

Winterville Tree Commission
Thursday, January 24, 2019
Meeting Minutes
Averil and Bob Bonsall's Residence

Present: Holly Campbell, Bob Bonsall, Averil Bonsall, Roger Cauthen, Seth Hawkins

Approval of December Minutes: The December meeting minutes were unanimously approved.

WTC webpage: Averil reported that our City webpage has been updated.

WTC Report to Winterville City Council – Update: Holly was not able to attend the presentation of the WTC Annual Report to the City Council, and asked how it was received. Averil did the presentation in Holly's absence, and Roger and Bob were present. They assured her that the Council appeared to be very interested and asked questions about the pros and cons of tree removal, and Roger gave a detailed answer. Dodd thanked us for all that we have done. *The report is attached to the minutes.*

MLK Day 'Making the Shade' Tree Planting at Winterville Elementary School: This went very well. Given the icy weather, frozen soil and frozen mulch, and very wet soil, Seth had anticipated that we would manage to plant 30 of the 47 trees. However, we had many volunteers, and by 1:30 pm all trees had been planted. Seth and Holly have been by the school since and report that all the trees are looking good. Dodd passed on to Roger a thank you card from one of the students, thanking the Tree Commission for the trees and for making the playground beautiful. Seth will provide pictures taken at the event.

Tackling tree removal along the Firefly Trail (Roger): Tree removal will be necessary, and a concern of the WTC is the public perception of this. Over-reaction by citizens could taint the acceptance of the Firefly Trail. One suggestion is to develop an artist's rendition of the changes that will have occurred five years after removal if –

- 1) Nothing is done
- 2) An interim thinning is done
- 3) Removal of all vegetation and trees that will eventually have to be removed is done – will seem heavy-handed

The economic reality of thinning the 25' construction easement – While the Trail is being constructed, all grading, grubbing, stabilization of soil – costs will be paid by the general contractor, who will know the cost in advance (Roger and Tom will ask for a quote), and this will allow us to develop a cost plan to the City under these different scenarios. Once the construction is finished, the temporary easement will revert to the City, and any later costs will have to be borne by the City. A cost assessment should help residents see why tree removal should be all done at one time.

Other considerations:

- Some areas of the easement are on sloping ground. If trees are not removed from the banks, they will eventually fall. e.g. N Georgia Avenue
- The vegetation currently provides visual and sound barriers, and there have been grumbles from some of the local residents as some of this was removed.
- Areas in front of the cut can be used for Commemorative Tree planting (so thinning would be good)
- Dodd asked about planting of azaleas – and it was thought that it would be possible to plant native azaleas
- Public Safety is important:
 - Safer trees
 - Prevention of dark pathways
 - Air flow for the health of the plants, prevention of slick paths
 - Visibility from the street
 - Buffering for homeowners

Presenting the tree removal/planting plans to the general public:

The information needs to be presented to the public in a way that is comforting and positive, not defensive. To do this, the information should be presented in as many formats as possible. Some ideas were:

- Use two descriptive scenarios – (1) doing nothing, and (2) heavy thinning
- Demonstrate how the current trees arose – not deliberate planting, but from random seeds in the area
- Using the Sandy Creek prescribed burn notices as a model, we could develop descriptive signs to place along Main Street (and elsewhere?) detailing the plans.
- City website
- A double-page spread description in the Winterville Gazette
- Town Hall meeting – after the information has been released elsewhere, and we have information on the timing of construction.

Our immediate objective:

- Get ideas written down – maybe a bullet list – and circulate to other WTC members.
- Make it sensitive to residents.
- Pull all ideas together, get the language right, use fun phrasing, and craft something that will appeal to the public.

Commemorative Tree Program Update (Roger): Eight trees have been planted; there are 36 more commitments. The present layout begins near the end of Georgia Ave. and ends in the vicinity of the Cherry Trees just west of the Bookstore. The next phase is at the far end of Marigold Lane, where there are 20+ spaces. This will be a good message about what is going to happen with the tree-planting, and will tie together the Firefly Trail and the Commemorative Tree Program.

Seth, Roger, Tom and others will be planting trees on Feb 6th-8th.

Feb 20 – Winterville Arbor Day:

A commemorative tree donated by Mayor Dodd Ferrelle will be planted in the area outside his house.

It was decided that 5 pm would be the best time to make the event as available to as many people as possible.

To encourage residents to attend we could send special invitations to all Commemorative tree donors as special guests. Also, Holly will talk to Dodd about other groups we could invite.

Perhaps Civitan?

Inviting a class from the Elementary School was discussed, but it was decided that the distance and timing probably wouldn't work.

It needs to be posted on the Winterville listserv, and sent out to the WTC and WCG groups.

Holly offered to make a poster that could be posted at e.g. Little City Diner, Off the Vine.

Elementary School Activities:

It was decided that it would be better to move the Elementary School involvement to April 26th (National Arbor Day). This would be warmer, trees would be more easily identified, and it would give us plenty of time to prepare outdoor activities. However, it will need to be discussed with school staff, and Holly will set up a meeting. It's possible this might be too close to the end of the school term.

Indoor activity – reading book to 2nd and 3rd grade students. The book has already been selected by the school.

Some suggestions for outdoor activities:

- Tree measurements
- Naming trees
- Mapping and charting the trees
- Resources – Project Learning Tree

We need to find out about funding for this.

