

**Jacksonville Tree Commission
Strategic Planning Session # 3
November 2, 2022
10 AM**

- I. Introduction and Welcome - Chris Flagg, Tree Commission Chair
- II. Roll Call & Submittal of Speaker's Cards
 - a. A raised hand icon as well as waving at the screen will be acknowledged by Chair or Ms. Chism.
 - b. For those attending in person, paper speakers' cards will be available.
- III. Status of Forestry Grant – Justin Gearhart
- IV. Review of Draft Strategic Plan – Mary Kress-Littlepage
- V. Public Comment
- VI. Adjourn – The next Tree Commission meeting is scheduled for November 16th, at 9:30am and will be a hybrid/Zoom meeting in the Ed Ball Bldg., 10th Floor, conference room 5.

Jacksonville Tree Commission
Strategic Planning Session # 3 Minutes
Approved November 16, 2022
Via Zoom Platform and In Person

Commissioners Present:	Chris Flagg, Chair Mike Robinson, Vice Chair Susan Fraser Steve Long Rhodes Robinson	Staff:	Cindy Chism
Advisors:	Susan Grandin, OGC Justin Gearhart, City Arborist	Public:	Jameka Smith, COJ Dave McDaniel, COJ Susan Caven, Scenic Jax Lisa Grubba, Greenscape Joe Anderson, JEA Mike Zaffaroni, Liberty Landscape Kelly O’Leary, Liberty Landscape Lisa Grubba, Greenscape Nancy Powell, Scenic Jax John November, Public Trust Mary Cress-Littlepage, KBT Assoc. Fred Pope, Scenic Jax Maryanne Salas, Late Bloomers Susan Kelly, DIA Sara Gumbayan, COJ Tanja McCoy, COJ

- I. Introduction and Welcome - Chris Flagg
- II. Roll Call & Submittal of Speaker’s Cards
 - a. A raised hand icon as well as waving at the screen will be acknowledged by Chair or Ms. Chism.
 - b. For those attending in person, paper speakers’ cards will be available.
- III. Status of Forestry Grant – Justin Gearhart
 - a. There were multiple emails and general excitement for getting a Master Urban Forestry Plan through the Florida Urban Forestry Council using a federal grant. Jameka and I looked over this grant and agree it is a wonderful grant but the due date for submission is in 14 days. There is not enough time to get everything lined up to submit this year. It’s not the time required to complete the application, which is the issue, the grant requires matching funds from the City and there isn’t time to get that done. We will prepare to apply next year and will continue to look for other grants which may be available.
 - b. Mr. Anderson said the Florida Urban Forestry Council does have members which serve on the review committee and understand how the process works and can help or give advice please contact me.
 - c. Mr. M. Robinson asked if past copies of grants were available for use as examples? Mr. Anderson replied they were. After serving as a reviewer for the last 3 years, learning the vocabulary, the formatting and how the reviewers look at the applications. What categories is the City looking for? Mr. Gearhart said it’s the Urban Forest Plan.
 - d. Mr. Anderson continued, these funds have to do with new legislation and why there’s a significant amount of money. The Inflation Reduction Act is where the funds are coming from, climate change is one of the driving forces.

- e. Ms. Fraser asked Mr. Long if there was a concerted effort to be ready for the next opportunity, is that something you can help lay the groundwork so there isn't a mad dash for the deadline. Mr. Long said he would have to find out who in the grant writing office would support that. Ms. Fraser said it sounds like we need to create a relationship with the grant writing office, so they are aware we are looking for grants.
- f. Ms. Grandin asked if the matching could be manhours? Mr. Anderson said, yes manhours, materials, personnel it's not just dollar for dollar, it may be a percentage. Mr. Long added each grant is individual, typically it's detailed what's allowed. Ms. Fraser asked if the matching was staff time, is Mr. Long the signatory authorizing staff hours dedicated to the grant.
- g. Mr. McDaniel said he would prefer to be prepared and not have to do things at the last minute. Ms. Fraser agreed. Mr. McDaniel added, they will continue to prepare for submission next year.

