Jacksonville Tree Commission

Amended Minutes
Friday June 28, 2024, – 9:00 AM
Via Zoom Platform & In Person
[Recording of Meeting can be obtained by sending request to Charles Hayes kennethh@coj.net]

For approval July 17, 2024

Commissioners:
Nina Sickler, Director of Public Works
Curtis L. Hart, Chair (Council Appointee; 2012-0033-A)
Susan Fraser (Council Appointee; 2022-0063-A)
John Moscarillo (Mayor Appointee; 2023-0696-A)
William Burke (Mayor Appointee; 2023-0695-A)
Alden Howell (Council Appointee; 2021-2027-A)
Chris Miller Council Liaison

Advisors:
Jonathan Colburn - Urban Forestry Manager
Justin Gearhart - City Arborist
Carla Lopera - Office of General Counsel
Jose Regueiro - Accounting

Staff: Charles Hayes

1. Call to Order
Conducted by Chair

2. Roll Call and Verification of Quorum
Conducted by Chair
Commissioners present:
Curtis Hart, Chair
Susan Fraser
Nina Sickler
John Moscarillo
William Burke
Chris Miller
Alden Holden

Quorum present (4, in person): yes

3. Call for Public Speakers (online & card):
Aldan Pepke City of Jacksonville Office of Mayor intern representing Angela TenBroeck COJ Urban Ag, Agriculture, Agro-Ecology and Land Use Policy turned in speaking card.

Action Items:

1. Prior Meeting Minutes.

Issue: The minutes for May 15, 2024, pending approval

Motion: Approved May 15, 2024, minutes
Moved by: Nina Sickler
Second: William Burke
Vote: Approved, unanimous.

2. Financial Report: Jose Regueiro Briefed Financial Highlights as of May 31. (Highlights can be found (Jacksonville.gov - Tree Commission) Stated Combined revenues were $4m, combined expenses $4m, combined revenue for May 24 $586k and combined expense $427k which created a net private sector terminology of $158k, unappropriated and unallocated including BJP were $24m and funds was approved to be moved and should show on June statement, Ordinance fund YTD has favorable net of $7K.

3. Fund Status of 630-City, Remove & Replace, and Level 2 Programs: Justin Gearhart Briefed as of June 1, 2024, remove & replace was $220,000 will go up by 2.6m once money is moved, 630-CITY $2.3m, Level 2 $3.3m, Level 3 $1.5m. This was prior to the bill passing and numbers will change but may not be reflected until July, however it will be reflected in Jose Regueiro's accounting statements.

4. Level 2 Updates:
Gearhart Briefed Kernen Blvd, Ft. Caroline Rd, Norfolk Soutel, and Whitehouse Park are off warranty. Stated Aldin Rd. did get through MBRC and is getting scheduled. Briefed completed project list that the Commission requested in the May meeting.

5. Parks Department Project Update:
Jill Enz Briefed Lift Ev'ry and Sing Park were complete, Northbank Riverwalk and Southern S-line is 80% complete but holding off on planting due to the dry weather and rain.

6. New Business:
Late Bloomers Presentation: Deborah Early Read prepared remarks (see Attachment A). **Natalie Rosenberg** suggested adopting a

policy of 10% cap of palm trees rather than 25% when using tree mitigation funding.

Motion: NONE (general discussion on recording)

Request for action/follow-up: Hart asked **Gearhart** to get the number of palm trees planted in the last 2-3 large projects and why they were used.

7. Old Business

Jonathan Colburn – Urban Forestry Manager read BRINGING ORDER TO THE TECHNICAL DYSFUNCTION WITHIN THE URBAN FOREST by James Urban article. (see Attachment 2) He went through the UF IFAS Tree Planting Site Evaluation Tool and Check list https://floridatrees.ifas.ufl.edu/FloridaTrees/site-analysis.html. Explained that the minimum design specifications for the city occurs at a couple of levels, the professional level and the level the Tree Commission wants. Asked how to facilitate getting the two levels needs met.

Motion: NONE (general discussion on recording)

8. Public Comment

Aldan Pepke City of Jacksonville Office of Mayor intern representing Angela TenBroeck COJ Urban Ag, Agriculture, Agro-Ecology and Land Use Policy stated a request to add Florida King peach and pecan trees to the approved species list. Stated they are a characteristic of this area and support the community and bring a variety of fruit and nut trees.