Third Winterville Tree Tour - Saturday May 4

The date has been set for Saturday, May 4th (after Marigold planting)

Dr. Smalley is not available this year, and asked to be put on hold for next year. Dr. Coder suggested we ask Dr. Merkle, who seems very interested and by all accounts would be an excellent choice. We are waiting for a confirmation.

Holly will approach Dodd and ask if he would be prepared for us to have a reception on his front porch.

Marigold Festival (May 11th)

Holly has been approached about WTC having a booth. None of us could think of a good reason why we should need a whole booth, but we would like to have information out at the GFC booth, and possibly the Firefly Trail booth.

We will put out our Tree Tags again, since they were so well received last year, and provide Festival participants with a lot of useful information about trees.

Looking ahead for 2019 – What are our goals?

Our major thrust year-long will be the Firefly Trail and the accompanying tree issues.

- A lot is at stake, and it needs to be a “good news” story. Perhaps present it from a historical point of view, starting with the railway? Maybe ask Mary Quinn to help with this?
- Signs should be posted as soon as we can get a design together.
- The Tree Ordinance needs some attention – particularly to remove the “draft” designation.

Concerns about the regulatory aspects of the Tree Ordinance were discussed.

ATTACHMENT

Winterville Tree Commission Annual Report to City Council - 2018 January 2, 2019

Tree Commission Members - Holly Campbell (Chair), Bob Bonsall (Treasurer), Averil Bonsall (Secretary); Ex Officio - Roger Cauthen (City Arborist), Tom Doonan (City Works Manager), Seth Hawkins (Georgia Forestry Arborist)

Meetings - Held monthly except for June and October.

Events:

- **Arbor Day** (Feb.20) - Tree planting and pruning demonstration, and presentation of the Winterville *Tree City USA* sign. About 15 people participated, including our Mayor and two City Council members, City Arborist, Tree Commission, Seth Hawkins and other Georgia Forestry Commission members, and city residents. (A photo of this event appeared in the GFC 2019 planner, the Winterville Gazette, and the Marigold Festival Program).
- **Second Annual Winterville Tree Tour** (April 14)- This focused on invasive plant awareness and management in our woodlands, and was held on the property of Jack Eisenman, who kindly offered the use of his woods for this event. Information was presented at stops along the walk by three experts, and we had a demonstration of prescribed grazing by sheep. There were about 30 participants. The event was two hours long, and finished with a light reception and Q&A time. Seth provided three trees for “door” prizes. (This was held alongside the Athens Home and Garden Show, and we promoted it in and around Athens and Winterville with our own posters and outreach).
- **Marigold Festival** (May 12) - We prepared 15 tree “tags” (educational information about individual trees and their value to the environment). We received great feedback about these, including requests for permanent installation.

- **First Winterville Tree Talk (Oct 22)** - This was a pot-luck dinner meeting that followed up on the invasive plant theme of the Tree Tour. The program was introduced by Mayor Dodd Ferrelle. Tom Doonan described our Commemorative Tree Program, and Bob Bonsall gave the first presentation to set the stage for talks by our invited experts, Lauren Muller (Athens Land Trust Invasive Plant Manager), Gary Crider (Invasive plant management expert), Joey Allen (State Botanical Garden Native Plant Garden curator), Seth Hawkins (Georgia Forestry Commission), and Roger Cauthen (City Arborist).

Outreach:

- Created Tree Commission webpage on the Winterville website (Many thanks to JoAnn Snow for all her patient help!). Have also set up a WTC email address.
- Provided entries for quarterly Winterville Gazette newsletters, including tree tips and events
- Were featured on local NPR station (Bob Bonsall and Seth Hawkins chatted to Alexia Ridley to promote our Winterville Tree Talk)
- Met with the Athens Tree Council to show a PowerPoint presentation about our accomplishments, and to discuss how we might collaborate.
- Added web links related to trees and their management to our WTC webpage.

Business:

- Voted in officers and ex-officio members
- Prepared WTC Bylaws for approval by City Council
- Prepared WTC Budget for 2019
- Met with City Arborist to walk the Winterville section of the Firefly Trail and to discuss preservation/replacement of trees affected by construction of the Trail

Professional development:

- Attended the start-up meeting for NGIPC (North Georgia Invasive Plant Cooperative) - (Averil & Bob); and the follow-up workshop at Sandy Creek (Bob)
- Attended GFC annual conference (Holly, Seth)
- Visited the Augusta Arboretum to determine the usefulness of QR codes (Averil and Bob)
- GAA fall workshop (Roger)
- Visited Atlanta Beltway visit to view trees (many installed by Trees Atlanta) and garden plantings (Averil & Bob)
- Visited Mars Hill University (NC) to review progress on their arboretum walks and plaques (Averil & Bob)

Plans for 2019:

- MLK Day tree planting/ Making the Shade - at Winterville Elementary School (Jan 21)
- Arbor Day tree planting and Elementary School activity (Feb 20)
- Third Winterville Tree Tour (Spring)
- Second Winterville Tree Talk (Fall?)
- Complete the mapping and identification of the trees that make our tree canopy
- Develop a brochure for Winterville residents giving an overview of the Winterville Tree Ordinance
- Develop an arboretum walk with labels, and possibly with QR codes
- Work on some revisions of the Tree Ordinance, and request the removal of the “draft” designation
- Add more members to the Tree Commission, and increase awareness of its existence