IV. How can we get more staff? (Attachment A)– Susan Fraser

- a. Ms. Grandin responded to the 2 questions asked at the Strategic Planning Session:
 - i. Can the Tree Fund be used to hire a COJ staff person, or a consultant, or both, to work on the design and management of the Tree Fund planting projects that the Commission, through City staff, may undertake?
 - ii. If the answer to the first question is “Yes,” then how would we obtain the funding?
 - 1. Yes, we can, but we must ensure the person or consultant focuses only on that. It must be planting trees on a specific project. For instance, we were able to use Level 2 funds to hire a design consultant firm to do the Gold Star Family Pkwy tree planting because it was a specific project. But if an employee is to be hired, part time or full time, or a consultant they need to be focused on specific projects rather than helping us figure out what the Urban Forestry Master Plan is. The City Arborist is paid out of the Tree Fund as well, so the City Arborist should be focused on planting trees. Even his time attending these Strategic Planning meetings is a little afield of what the Arborist should be doing.
 - 2. Ms. Fraser said, until the Commission says this is the broad category and this is the specific site, we really cannot use our resources; we must bring it to the brink of a project. At the last meeting Ms. Grandin likened this to a Level 3 Project; the payments don't start until the project has been approved, it's a real project. So this person must be brought to the same point. Ms. Grandin added, the project must be fully formed before it is appropriate to employ this person.
 - 3. The Settlement Agreement, which is discussed in the Attachment, does not need to be amended because it contains specific language about the hiring of additional City Staff and how that can change over time. That can mean either more or less staff and doesn't not have to go through all the parties and through City Council. The Settlement Agreement can be amended through executive function.
 - 4. If the City is going to hire someone fulltime or a consultant full time to work on this, these funds should be appropriate through the City Council so the process is transparent.
 - 5. Mr. November agreed with Ms. Grandin except there is some capacity to do some larger level planning as it relates to tree planting. What in the law stops someone from doing higher level planning related to putting trees in the ground? Why is that not a function of a position related to planting trees? Why is that person precluded from looking at things from a higher level to determine where it makes the most sense.

6. Ms. Grandin said it's a slippery slope, so be cautious. The farther afield the person would go from planting trees, the more chance is taken. If the person was hired to implement the tree fund, the purpose of which is to plant trees, but they spent a year master planning something, that wouldn't work. Ms. Littlepage suggested if that person took existing research and spent time developing a proposal to bring to the Commission, would that be acceptable? Ms. Grandin agreed it would. Ms. Littlepage continued; you can't hire someone to develop the Urban Master Plan, but you could hire someone to think about how to implement the research we already have. Ms. Fraser said this opens a door I wasn't aware of. Ms. Grandin agreed.
7. Ms. Grandin added, the reason I'm suggesting going through City Council to appropriate the funding instead of just using funds from a program it the more open we make the process, if we do get sued, it would be helpful to be able to say, everyone had a chance to stop it and no one did.
8. Mr. November said he thought the new staff person's major role was to empower the Tree Commission specifically. Almost acting as Staff or the Commission when it comes to planting. I'm not sure how to make sure the Tree Commission is feeling adequately supported. My biggest fear is the Commission does not feel adequately supported from a Staff perspective. I would think this position would be different than the City Arborist position and include a special element of being supportive of Tree Commissioner's requirements.

V. Review of Draft Strategic Plan – Mary Kress-Littlepage

- a. Mr. Anderson said with the Florida Forest Service grants discussed previously, they look at 4 basic principles under Urban Forest Management they look at Staffing, Ordinance, Advocacy and Planning (SOAP). They will support, through those grants and other resources everything in the report. The design of an Urban Forest Management Plan, the private lands, and the issues there, that's where the Advocacy principle comes in. When discussing an Urban Forest Management Plan, don't forget Duval County does have a Forest Service Representative, John Johnson, who can help understand the grant money and the processes that other communities have used for their Urban Forest Plan. Because the City is not applying for a grant there is no conflict of interest, Mr. Will Liner, John Johnson's supervisor, is assembling the review staff, now would be a good time to volunteer for review staff. It would be a good opportunity to see how the process works. It does take time.
- b. Ms. Littlepage said we would add a reference to working with the Florida Forest Service in Goal #3 about developing Urban Master Plan.
- c. Ms. Grandin asked what the qualifications are. Mr. Anderson said they will be looking for certified Arborists, as a diversity of different people. Mr. Gearhart asked when are the meetings? Mr. Anderson said when he served last year, he worked 40 hours within a 2 week period.
- d. Mr. November suggested spending more time to determine the contents of a Master Plan. What does it really look like. Perhaps time and/or money should be set aside to pay a consultant to advise us what's included in the Master Plan so when the grants are applied for, we know what to ask for. When I asked Plan-It GEO, they said they could but then asked what I wanted. It's not clear exactly what that looks like. Ms. Fraser said the grant for the Urban Forestry Master Plan from the Florida Urban Forestry Council lists what is included. We could emphasize and deemphasize things but it's a standard table of contents.
- e. Ms. Powell said her experience in discussing Master Plans in a variety of contexts is there is a wide range of perceptions of what is a Master Plan. We've seen some from other cities, I would be interested in knowing if \$20,000 gets us a Master Plan. Or what kind of level of Master Plan will that get us versus what we saw in Cedar Rapids or Boston. Perhaps the group has the information of these