Motion: NONE (general discussion on recording)

Request for action/follow-up: Fraser asked that the Parks Department bring a presentation of how they will manage the fruit tree groves to include the maintenance and how this will affect their ongoing operation.

9. **Prior to Adjournment**

Request for action/follow-up: Fraser stated need to get ball rolling on the Task Force or Sub-Committee.

END OF MEETING 11:07AM

ATTACHMENT 1

Tree Commission Remarks June 28, 2024

We are here today as members of the civic and conservation committees of Late Bloomers Garden Club.

We've all been reading about the heat dome and sweltering temperatures over much of the country this summer and more importantly, we are FEELING it every day here in Jacksonville. This summer has reinforced for us the critical need for shade and the importance of the work done by this commission. Thank you for all you do for the city.

As you know, *planting trees* is the quickest, most effective antidote to heat and other climate related challenges…but *all trees are not created equal* in that regard. Palm trees vs oaks and other similar species? There is no comparison. Larry Figart, UF urban forester wrote an article wondering if palm trees are really trees at all?

After reading Mr. Figart's article and speaking with him on the phone, although it seems that you can argue both ways as to whether palm trees are more of a tree or a grass, here are some important *things to know about palm trees that are not debatable*:

1. Palm trees are more susceptible to **lethal bronzing disease** which can spread
2. Palm trees have **higher maintenance costs** than shade trees because frequent pruning and fertilization is required (and it is our understanding that we do not have the resources in Jacksonville to maintain palms as recommended)
3. Palm trees do not provide the **environmental benefits** of other trees including:
    a. **Providing Shade**
    b. **Sequestering significant amounts of Carbon**; and
    c. **Providing a habitat for wildlife**.

Oak trees, for one example, are *better at sequestering carbon* than palm trees because oaks have more wood and leaf surface area. Trees that have a more extensive root system, larger trunk and branches and a broad canopy have more biomass to store carbon. In fact, over a 25-year period, a live oak could sequester almost 14,000 pounds of carbon whereas a cabbage palm would only sequester about 461 pounds over that same time period. Oaks and other shade trees also provide *habitat and food for countless species*, from birds and insects to mammals. Trees with large canopies offer nesting sites for birds and shelter for animals, while their leaves, flowers, and fruits serve as food sources throughout the year.

We wanted to make you aware of *major palm tree-related changes being made in south Florida*. Both West Palm Beach and Miami Beach, Florida (communities that are far more associated with palm trees than Jacksonville) have *recognized the many shortcomings of palm trees*. They are being more *intentional* in their approach to tree planting and they are taking the initiative to plant other trees that are *more adept at handling changing climate conditions*.

West Palm Beach for example no longer uses their tree mitigation funds to plant ANY palm trees

Miami Beach is also joining the initiative to shift their planting priority to a variety of trees -- just not palms. Miami Beach has an urban forestry master plan which details the environmental benefits of planting shade trees, including species such as oak, ash, elm and sycamore, rather than palms.

In addition to the need to be smart about which trees to plant, these communities are also *recognizing the need to put more focus on saving the older trees* they already have. Older trees are exponentially better for stormwater runoff, cleaning the air, shade and biodiversity.

The Asks:

Some specific changes that we think you can make NOW are to:

Adopt a 10% cap on palm trees-We urge you to change the policy allowing for up to 25% palm trees to be incorporated into planting projects paid for with tree mitigation funds. We believe that 10% is a better number for palm trees paid for with public funds since these trees are more work, more susceptible to disease, and unable to provide shade or meaningful environmental benefits. We believe that *public funds would be better spent on other trees* and palms are simply not a viable tree replacement since replacing a mature oak tree with a palm tree is not a one for one swap by any measure.

- Since West Palm Beach has decided to spend $0 on palm trees, we believe that asking to limit our planting projects to 10% palms is a good compromise.
- Setting this standard would encourage developers and designers to *limit use of palm trees in the plans before they ever get to this commission* for approval thus eliminating the need to quibble over how many palm trees are included and to *encourage them to design their projects to allow for larger planting areas* or to incorporate innovations like silva cells or structural soil innovations that allow for the planting of larger trees in smaller areas.

Adopt guidelines for planting palm trees-We also request that you revisit how applicants are planting palm trees and adopt some helpful guidelines.

