms. Nelson reported that she spoke with Mr. Donald Hart, of the Sebastian Police Department, who mentors children between the age of 10 to 18 and they are willing to come here and volunteer anytime.

Mrs. Booth asked does MainStreet have a committee for beautification projects that one (1) of the Commission members could sit on if they choose.

Mrs. Gromis said they did have a design committee and she felt they could get it started again. She would be happy to have a Commission member sit on the committee.

Mrs. Booth asked the Commission members if any of them would be interested in sitting on the committee. She said they could put the offer out in an email and they could respond back to the City Clerk's office.

Ms. Flanigan suggested that if they need to do more research on this issue, they could put this item on their next agenda. She said it didn't sound like there was a committee at this time. If MainStreet formed the committee again then MainStreet would be the point of contact.

Mrs. Siplak asked that MainStreet notify the City Clerk's office when they have a committee.

Mrs. Gromis said that she would.

Mrs. Booth referred to the list of the City's Commissions and Boards that was provided to the Commission members. She said not all of them were pertinent to this Commission so she would edit the list so the Commission members know which Commissions and Boards she felt they should be a part of.

**Mrs. Booth said that she would like to make a recommendation that the Commission approves of what has been presented by MainStreet and the Public Works Department.**

Ms. Flanigan questioned is that a motion to pursue MainStreet and EDZC's plan.

**Mrs. Booth put it in the form of a motion. Ms. Nelson seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.**

**B) Tree Protection Ordinance Revisions – Mr. Jason Jeffries, Planning and Development Director**

Mr. Jeffries gave a brief history on the Tree Protection Ordinance revisions (please see attached). He reported that the Planning and Zoning Board would be discussing the draft Ordinance that he has prepared at their meeting this afternoon. He explained that the Landscape and Tree Protection Ordinance is part of the City's Land Development regulations and any changes to those regulations would have to come from the Planning and Zoning Board.

Mrs. Booth reported that she would be attending this afternoon's Planning and Zoning Board meeting and she would like a copy of the revised Ordinance.

Mr. Jeffries reported that it is located on the City's website.

Mrs. Booth asked if she was correct that the changes to the Ordinance impacts multi-family and commercial, but not single-family.

Mr. Jeffries answered yes. He said that would not be a recommendation of staff and it also would be in conflict with the City's Comprehensive Plan. He reported that there were new elements required by the State to be added to the City's Comprehensive Plan regarding property rights. He said the State has passed regulations limiting the ability to determine what type of landscaping to require for single-family.

Mrs. Booth requested a copy.

Ms. Flanigan said that she would send the City Clerk's a copy of the State Statute to distribute to the Commission members.

Mrs. Siplak said that she did watch the video that was emailed to the Commission members on Alachua County (link on file in the City Clerk's office). Based on the video she felt that the City of Vero Beach had a public information problem. As a landscaper she has the privilege of working with people who want to change their landscape, but she also has the privilege of seeing other people who don't. She encouraged the Commission members to focus on education for the betterment of the environment.

**C) Beautification Weekend**

Mrs. Booth asked the Commission members if they had any comments on how they could improve Beautification Weekend. She asked if they had any ideas on how they would like the public to participate, if they want to have an Award for Beautification at that same time, and if they think February is the time to hold Beautification Weekend. She questioned if they had an award program, what criteria would they want to use. She said it was important that whatever award they give that it goes to a property that is up to Code. However, there are some older properties that are not redeveloped and are not up to the current Code.

Mrs. Siplak suggested that they look into the Florida Friendly Program because they already have nine (9) standards.

Mrs. Booth felt that they needed to do some more research on this. She asked the Commission members to look over the Florida Friendly requirements.

Mrs. Booth said that she would like to bring a special speaker to their June meeting to discuss Lagoon friendly landscaping. She felt this would give them more ideas.

