

VERO BEACH TREE AND BEAUTIFICATION COMMISSION MINUTES

Thursday, September 17, 2020 – 9:00 a.m.

Council Chambers, City Hall, Vero Beach, Florida

PRESENT: Chairman, Marilyn Black Dussault; Vice Chairman, Cynthia Schwarz (via phone); Members: Fran Robinson (via GoToMeeting), Neal Roe, and Katherine Booth **Also Present:** City Attorney, John Turner, and Senior Administrative Assistant, Rita Hawkins

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Dussault called today's meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. and the Senior Administrative Assistant performed the roll call.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A) August 20, 2020

Mrs. Booth made a motion to approve the minutes of the August 20, 2020 Tree and Beautification Commission meeting. Mr. Roe seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

None

4. NEW BUSINESS

A) Discuss Arbor Day Celebration – Friday, April 30, 2021

Mrs. Dussault said that they are not premature in discussing this because they do not know what will be going on with the Coronavirus in April, 2021. She asked if any of the Commission members had any new or different ideas from what they have done in the past, because she would like to get more people involved. Normally they invite children from an elementary school who walk to the site. They are not sure where they will be planting a tree, but she would like them to think about a way to make it a more prominent celebration.

Mrs. Booth said that in the past, there was a suggestion of planting a tree in the triangle east of the County Administration Building. The City Resolution was changed which now allows them to install irrigation, so this might be a possible location.

Mrs. Dussault said anything can be considered, but Arbor Day is normally just about planting a tree. She asked if that location is in the City limits.

Mr. Roe replied yes it is.

Mrs. Booth said perhaps they could keep this spot in mind if they can get an irrigation line installed.

Mrs. Dussault said they would need to find out what is involved with establishing a water line.

Mr. Roe stated that Ms. Nanette Haynes, Grounds Maintenance Manager, is familiar and up to speed with the challenges in getting that accomplished. He said that if they choose this location they will also have to think about school transportation for the children, personnel, City staff, and the public. This might be a tough spot since it is in the middle of a roadway. They would have to get so much permission to make that engagement not only possible, but to have an effect. This might be too short of a timeframe to get this all accomplished.

Mrs. Dussault said that is why she said they do not know where they are going to be at that time. She said even if a good amount of this event is not virtual, they have the ability and the experience with it. She suggested that they table this item until their next meeting since Ms. Haynes is not present today.

Mrs. Robinson said she remembers discussing the issue concerning irrigation and Ms. Haynes will be able to bring them up to speed on that.

Ms. Schwarz said that location is near the Theater Guild on Atlantic Boulevard and San Juan Avenue.

Mrs. Booth asked if she should send an email about this to Ms. Haynes.

Mrs. Dussault replied no. They will put it on the next meeting agenda and Ms. Haynes can give them an update. Mrs. Dussault stated that everyone is getting used to doing things virtually, so maybe they can combine certain people and a virtual presentation to celebrate Arbor Day more widely.

Ms. Schwarz asked if she was talking about using videos from around the area or children making a video of them doing something in their own yard.

Mrs. Dussault replied that she is talking about having a virtual Arbor Day celebration that anyone can tune in and see, but still have people present at the celebration. There will be a tremendous amount of decision making involved.

Ms. Schwarz stated that she reached out to the City Clerk's office regarding the Beautification Weekend to find out if it was possible for residents to submit videos to be put on the City's website, but she was told they could not do that. She asked Mrs. Dussault if she was thinking about doing a video of the Tree and Beautification Commission doing a project and publishing it somewhere.

Mrs. Dussault replied that she does not know, because the idea of doing it virtually was just brought up and they need to explore their options. Without Ms. Haynes being present today, they are missing her knowledge and input on that triangle piece of land. They can table this until their next meeting when they can discuss it more in depth.

Ms. Schwarz said she agrees. They have looked at that specific area a couple of times.

Mrs. Booth stated that she likes Mr. Roe's idea of people videotaping themselves doing beautification projects that can be published for the public to see.

Ms. Schwarz replied that is what she asked the City Clerk's office and she was told they could not put people's videos on the City's website.

Mrs. Dussault stated that they will table this item until their next meeting.

B) Beautification Award Article – Mrs. Fran Robinson

Mrs. Robinson stated that she shared an article that was in the TCPalm newspaper at the end of August (on file in the City Clerk’s office). It is interesting that this young woman took it upon herself to adopt a street, participate in the cleanup and she received an award. She thought that maybe this is something that could tie into their Beautification Weekend. She said that in 2019 Keep Indian River Beautiful (KIRB) received the Affiliate Award of Excellence from Keep America Beautiful. The City Clerk’s office will forward the link to KIRB’s website so the Commission members can review it. She explained that KIRB is a 501(c)3 organization and their purpose is to educate. They promote recycling and beautification and they are very active in the community. This will be a good link to look at as they start working towards the Beautification Weekend and it might be a way of getting the County involved.