- We believe that palms should be treated as an accent tree only
- Rows of palms planted close together can be very *aesthetically off-putting* but also, if *disease strikes* one of the trees, they may all go. We request that more of an emphasis be placed on planting a *variety of species* to mitigate against disease problems and that you discourage closely planted rows of palms in most every case.
- With regard to applicants who desire to plant a *clump of palm trees*, we ask that those applicants be required to *demonstrate* why it makes senses to pay for *multiple palm trees* when *one shade tree* in the same spot may be a better alternative from a cost perspective and for our long-term shade canopy and climate mitigation efforts. Although clumps of palms can

provide more shade than a single palm, the fact is that the amount of shade provided by the palm clump will never increase whereas a well-placed *shade tree keeps expanding its cover* over time.

Policies to protect Mature Shade Trees-Finally, we request that you strengthen our policies *to protect mature shade trees*. The research is very clear that mature trees are superior to new ones and we must do a better job of protecting our mature trees where possible. Not only do mature trees offer more shade but mature trees have been shown capable of adapting and increasing their rates of photosynthesis in response to higher levels of CO2.

The bottom line is that shade trees simply provide *more bang for the buck*. In our time here today, we could not cover everything but when shade trees are planted in the right spot and well-maintained, they provide many *economic and social benefits* in addition to the environmental ones that we have spoken about today. We hope that this commission will adopt our proposed policies to start getting *more bang for our tree mitigation fund bucks*.

Thank you so much for your time, for all that you do and for allowing us to speak to you today. We will follow up in the next few days and get you our recommendations in writing as well as the information about West Palm Beach and Miami Beach.

Journal of Arboriculture 18(2): March 1992

BRINGING ORDER TO THE TECHNICAL DYSFUNCTION WITHIN THE URBAN FOREST[1]

by James Urban

In order to increase the success rate of trees planted in the urban environment, there must be a significant change in the way trees are planted. The wide diversity in soil conditions found within urban areas suggests that there should be modifications to planting details from one site to another. The profession of urban forestry and landscape architecture, however, continue to use the same planting details regardless of the quality of the existing soil. Further, no protocol exists to guide the decision making process to determine when to use different methodologies.

This paper will present the framework for such a methodology and a series of possible changes to the way trees should be planted. The methodology is based on quantifiable levels of urbanization and soil quality, and proposes a logical approach to the design of planting details.

A major impasse to the development of a healthy urban forest is the technical dysfunction within the professions of urban forestry and landscape architecture with respect to the details of planting trees. The average professional knows little about how a tree actually grows. They are not skilled in the mechanics and dynamics of soil, roots and water and they are not aware of the impact these dynamics have on performance. Current planting practices are designed for the most benign sites; where soil is generally suitable to support root growth, is well drained, and is available in large quantities. Unfortunately, the urban forest is a continuum of soil conditions which range from these good sites to sites that have little or no drainage and where the soil is of such inferior quality and structure that it will not allow root penetration or function.

Urban forestry practices have largely relied on tree selection or "the right tree in the right place" as the primary method to overcome more difficult sites. Current research suggests that many urban sites are so severe that no species will reliably work. Modification of the site soil and drainage capability is often the only solution to successful growing of trees. On better sites, modification of the planting area could be used to broaden the number of species that will be predictably successful.

Predictability and success are the key words. When a professional forester or landscape architect is relied upon to specify a tree planting, the person investing in the cost of the tree should have some reasonable assurance that the tree will grow to meet some predetermined level of success. It is one of our profession's obligations to either ensure that the site is made suitable for the trees' growth potential or to define for our clients how much growth they should expect out of a given tree in a given site.

Site modification, however, is expensive and requires specific solutions for each problem. Currently, there are few guidelines or standards to assist in the designing of site modification procedures. Practitioners who attempt to propose new planting details are often viewed as extravagant and individual designers often come up with widely varying solutions to similar problems. The following protocol is proposed to begin to set standards for site modification and the design of planting sites. It is designed as a guide to help predetermine how much site modification is necessary to successfully grow large trees. The protocol is based on the principle that soil is the primary factor influencing tree growth in urban areas. It is necessary for a tree to have access to sufficient rooting space in order to grow properly. Since both soil quality and soil quantity are critical to the equation, a methodology is proposed to accommodate each factor.

1. Presented at the annual conference of the International Society of Arboriculture in Philadelphia in August 1991.