**Mrs. Booth made motion that the Commission have a special speaker to speak with them about Lagoon friendly landscaping to offer more ideas for their Beautification Weekend and reinstatement of a landscape award.**

Mrs. Booth said the speaker that she is referring to is Mr. Bryan Bobbitt, of Keep Brevard Beautiful. She reported that he is mentoring the new person for Keep Indian River Beautiful. She said it was her understanding that they both would be present to give the presentation.

**Mrs. Siplak seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.**

Mrs. Roberts said that she would like to continue holding Beautification Weekend in February.

Mrs. Booth said the reason why she thought it would be better to hold it in May or June was because once they get into the rainy season people don't have to irrigate their new plantings like they do if they are planted during the dry months.

Ms. Haynes reported that when the previous Tree and Beautification Commission started Beautification Weekend they encouraged people to do landscape projects, but also to see what they could do to beautify their property, such as painting their house, cleaning their yard, etc. She asked is the Commission going to narrow their scope or keep the broad beautification of properties.

Ms. Flanigan would recommend that they keep it as broad as possible.

Mrs. Siplak agreed. She said when she lived in Oregon, they held beautification weekends where they would have all the dumps open and they would accept more waste products than they normally would. She said that is another option they could look at.

Ms. Haynes questioned if Keep Indian River Beautiful could assist in getting the word out about Beautification Weekend.

Mrs. Booth said that she would like the Beautification Weekend signs to have public information on them, such as plant native, conserve water, etc.

Ms. Haynes thought they had a Beautification Weekend banner that spanned across 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

Ms. Sherri Philo, Deputy City Clerk, said that she would check to see if they still have the banner.

Mrs. Booth asked that she notify the Commission members.

**D) Landscaping Award Program – Mayor’s Award and Champion Tree Award Programs**

This item was discussed earlier in today’s meeting.

**E) Outcome of Dedicatory Tree Brochure and Website Revision**

Ms. Flanigan reported that this past Tuesday, the City Council passed a Resolution approving the Dedicatory Tree changes, as well as administrative changes.

Mrs. Booth said the Dedicatory Tree Brochure has not been updated on the City’s website. She said that she was not fond of the tree that was pictured on the brochure because it looked like it was an aggressively pruned tree. She said that she sent two (2) other images of trees to the City Clerk’s office and has not heard back on if either of the images were accepted.

Mr. Flanigan said that she would check into this and report back to the Commission at their next meeting.

Mrs. Booth noted that the brochure on the website has the old Commission members listed.

**F) Goals for 2022**

The Commission members briefly went over the Commissions goals from 2021 (attached to the original minutes).

Mrs. Booth said they could eliminate item D – *Continue to monitor the planters and plants installed along Ocean Drive to ensure their success.*

Mrs. Booth felt that items F, G, and H, were all about the same thing, which is how do they encourage the public to get involved in beautification and tree protection.

Mrs. Siplak asked are schools considered public property.

Ms. Haynes said schools are the property of the School Board.

Mrs. Siplak said the Commission has a Dedicatory Tree Brochure and suggested that they also have a brochure that encourages beautification that could be distributed at the Library.

Mrs. Booth said that she liked that idea. She said Mainstreet might be another area to have the brochure available. She said they would add that to their goals.

**G) GIS Tree Inventory and City Map**

Mrs. Booth hoped the information on the GIS Tree Inventory and City map was helpful.

**H) Discussion of Members Attending other Commission/Board meetings**

This item was discussed earlier in today's meeting.

**6. TREASURY REPORT**

Mrs. Booth reported that this information was included in their agenda package.

**7. CHAIRMAN'S MATTERS**

None

**8. MEMBER'S MATTERS**

Mrs. Siplak showed the Commission members a flyer that has a list of dates that the Metropolitan Planning Organization would be hosting visioning workshops regarding the Indian River County Land Use Visioning Study (flyer on file in the City Clerk's office).

**9. NEXT MEETING DATE**

**A) June 16, 2022**

The next Tree and Beautification Commission meeting will be held on Thursday, June 16, 2022 at 9:30 a.m. in the City Hall, Council Chambers.

**10. ADJOURNMENT**

Today's meeting adjourned at 11:23 a.m.

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