are the plans which have been done we like, how much was this one, how much was that one, how long did it take, how far along are we in getting basic data. There is a lot of work to be done around the scope, so we get something actionable, not just a 5-day project. Using the words Master Plan is always risky, is there another way to describe it? We know what we want, when I looked at the Boston plan, I knew immediately that was what I wanted but how do we get there. The Cedar Rapids plan was also very good. There are others out there, what are the good models we like and how do we get one for us.

- f. Ms. Fraser said, so we don't lose the thread, an immediate goal which is in our plan is obtain an Urban Forestry Management Plan. It looks like we are going to defer that to an application cycle next year, which is appropriate. So maybe our immediate goal is to define the scope of work involved in an Urban Forestry Master Plan.
- g. Ms. Littlepage said the goal is going to stay at obtaining the plan but under the Strategy we will add some action steps relevant to the comments today about defining what kind of plan, identifying good role models for that plan, figuring out ways to connect with the Forest Service using that as a guide. Ms. Fraser asked is it appropriate at this time to form subcommittees to focus on the issues? Ms. Littlepage said think about the contents of the plan separately from implementation. Let's get the changings from this meeting incorporated into the report in time for the next Tree Commission meeting. If it's adopted, that is the point to determine implementation, if subcommittees are necessary.
- h. Ms. Powell said the mission statement is a little flat. Perhaps something like this: "The Tree Commission seeks for Duval County a replenished and expanded tree canopy that provides protection from heat and climate change, addresses previous inequities and is beautiful and healthy." It needs to say more. Mr. Zaffaroni suggested including economic, somehow stressing economic importance of this beautiful tree canopy. It implies investment in the City, there's a multitude of benefits by creating more shade, you are creating a better environment for people to live which then makes it more desirable, which then increases the desirability of people to come here. Mr. Flagg agreed and said he likes the word return attached to economic. Economic return on the value added.
- i. Ms. Caven suggested adding "The Tree Commission seeks for Duval County the benefits of an economic return of a replenished" Ms. Fraser said using the word beautiful for some is a trigger for "extra." If we are trying to reach people who think extra is extra, we should be focused on the basics than quality of life, health benefits, economic benefits, so we are contributing to the value of the community in a variety of ways. Beautiful will be an outcome of that. Ms. Powell pointed out that with regards to the word economic, it's not like the City is investing its own money, we have money because people have cut down trees and then we are trying to put those back. If we get the City to pay for an Urban Forest Master Plan than that's an investment, right now we are taking money from the developers and putting it back again.
- j. Ms. Fraser said the word replenished addresses that; we are losing, and we are replacing. It may cause us to be closer evaluators to what we are losing and are we getting it back. Ms. Littlepage said the only other thing missing which the group had mentioned was the notion of public support. Ms. Fraser agreed, it needs to be explicit. There is an education component which we haven't done that would help a lot in seeking funds from the Council if their constituents are in support, it's a big conversation, we can do better.
- k. Mr. Flagg suggested just adding additional words and phrases as bullet points and Ms. Littlepage can rephrase it. Mr. Anderson suggested adding sustainable and resilient. None of the liabilities are being addressed, with a Master Urban Forest plan the benefits are maximized, and the risks are minimized.

