

A meeting of the Park and Tree Advisory Committee was held on **March 22, 2018 at 3:00 p.m.** in City Hall, 1911 Boundary Street. In attendance were Chairman Barb Farris, committee members Gordon Fritz and Chuck Rushing, and Brian Franklin, city staff. Amanda Flake and Blake Austin were absent.

In accordance with the South Carolina Code of Laws, 1976, Section 30-4-80(d) as amended, all local media were duly notified of the time, date, place, and agenda of this meeting.

Chairman Farris called the meeting to order at 3:04 p.m.

MINUTES

Mr. Rushing made a motion, second by Mr. Fritz, to approve the minutes of the February 22, 2017 PTAC meeting. The motion to approve the minutes as submitted passed unanimously.

TREE REMOVAL APPLICATION – 412 JOSHUA COURT

Chairman Farris read a letter from Ms. Flake, who had gone with Mr. Franklin to look at the tree.

Mr. Fritz said he didn't agree with Ms. Flake's assessment because of his experience with large oaks on his property that had fallen over because of Hurricane Matthew but are coming back after the roots were trimmed. He said he knows that this kind of tree can recover from this type of pruning.

Mr. Franklin said he doesn't disagree with Mr. Fritz, but Ms. Flake is a certified arborist, so he would defer to her opinion. There was a discussion of her assessment and of what had happened, which is that the trimming on the tree "was not done from a pruning standpoint" but with the intention of "a removal," Mr. Franklin said, and the tree company was stopped in that process. If the tree declines and expires, he said, the tree company should bear the responsibility for that.

Mr. Rushing said the tree company cut a major section of the tree without a permit. Mr. Franklin said the company did the work the same day he denied a trimming permit. He called **David Tedford** of Action Tree Service and also emailed the tree company to let them know that he had denied it, but the work took place during that time that he was attempting to contact them. Mr. Rushing said the application was for a permit to remove one of the trunks of the tree; Mr. Franklin said that's correct. Mr. Tedford was apologetic, he said, and Action Tree Service had reached out to Mr. Franklin to apologize and to find out what to do to make it right.

Mr. Rushing asked what the recourse is when something like this is done without permission. Mr. Franklin said he believes it's mitigation or a fine, but he doesn't know what the fine is for doing this to a live oak.

Mr. Rushing said he hears Ms. Flake's letter as saying that the part of the tree that has been "mutilated" should be cut off, and if the remainder dies, then the tree company should be responsible. Mr. Fritz told **Janice Thompson**, the homeowner, that he knows from experience that a live oak can rebound. He told Chairman Farris that he is opposed to removing it.

Mr. Rushing made a motion to remove the portion of the tree that has been "heavily trimmed," leaving the other trunk, and either to fine Action Tree Service or to require it to mitigate for removing the trunk without permission. Chairman Farris seconded the motion. The motion passed 2-1, Mr. Fritz opposed.

Chairman Farris told Ms. Thompson that she has permission to have the trimmed trunk removed, and Mr. Franklin will be overseeing that. Chairman Farris asked Mr. Franklin about the mitigation. Mr. Franklin said, before the removal, Action Tree Service would have to do the mitigation or pay the fine. He will update the board at its next meeting. Mr. Franklin said he would email Action Tree Service tomorrow and will copy Ms. Thompson on it.

Chairman Farris said she feels that if the city doesn't take a stand with tree companies about trimming without permission, this practice will continue. This company moved forward without a permit, which she said is "unusual." Mr. Fritz said he thought the committee made a good decision, even though he didn't vote in favor of it.

SOUTHSIDE PARK TRAIL UPDATE

Trail work has commenced at Southside Park, Mr. Franklin said. In the next few weeks, there will be a walking surface. They are shooting for a May deadline, he said.

BOUNDARY STREET PLANTING UPDATE

There are trees in the medians, Mr. Franklin said. They are holding off on the north side of Boundary Street until the overhead power lines can be brought down. Chairman Farris said she thinks it looks great so far, and Mr. Fritz agreed. Mr. Franklin said there would be shrubs put in on the south side of the street and in the medians while they wait for the power lines to come down. The goal is to complete this by the end of April, he said.

Mr. Fritz said he feels "this is a fantastic legacy for you guys, to have fought for this and got it."

Mr. Franklin said the landscape contractor will do maintenance for the first year, and then it will be turned over to the city. Mr. Rushing asked if ground cover is planned and about weed control and mulching. Mr. Franklin said he had removed the weed fabric from the project that was to be put down because in his experience, it is an impediment to work, and it kills weeds coming up, but if the mulch is deep, weeds will grow on top

of the fabric. By removing that from the budget, he was able to add 3 oaks on Boundary Street.

Mr. Franklin said the plan is to have ground cover and 3 types of grasses; it will take several years to create a carpet, but there will be weeding and maybe the use of selected herbicides. The goal is to keep from having to cut the grass there every week.

WASHINGTON STREET PARK PROGRESS REPORT

Mr. Franklin said he and **Lauren Kelly** are working on a plan to be presented to the owners, and then they will develop that into a plan to be presented to the neighborhood (e.g., playground equipment, sports courts, restrooms and maybe a pavilion). If there's a master plan, they can move forward on grants and other fundraising, he said.

