

Winterville Tree Commission

Thurs, August 26, 2021, 9:00 AM
via Zoom

Meeting Minutes

Present: Lea Clark (Chair), Brian Binder (Secretary), Bob Bonsall (Treasurer), Holly Campbell (non-voting), Seth Hawkins (Georgia Forestry Commission, non-voting)

Approval of Minutes

The minutes for the July 12, 2021 meeting were approved 3-0.

New Business

TSPLOST Proposal

Bob has developed a proposal for walking paths in the “wilderness area” of Pittard Park. This would involve approx. 1.5 miles of new walkway (granite chip, 4 ft width). Native shrubs and small food trees would be planted as part of the project. There was general enthusiasm for the project. That area of the park is often flooded/muddy in the winter and therefore in need of improved walkways. There was discussion of designing the project in such a way as to make maintenance easier. Motion in support of the concept with the stipulation that the final proposal will be subject to review by the Commission approved 3-0. ► Bob will formalize the proposal and circulate it to the WTC.

Patsy Chandler request to sponsor existing tree

Patsy Chandler has asked if the Chandler family could place a plaque sponsoring the dawn redwood situated by the new Chandler Park. She has provided a \$100 donation to do this. At present the Commemorative Tree Program doesn't make any provision for sponsoring existing trees. However, we are running out of space for trees, and the only cost to the Program would be for the plaque. Motion to approve this request passed 3-0.

Some discussion of the policy regarding commemorative trees that die. These have been replaced at City's expense (or with replacement provided by nursery), but this isn't a formal policy. Perhaps it should be formalized?

Commemorative Tree Program database

The Commemorative Tree Program has grown rapidly, and Tom needs help keeping track. Bob has volunteered to create a database, under the auspices of the WTC. Lea entered data about ~125 trees into the GFC GIS database last summer, but needs to get with Seth to access it. Many commemorative trees have been planted since. ► Lea will provide Bob with the data. ► Bob will work to get a Microsoft Access database going.

RESA Trees (information item)

RESA recently took down a small dogwood, and pruned a large oak. This latter is a boundary tree, and after being made aware of the requirements of the Tree Ordinance, RESA conferred with the adjoining property owner regarding the pruning.

Lea interview (information item)

Lea was interviewed about the WTC by Victoria Cooper (whom she met at a booth at the Marigold Market) for Victoria's "Little Decisions" Podcast. The link to the interview is: <https://www.buzzsprout.com/1806900/9051764> (Lea's interview starts at around the 16 minute mark), and will be posted on the WTC web page and included in our next Gazette article.

Lea is our new Community Forester! (information item)

Lea was recently hired to take Seth's position at GFC as Community Forester. Congrats Lea! She would like to remain as Chair of WTC, but it is unclear whether the GFC would be comfortable with this. She will discuss the issue with her new boss, and let us know.

Commemorative Tree for Danny Nash

Bob has been in email contact with Rosalind Nash Robert, Danny's sister. She would like to plant a 5' Golden Raintree (that she would provide) on the FFT in front of the house where Danny grew up. Bob has sent her a CTP application and they are working out details with the proposed plaque. This tree is hardy and is on the Winterville Tree Species List, however it is non-native and can lean toward invasive. Despite these problems, there was general agreement that the presence of the tree on the Tree List would make it inappropriate for us to block its use, and there was a consensus that this request should be approved.

The suggestion was made that Tree Species List might be modified in the future to exclude this and other non-native trees.

The establishment of a Commemorative Tree Working Committee was also suggested; this would allow issues of this sort to be resolved in a more timely manner.

There was some discussion about who would plant new Commemorative Trees in the absence of a City Arborist. This would probably fall to Tom, but he could use help, especially from people with expertise. It was suggested that tree-planting could be a part of the MLK Day work activities we had discussed.

City Arborist position status

Our tree ordinance says we must have a Certified Arborist or Registered Forester who may be a "city employee or consultant hired to work on a contract basis." Furthermore, The Tree City USA & World programs require someone to be listed as Arborist on the yearly applications for certification. Bob reports that the Mayor is aware of this and seems amenable to having someone on contract to serve the role. It was agreed that ► Commission members should put out the word to local arborists and foresters who might be interested and qualified.

It was suggested that the Mayor be invited to a WTC meeting to discuss the situation, and so he can see what we're up to. Bob does try to keep him informed about our projects, but nevertheless it might be good to get him to a meeting now and again. ► Bob will sound out the Mayor on this.

Pandemic-related postponement of upcoming events

Given the covid situation, it was agreed that our Fall Meeting / Educational Event planned for Sept. 18 should be postponed. ► Lea will let the speakers know, ► Brian will cancel the Depot reservation, remove the calendar entry, and note the postponement on the WTC web page.

Regarding the Chandler Park events, we expect that the Mayor will scale back the dedication ceremony as appropriate, and we agreed that our planned Commemorative Tree event should also be postponed.

October 30 Trick-or-Trees Event, in collaboration with the Athens Tree Council

This is an outdoor event (at Sandy Creek Nature Center) and participation will be limited, so it is still expected to happen. Holly and others will lead tree ID walks. Set up will start at 9:00 AM, the event itself will run from 10:00-12:30, and clean-up should be done by 1:00. ► Volunteers from the WTC are needed.

WTC Gazette Entry

Lea has circulated a draft. ► Please contact her with suggestions for additions or changes.

Our next meeting is set for Tuesday, Nov. 16 at 5:00 PM via Zoom.

The meeting ended at approx. 10:10 AM.