

Winterville Tree Commission

Thurs., Jan. 12, 2023, 6:00 PM

Via Zoom

Meeting Minutes

Present: Tina Mills (Chairperson), Brian Binder (Secretary), Ande Burke, Mateo Fennell, Brian Herndon

Non-Voting Members: Bob Bonsall (advisory), Susan Russell (ex-officio)

Visitors: Caroline Riggins

Approval of Minutes

The minutes from the Oct. 13, 2022 meeting were approved.

Membership

Welcome again to Brian Herndon and to Ande Burke as the newest members of the Commission. Ande was approved as a member of the Tree Commission at the Nov. 2022 City Council Meeting.

Holly Campbell has resigned her advisory membership. See item below about commemorating her service on the Commission.

Tree Ordinance

Susan feels that although the ordinance is pretty good overall, it would be worthwhile to include more language regarding specific best practices for tree planting, etc. There was general agreement that this is a good idea. ► Susan will work on this; she expects to be able to distribute draft revisions in about 2 weeks.

Arborist Report

A member of the public brought concerns about a tree in Pittard Park to City Hall. Susan confirmed that the tree needs to come down. The area is taped off, awaiting this work.

Susan will meet with Tom Doonan shortly to discuss how she can best help him care for trees in the City.

Tina & Susan have been looking around for new planting sites for Commemorative Trees. One area might be on the edge of Pittard Park along Parkview, where there are a number of dogwoods that are in poor condition. These could be removed to make room for new trees.

► The Commission voted to support this idea.

Georgia Tree Council Meeting Nov. 2-3, 2022, Rome GA (Tina - Information Item)

Tina had a great time at the meeting. She met Roger Cauthen (our old city arborist) and Seth Hawkins (our old GFC Community Forester), and reports that Winterville was well-represented at the meeting. She also met some folks from the Athens Tree Council, and she thinks it would be worthwhile for us to meet with that group sometime in the near future.

Among other things, Tina learned about a federal program that funds tree-related community projects. We would be eligible to apply if we come up with an appropriate project. The program is intended to help under-served communities/groups, and to help mitigate climate change. Tree-canopy projects would therefore be relevant. Susan added that there may be fire-related funds available to communities under the same program.

Tree City USA, Tree City of the World, and Growth Award applications (information item)

Tina and Brian B. have been working with Lea to get these applications submitted. It's just some paperwork – nothing too onerous. We should be able to do it ourselves next year. [See Arbor Day event below, for further Tree City USA -related info.]

Past Events (Tina)

The commemorative tree celebration / tree-product-pot-luck (10/16/22) was fun, although only one non-Tree Commission person (or family member) attended. Thanks to everyone for bringing dishes, especially Bob for his 'butties' and Marilyn for all her delicious treats. Brian H. gave a nice talk about the huge white oak next to the police station, honoring Don Bauer & Family – Tina filmed this and posted it on YouTube (<https://youtu.be/VJiP0nk5uDo>).

► We agreed that we should do this event again this year, and make a more concerted effort to attract donors and honorees.

"Bring one for the chipper" (1/7/23) was a success. Tina and her dog accepted 13 Christmas trees for recycling, and gave out ~25 seedlings.

Commemorative Tree Program

Brian B. has updated the Commemorative Tree database [soon to be posted on our google drive] and produced an interactive map of all the commemorative trees (<https://winterville-trees.github.io>).

As discussed at our last meeting, adding physical numbers to each tree will help people identify and keep track of them. We agreed that pre-numbered aluminum tags are a good solution.

► Bob will order 200 tags. Once we have them in hand, we can arrange a time for a group of us to get to work attaching them.

Patsy Chandler paid for two commemorative trees that are currently growing in her yard. Tom said he could transplant them in February. It would be good if one of us could assist him.

► Susan said she would do this, her schedule-permitting.

Where will these trees be planted? As mentioned above, Tina & Susan have scouted out some possibilities. We agreed that Patsy should have some say, so ► Tina will contact her with a few location choices.