- l. Mr. M. Robinson suggested adding the word robust: "...seeks for Duval County a robust tree canopy..." which covers regenerated and expanded. Something that is robust is something growing, healthy, and strong.
- m. Ms. Powell asked if fourth quarter 2023 was correct for the Strategy #1 C.? Ms. Littlepage said currently the City is in the 2023 budget cycle already, it's too late to add a position now for the budget that starts next fall. Ms. Powell replied, if you wait until fourth quarter next year it will be 2024. Mr. Long suggested revising the statement, to get staff hired, for fiscal year 2024 which begins October 1 of 2023 and omit the quarters. Ms. Grandin pointed out if the funds come from the Tree Fund, why can't it be the next Council meeting? Ms. Littlepage said this is additional staff which may not be funded by the Tree Fund.
- n. Ms. Fraser said we don't want to ask for funding until we have created relationships with the Council Members. If we will spend January of 2023 through the summer building relationships and at the same time say we need a staff member. Ms. Powell added there is a Council election going on, so we won't know until May who the Council members are. We do have a Council representative who happens to be the Vice President of the Council. So visiting 19 Council Members plus 10 candidates, seems out of reach. Mr. Flagg said it seems our 5 years existence, trying to introduce ourselves, we should have earned a little bit of a spot to ask. We want to be more robust and to be that we need additional staff. Ms. Fraser added, if we are going to get the Tree Commissioners to tread the beaten path, even just to say Hi here is who I am and what we do, is then at the same meeting we are saying, quickly, we have found ourselves under-resourced to do it right. Ms. Caven added this is what we have done, this is how much we have spent, this is how much we have saved you. This is the most understaffed Forestry Division in the country. Ms. Powell suggested more sense of urgency, be bolder, look for more leadership, look for staffing from the Tree Fund and the City Council, get a good Urban Forestry Plan and be bold.
- o. Ms. Grandin said if the Tree Commissioners are going to speak to Council members they need to "sing off the same song sheet." Just be mindful of that. Ms. Fraser said perhaps the immediate thing we should do is create the talking points so there is consistency is what's said, the information is accurate, there is graphics or whatever to support that debate because then we would be ready. We are all willing but perhaps not prepared. Ms. Littlepage said that is listed in Strategy #1 A.
- p. Ms. Grandin asked if that was a subcommittee. Ms. Littlepage reminded the Commission that's decision for after the decision to accept the recommendations of the report. Ms. Littlepage said she will incorporate everything discussed today and have a revised report distributed in time for the next Tree Commission meeting. Mr. Flagg said then the Commissioners and Stakeholders will have an opportunity to re-comment on the refined strategy and then it is voted on. Ms. Fraser suggested perhaps the Commissioners could review the report beforehand and decided what needs subcommittees so the meeting can move quickly.
- q. Mr. McDaniel said he wanted to update the Commission on the financials: Since the inception of the Ordinance Code Fund 15F the City has collected \$71,172,000. We have spent \$44,408,000. The Charter Fund 15N has collected \$8,000,000 and spent \$259,000, which is more restricted. Perhaps there should be a Level 2 Charter Fund so when we are going to plant trees on a project which are approved through this fund, we could use it. Currently there is approximately \$16,000,000 combined and available to appropriate \$9 M in 15F and \$7.6M in 15N. Mr. Flagg said we need to be very careful and we need to see a financial plan and a productivity plan.
- r. Ms. Littlepage said, 'available to appropriate' may not be the same as 'fund balance.' Ms. Grandin agreed and said the difference is 'available to appropriate' is the amount of money we could appropriate and put in a different bucket for Level 4. The difference between the 'fund balance' and the 'amount available for appropriation' is all the money that we have already put into Level 2,

Remove & Replace, 630-CITY, and Level 3. Mr. Gearhart said part of that money comes from retainages, each project has a 20% retainage. Some of the projects are 1 year, some 3 months a lot are 2 years because of the conditions. There are a lot of projects with retainages which is part the available but not for appropriation. Ms. Grandin said the big challenge is going to be the Finance Department puts together the big numbers but only Justin and Dave know the Level 2, Level 3, Remove & Replace, and 630-CITY balances are. There will have to be a merging. Mr. Lee Dupree, Public Works Assistant Financial and Administrative Manager, Mr. Gearhart, and Mr. Regueiro will have to meet to discuss to determine how a financial report can be generated that not only has the overall view and how it's broken out. Ms. Chism suggested tabling the discussion until the scheduled Tree Commission meeting.

