

Winterville Tree Commission

Mon., January 31, 2022, 5:00 PM
via Zoom

Meeting Minutes

Present: Lea Clark, Brian Binder (Secretary), Bob Bonsall (Treasurer), Mateo Fennell, Dorset Trapnell, Holly Campbell (non-voting).
Guests: Mayor Ferrelle, Tina Mills, Bruce Johnson

Meeting Chair: Mateo Fennell

Approval of Minutes

The minutes for the Dec. 20, 2021 meeting were approved unanimously.

Arbor Day 2022 – Sun. Feb 20 at 2:00 PM

The Mayor will read a proclamation and we will plant Seth's tree and give out seedlings. Regarding the tree planting: it's a swamp chestnut oak, so would be happy in the wetter soil of the Pittard Park wildlife area. It's fairly small, so the hole could probably be dug by hand the day of, but the Mayor said the City could get it dug beforehand if desired.

- ▶ Lea will send the proclamation from last year to Wendy
- ▶ Lea will bring the tree, TCUSA & Growth Award Swag, TCUSA Banner, and seedlings to give away.
- ▶ Bob will get with Tom to pick out the spot and talk about prep (if any).

Tree City USA, Growth, and Tree City of the World awards (Information item)

Lea submitted applications for all three on 12/22/21. We've been awarded both TCUSA & Growth, still waiting on the TCW (the application deadline for which has just passed). Great work Lea!

Commemorative Tree Program

The American Legion wants to buy an additional 22 trees, and there are 10 or so people on the waiting list as well. Finding planting spots is becoming a challenge. Suggestions included Pittard Park and the vicinity of the pump track. That latter area might be turned into a city parking lot, but the tree ordinance requires trees be planted in new parking lots as well. Also mentioned was the Georgia Ave side of the FFT south of Dozier, but there are questions there about the right of way.

There was some discussion about the appropriateness of siting commemorative trees on private property, as has been done with the Baptist Church. Once planted, such trees would seem to be under the control of the property owner.

Also discussed was the possibility of raising the 'price' in order to help cover the cost of maintenance and replacement (if necessary). Currently, a donation of \$100 is required for a planted tree - perhaps this could be changed to a "donation of a minimum of \$100."

Regarding the role of the Tree Commission in the Commemorative Tree program: The Mayor was asked what he envisioned, and he said that ordering the plaques was extremely helpful – this has lately been handled by Bob. Coordinating with Tom regarding planting sites would also be appreciated. Public Works will continue to plant and maintain the trees.

Tree Inventory update

As discussed previously, there are three different inventories (from 2016, 2018, and 2020), all of which are currently in ArcGIS. The crux of the problem is that Clarke County owns the data, and getting them to give us ownership has turned out to be very difficult. Seth is still pursuing this. If we can get ownership, then the data could be exported into QGIS or it could be accessed using Lea's GFC GIS login.

Alternatively, we could start from scratch and create a new inventory. Lea could get GFS interns to do this. This is an attractive option, not least because all the data could be incorporated into a single map (it is not possible to merge the existing inventories).

The final decision on this will depend in part on Seth's success (or lack thereof) in getting ownership of the existing data.

Regardless of the inventory's final form, the goal is to have an easily accessible tool by which (i) commemorative trees can be identified and located and (ii) all city trees can be managed effectively.

Recommendations / Issues for the City

- Pittard Park Trees are being lions-tailed. Apparently lower limbs are being removed to make mowing easier. A better solution would be mulch circles – good for the trees, and don't need to be mowed.
- Carolina cherry laurels are being unnecessarily removed from behind the bank building.
- Auditorium Plantings. Need to be cognizant that solar panels are going to be installed on the rooftop, but this shouldn't be a big a problem.
- Chandler Park Plantings. Shade is needed. There were trees in the original plan – are they going to be planted?

Potential ways to help:

- Discussion of possible training opportunities for Tom. For example, GFC offers courses.
- Tree Stewards: Discussion of reviving this idea – a corps of volunteers who could help maintain city trees. Holly has been working with Ag Extension to develop such a program on a county-scale. We could perhaps plug into that.
- Firefly Trail maintenance: Perhaps arborists (and soon-to-be arborists) among us (Holly, Mateo, Lea) could collaborate with Public Works to maintain trees along the trail.

► Bob will try to sound out Tom on these ideas.

Additional Note: The Mayor told us that the City was planning to move one of the Crepe Myrtles from the police parking lot, and replace it with a big oak of some sort, to provide shade in the area behind the bookstore (where the stage will be relocated).

New Members

As discussed previously, we are in serious need of new members. We can have up to 7, per the Tree Ordinance. (► Brian will send Bruce a copy of the current version of the ordinance.) Tina is interested and will submit an application shortly. A booth at the Marigold Market to raise awareness is still on the table [no pun intended].

Next Educational Event

It was agreed that planning of this event should wait until the next meeting.

Mateo's suggestion of a Tree Potluck was greeted enthusiastically. Could include 'standard' items like apple pie, as well as more exotic things like Acorn Pancakes.

Yearly Update for the City Council

► Lea is still planning to do this

SPLOST / TSPLOST Update (Information item)

Bruce is incorporating the Citizens Advisory Committee's recommendations (which include the WTC Pittard Park Perimeter trail) into a more broadly-worded document. Council will vote on this at their February meeting, after which it will be incorporated into the County's TSPLOST language.

It was suggested that the green space acquisition project that was part of SPLOST 2020 might be used to purchase the historic church parcel(s) on William Strong Ln. This is ultimately the decision of the City Council.

► Mateo will get more information and bring it to the Tree Commission. We can then decide whether or not to make a recommendation to the Council.

Tree Species List

► Still on Lea's list: collate and distribute a list of the recent changes that the Athens Tree Council has made.

March Gazette Entry

► Mateo will put this together. He's thinking of highlighting the "Second Life of Trees" – i.e. dead trees as habitat and resource for others.

Tree Planting this Spring

Lots of commemorative trees will need to be planted this spring. It was agreed that an informal "CTP working group" might help.

▶ Bob will get with Tom and schedule something via email as appropriate.

[2/3/22: Bob has arranged a meeting with Tom on Tues Feb. 8 at 2:00 PM]

Our next meeting is set for Mon., March 28, 2022 at 5:00 PM via Zoom. This will be a public meeting.

▶ Bob will put together the agenda and run this meeting.

It was suggested that we might hold some breakfast meetings at the Community Center, once we can meet in-person again. General enthusiasm for this idea.

The meeting ended at 6:17 PM.