Mrs. Booth stated that she knows the founder of KIRB and they recently worked with Ms. Haynes to install plants at Jaycee Park.

Mr. Roe stated that KIRB built planters on the property of Youth Guidance for them to grow a variety of plants and last week there was an awards ceremony there.

Mrs. Dussault said there are two (2) issues. If KIRB is already working with Ms. Haynes and the City she does not see a problem with continuing to work with them, but the funds are a problem. She said that 501(c)3 organizations can accept donations with a specific designation, so if the City was a designee that might be a possible option. Keep Indian River Beautiful is an affiliate with Keep America Beautiful so it seems like if they can work with Indian River County, who does not have a Tree Commission they certainly should be able to work with the City and the Tree and Beautification Commission. If each of the Tree and Beautification Commission members do some research, she believes this is worth pursuing. They are a small Commission and it is important to expand what they do.

Ms. Schwarz said she agrees with Mrs. Dussault. She said about a year ago, she discussed how the Tree and Beautification Commission members could go on line and take the Tree University course on the Arbor Day Foundation’s website. It takes several hours, but once they graduate they are linked with everyone in the nation who has taken the course and all kinds of information. She still encourages all of them to take the course.

Mrs. Dussault said she agrees. It should be on the top of their list and they should all take the course.

5. OLD BUSINESS

A) Discuss 2021 Beautification Weekend Events and City Project Ideas – February 13-14, 2021

Mr. Roe said because of the Coronavirus people are staying at home more and they are getting to know their neighbors. People are beautifying their homes in droves and some landscapers are losing business because people are doing it themselves. Without the Garden Fest taking place this year that leaves a lot

of readily available plant products that could fit in with their Beautification Weekend. He would like to propose that they come up with a way to encourage neighborhoods to get involved with a plant or plant cutting trading day or week among their neighbors. They would need to deliver this information out to the neighborhoods and he thought they could do this through social media. They could develop a two (2) or three (3) month campaign promoting the Beautification Weekend and to introduce the idea of a plant or plant cutting trading event with their neighbors. Each of the Commission members could reach out to businesses and provide them with the message then the business could incorporate it into their marketing with their customers. He said he spoke to the owner of Digg Gardens and he liked the idea. Digg Gardens is changing their business model to be more about education and being hands on. There are Parks in some neighborhoods that could be used to do the plant swaps, but the neighborhoods can decide what they want to do. They just need to find businesses who want to interact with the neighborhoods. They will need to get City Council's approval, but he wanted to present it to the Commission before he wrote it up. The Commission would not be stepping outside their boundaries or spending any money. He said he also spoke with Main Street Vero Beach, the Master Gardeners, the Garden Club, and the Cultural Council about being involved with the Beautification Weekend and getting the message out to the community.

Mrs. Dussault suggested that Mr. Roe write down his ideas and send it to the City Clerk's office so it can be included on the agenda and distributed to the Commission members. If they can finalize what they want to present to the City Council at next month's meeting then they can get on the City Council agenda.

Mr. Roe stated that he will put it together for the Commission to review at their October meeting.

Mrs. Dussault said they will have November, December, and January to work it all out.

Ms. Schwarz said this is a great idea because many neighborhoods have groups that share information with all their neighbors via email and phone.

Mrs. Dussault said she would like to promote the outcome of their success with the City Council for this year and then broaden it with the County in future years.

Mrs. Robinson said the Garden Club President was very perceptive to the idea and they would be interested in participating in some way. The Garden Club has a Board meeting at the end of September and she can plant the seed that something is upcoming.

Mrs. Dussault said that would be involving the County and she believes that is premature. This is different then what they have done before.

Mrs. Booth said she appreciates the gift of ideas from Mr. Roe. His plan sounds very flushed out and ready to implement.

Mrs. Dussault said that she also gave some thought about the post publicity of the event. She would like to see the Mayor's Award reinstated to recognize individuals on great landscaping, property improvements, etc. They could invite the award winner(s) to a Tree and Beautification Commission meeting to present their project for the public to see and hear. The issue is going to be who makes the determination on who gets the award(s). While it is important to see everyone getting involved, she

would also like to see the Commission recognizing the people in the community and giving them praise.