IDEAS ON CREATING A TREE MASTER PLAN FOR THE CITY

Mr. Franklin said he wanted to present this idea to PTAC because when he worked in Virginia, there was a master plan, which meant each street had 2 or 3 options for street trees. As money became available, those trees were planted, or if a tree died, there were types of replacement trees at the ready. On Boundary Street, the trees are appropriate, he said, and they would be on Ribaut Road or Robert Smalls Parkway, too, but in the smaller blocks of the city's neighborhoods, he is concerned that "everyone wants to plant live oaks." If there is a fungal infection or beetles, it could wipe out the entire urban canopy if there's not enough diversity, Mr. Franklin said, so they should think about that and where the trees would go on the city's streets. Mr. Fritz said he's seen canopies wiped out by Dutch elm disease.

Chairman Farior asked if the tree master plan would be for all of the city's streets. Mr. Franklin said it could be for as many streets as the committee thinks is appropriate. He said the Old Commons neighborhood wanted to replant live oaks on Prince Street, for example. They went with live oaks because of the DOT's tree list, but his vision is that the city will own its own streets at some point, and PTAC "could set a tone" if there were a list of trees for those streets. They might just do the main thoroughfares, he said. For example, Mr. Franklin said, if a homeowner came to him and said they hated their street's trees, which weren't doing well, they could ask what could be put back in place of those trees. With a master plan, "there would be a thought and a vision put into this," he said, and he could suggest 2 kinds of trees that PTAC had named, rather than give the homeowner "50 options."

Mr. Fritz said the city has street section plans, and he asked if Mr. Franklin was thinking of incorporating trees into those sections; Mr. Franklin replied, "Yes." For example, on Burton Road, he said, the street section that is proposed looks much different than what is there now. PTAC could make suggestions about the trees on that road.

Mr. Franklin said this could be a very long process, and the scope of it could be as large as the board wants. Mr. Rushing suggested that if they took main corridors, a master plan could offer choices. For some developments, PTAC would have input on what was planted along the streets, but not on the property, he said.

Chairman Farris said it would be nice to make the master plan “more binding” and less “advisory.” Mr. Franklin said if PTAC makes recommendations, the DRB could consider those when they’re looking at a development, for example. A developer might not come to PTAC to get its blessing, but this would allow PTAC input in this aspect of the development process.

Mr. Fritz said there’s currently no consistency in the way developers choose their trees; what Mr. Franklin’s saying is that PTAC could coordinate this, so it’s more consistent, not left to individual choices, which could clash.

Mr. Rushing said he fully supports doing a master plan for the major corridors in town. **Mr. Rushing made a motion to authorize staff to begin the process to create a tree master plan for significant corridors throughout the city. Mr. Fritz seconded. The motion passed unanimously.**

LITTLE FREE LIBRARY FUTURE HOMES

Chairman Farris said **Herb Gray** agreed to sell the materials for building 2 Little Free Libraries at cost. **Steve Lanier**, “a very talented woodworker,” will build them, she said.

Mr. Franklin said PTAC members should think of potential locations. Chairman Farris said she was thinking of one near the Spanish Moss Trail trailhead and one by the police station.

OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Fritz said he is one of the directors of the Sea Island Corridor Coalition (SICC), and the group is very interested in the approach into Beaufort on Sea Island Parkway at the Walmart intersections; they would like to see the median and outside edges of the highway planted like Boundary Street is. He said SCDOT would not allow large plantings/trees in a median of a road where the speed limit exceeds 35 miles per hour. The problem seems to be that SCDOT controls the approaches into the city, Mr. Fritz said, so he thinks, “we need to put some effort into changing that.” What has been done with landscaping on Boundary Street is “a fantastic plus” for the city, and Mr. Fritz thinks the city should do the same thing with the road going to the beach. He asked how to approach DOT and to “start asserting Beaufort’s priorities instead of the state’s priorities.”

Mr. Franklin said SCDOT would give the city all the roadways within this jurisdiction, because its funds are limited, and it hasn’t been maintaining the roads as well as people would like it to. The city’s position is to ask why it would want roads that were not well-

maintained, he said, and to ask where the money would come from to maintain them if they were to take them on – now and in the future.

Mr. Fritz said he'd like to see this issue addressed: how to maintain the same look leaving Beaufort for the beach as has been developed on Boundary Street. Mr. Franklin said a project on that road would mean closing curb cuts, which would affect access; there would need to be new ways developed to get to places if the number of curb cuts were to shrink. He said staff is working on development plans for this area.

Mr. Fritz said he'd like to see if this is possible, as would the 900-member SICC. Mr. Franklin said that "a very wealthy donor" would be the quickest way for SICC to accomplish this.

Mr. Franklin said this could be done in some other areas in the city if it were coordinated with DOT, but he understands "it's a financial issue at the moment."

Mr. Rushing said it would be "a stretch" to make an argument that the speed limit should be lowered in order to plant trees.

Mr. Fritz asked about making a motion to do something to the east side of Highway 21, on the way "out to the beaches." Mr. Franklin suggested that an overall tree master plan, like they'd been discussing, could include that area. There was a discussion about the city limits in that area. Mr. Fritz said he thinks there's enough city land in the Walmart area to consider incorporating that area in a tree master plan.

There being no further business to come before the committee, Mr. Rushing made a motion, seconded by Mr. Fritz, to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed unanimously, and the meeting was adjourned at 4:07 p.m.