Commemorative Trees on Private Property

Doug and Diane Shover of 400 N. Main St. submitted an application and payment for 2 commemorative trees to be placed in their front yard – right next to the Firefly Trail. With the exception of the Baptist Church, there are not presently any commemorative trees on private property. Although we agreed that encouraging tree planting is a good thing, a number of issues regarding planting commemorative trees on private property were raised and discussed. Susan said that spending public funds to improve private property is generally illegal. Once planted, who will be responsible for the care of the trees? Are there liability issues? If we allow this now,

could any citizen sponsor a tree on their property regardless of its location or accessibility to the public?

In addition to these issues, there seems to be a technical problem in that the Shover's used an old version of the commemorative tree application, and therefore paid less than the prices shown in the current application. Furthermore, even the current application is based on outdated tree pricing. [The current version can be viewed here:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/12IXZpZdODrsm6EED6uPS8PXt6ru9oIT/view?usp=share_link].

We agreed on the following path forward:

- ▶ Tina will contact the Shovers to let them know that we haven't forgotten them, and we are trying to work this out.
- ▶ Tina will consult with the City Attorney to get his input on the issues raised above.
- ▶ Tina & Susan will contact the White Oak Nursery (and perhaps others) to get current pricing on the species we commonly offer.
- ▶ Susan will distribute some examples of how other cities have dealt with this sort of issue.
- ▶ Once all the information is gathered, Tina will follow up with the Commission to arrange for a meeting of some sort to decide how to proceed.

Tree Comm Web Page

We need a new picture for our web page (there is currently a picture of the tree-climbing event, which doesn't really reflect what we're about). ▶ Please send pictures you think would be appropriate to Brian B.

- ▶ Brian B. will contact the web administrator about changing the picture and adding links to the Commemorative Tree database and map, as well as donor/sponsor application forms.

Upcoming Events

1) Arbor Day – Feb. 20 (the Mayor's [and Tina's!] Birthday). The Mayor is keen on involving the Winterville Elementary School, which means the event will look very different than in previous years – e.g. we probably won't plant a tree. There will be zoom call at some point soon to discuss the plans; ▶ Tina, Brian B., and/or Bob will try to be on the call. It was pointed out that no matter what, the Mayor will have to read the Tree City USA proclamation (it's one of their few requirements!).

We agreed on the following events/dates:

2) Pre-Marigold Festival work day – April 22. Last year we weeded and mulched a bunch of commemorative trees along the Firefly Trail. It was great fun, and really spruced things up.

- ▶ We'll work out the details at our March meeting.

3) Tree Pruning – Sat., Jan. 28 @ 10AM. Qualified arborists among us will lead the effort to prune commemorative trees. Non-qualified people can help out. ▶ Tina will invite Tom Doonan.

4) MLK Day 2024 – we didn't plan anything this year, but agreed that we should plan a work day next year for sure.

William Strong Property

As discussed at our last meeting, there is a wooded piece of property on William Strong Ln up for sale. It is adjacent to the old Baptist Church site, which the City already owns. The idea would be to recommend to Mayor & Council that the City purchase this lot using SPLOST funds

designated for green space acquisition. ► We agreed to meet sometime soon to have a look at the property – after the 1/28 pruning event? Before our 3/9 meeting?

Additional Items

It was proposed that we honor Holly Campbell with a commemorative tree. Holly was instrumental in getting the Tree Commission established and she was its first Chair Person. She was really the driving force of the Commission during its first few years. There was enthusiastic support for this idea. ► Tina will talk to Bob (and others?) to suss out what species might be appropriate, and she may order a tree in the course of her conversations with the nursery people.

Our next regular meeting is Thurs. April 13, 2023 at 6:00 PM, at the Pittard Park Pavilion.

[Date corrected from March 9 via email on 3/8/23]

The meeting was adjourned at 7:20 PM.