Mr. John Turner, City Attorney, stated that there is nothing wrong with recognizing groups or individuals. He recommends that they put it on their agenda if they want to recognize someone. If they want to make a recommendation to the City Council to recognize an award winner, they can do that too as long as they keep it in a public forum.

Mrs. Dussault said she wants to research how the Mayor's award was done and get the details.

Mr. Turner said he believes that this would be in the jurisdiction of the Tree and Beautification Commission, because it is to promote the beautification of the City.

Ms. Schwarz asked who would be the person judging the properties.

Mrs. Dussault replied that goes back to the Mayor's award. She will research the Mayor's award with the City Clerk's office and provide the information to the Commission.

Mrs. Booth said they spoke about this at their June meeting and the information they received was that Mrs. Tammy Bursick, City Clerk, would come to the meeting and explain it to the Commission. She thinks it is wonderful to honor people.

6. TREASURY REPORT

Mrs. Dussault reported that the Tree Replacement/Mitigation Fund has a balance of \$110,951.55 and the Tree Planting Application Fund has a balance of \$1,269.21.

Mrs. Booth said she believes that they need to be made aware of what is included in the treasury reports. She explained that mature trees are permitted for removal with a fee of \$20 per tree if they are on a person's property or a \$50 fee per tree if they are part of a planned project. She said based on the fee collected from April 2019 to December 2019, there would have been 2,528 trees removed if they were at the \$20 fee. If they figured it at the maximum amount of \$50 per tree, that would equate to 1,010 trees that were removed in that eight (8) month period. She said over the last two (2) years over 4,000 trees have been removed from the City.

Mrs. Dussault asked what do those calculations do for the Tree and Beautification Commission.

Mrs. Booth said is speaks of thousands of mature trees being lost for decades. Juvenile trees do not provide the same benefits. She does not believe that charging \$20 or \$50 per tree is a deterrent for removing the mature trees.

Mrs. Dussault said she agrees with the philosophy, but she does not know what they need to do with this information.

Mr. Roe said he is not a figures person, but when he hears 4,000 trees have gone away he now has a visual. He asked when does the City Council get this information or do they see this spreadsheet.

Mrs. Dussault replied that it is part of the budget, so she believes they are aware of it. If he is suggesting that it should be looked at by the City Council then they can recommend that, but the City is following the laws that are currently in place.

Mr. Roe said that in planned projects as soon as trees are removed others are planted.

Mrs. Booth said that the Commission's title is Tree and Beautification not Tree *Protection* and Beautification. Does that mean they believe that existing trees are beautified by pruning or removing them.

Mr. Roe replied that the Tree and Beautification Commission relates to being a Tree City USA community. They rely on City staff to maintain that status, so they are an ancillary to that program. He does not believe that they need to have the title of *protector* because the Tree City USA program does that for them.

Mrs. Booth said that the Arbor Day Foundation/Tree City USA is partnered with the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) and their goal is to prune and remove trees.

Ms. Schwarz said she would like to know how many trees were removed and how many were planted. If they give people the information on the number of trees that are taken out each year, that is education. People should be encouraged to keep as many trees as possible. The more education they provide the more people think about it.

Mrs. Dussault replied that the information they give out must be accurate.

Mrs. Booth stated that it is all in the treasury reports.

Mrs. Dussault replied that it is not all in the reports, because it depends on whether they divide it by \$20 or \$50. This information has to be in the documents or applications that the City receives. If there are two (2) different tree removal fees, they cannot assume how it is broken down. If they are going to discuss it at the Tree and Beautification Commission meetings, then they are making the public aware. They cannot change the law, but they can push other people to act on it.

Mrs. Booth said that if anyone wants that information broken down they will have to pay \$700 to get it. When she asked for it, that is what she was quoted by the Planning and Development office.

Mr. Turner replied that he has not seen any records like that, but he believes there should be a public record of it maintained by the City.

Mrs. Dussault said in order to get an accurate total there has to be a paper trail. She asked Mrs. Booth what the \$700 was for.

Mrs. Booth said that was the quote by Mr. Jason Jefferies, Planning Director, for the time involved to research and obtain the number of trees that were removed.

Mrs. Dussault stated that she will look into this as well.

7. CHAIRMAN’S MATTERS

None

8. MEMBER’S MATTERS

None

9. NEXT MEETING DATE

A) Next Meeting Date – October 15, 2020

The next meeting of the Tree and Beautification Commission is scheduled for October 15, 2020.

10. ADJOURNMENT

Today’s meeting adjourned at 10:20 a.m.

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