- s. Mr. Long pointed out there is a finance person assigned to the Tree Commission. They should be invited to the meeting and present the accurate and up to date report. They can explain it. In addition, Mr. Gearhart, and Mr. McDaniel can look at the outstanding projects and any with a differential and determine how much that is.
- t. Ms. Fraser asked Mr. McDaniel if there was a way for him to tell the Tree Commission what percentage of his Forestry section's manhours are utilized for the Tree Commission. Ms. Littlepage said the challenges for the Commission is to get the financial and the production work done. We don't have the data to discuss what percentage the canopy is now, what the losses have been and what the existing is beyond what the various research reports have said. If that is the kind of statistical analysis you are looking for then that is what you should discuss for the Urban Forest Master Plan, that is not part of the Strategic Plan, the strategy may be, we need to know that but we need the expertise to do whatever kind of measurement we choose to use.
- u. Mr. November said if there is some consensus that we are going to add another person from the Tree Fund, perhaps this forum may provide an opportunity to discuss how the Urban Forestry Managers position responsibilities would change since the burden of planting trees would fall on this new position, may that Urban Forestry Manager could do more to support the Tree Commission. Because that position is not paid from the Tree Fund, perhaps there is a way for that person to fit into a role of being more supportive to the Tree Commission as well. Ms. Fraser said that is more the subcommittee who develops strategies to add staff and then spend a month mapping out who we have and what their job descriptions are. It is understood that with the addition of staff we need to recognize how responsibilities may shift. Ms. Littlepage asked if we wanted to chase all these opportunities at once? Apparently, there is clearance to hire a consultant or temporary staff with some of the Tree Funds to do specific planting projects, that's 1 way to increase staffing resources. There is the opportunity to add permanent staff within the division, do you want to pursue both of those at the same time or one at a time.
- v. Ms. Fraser said this Commission is reactive. We haven't set the Commission's priorities. We say to the staff, spend the money and hope that their priorities reflect ours, but we have not articulated them well enough to hold them accountable. They are doing a great job, spending the money. They are more than happy to fulfil our priorities if we tell them what they are. That's really the purpose of the Strategic Planning. Perhaps an immediate goal, which can fulfil a gap between the Master Plan, which is going to be a year from now, that we look at the Tree Commission reviews it's existing criteria and expands that criteria for review of projects so we clearly give direction. When the staff presents projects, it's where we want to go.
- w. Ms. Littlepage said that thinking was behind that short-term goal of taking a proactive data driven approach. For the Commission to say here is the data we have from all these different studies, this is what we are interested in. That perhaps needs some amplification, during that, targeting the priorities in advance of a master plan and really focusing on those and providing some direction. Ms. Fraser continued, Strategy #5 is during the next 12 months, so perhaps Strategy #5a says in the next

90 days we will review the existing criteria and put at least that step into place. Then as the Staff tries to fulfil those goals, the process could be adjusted.

- x. Ms. Fraser there are many strategies in this report, is it our goal in this process or after this is adopted to prioritize which ones are most important. For instance, Strategy #7-“Establish an annual plan for meeting with policymakers...” At some point we’ll need to say to our lone staff person, please put this on your plate for the next 90 days, item C. we will do in the 90 days after that, a timeline to accomplish these items. Is that something we do after the report is approved and then we start mapping out the implementation. Ms. Littlepage added that’s where it would be important to look at those immediate goals, whether it’s data or Urban Master Plan, do we want to have a subcommittee of 2 or 3 people who are going to tackle specific items. Ms. Fraser said we could look at the table of contents, and the data we have, and decide we have 3 data sets which are incomplete or data, that can be done while waiting for the consultant. Perhaps in December, since there will not be a Tree Commission meeting, there could be some workshops to plot timelines.
- y. Ms. Grandin suggested a timeline, perhaps by the next meeting for Strategy #2.A. The information is there from the Finance Dept. side and the Mowing & Landscape side they just need to come together. Ms. Littlepage said it’s not just a question of gathering the information, it’s figure out how to present it so that it’s clear to everybody. What do you want in that monthly financial report that will make sense? Ms. Grandin said her request to the Finance Dept. was to make it look like a for-profit company person would understand, not the municipal accounting system lingo. They agreed.
- z. Mr. Anderson suggested getting information to the public on what the Tree Commission is and what is available. When you develop a plan and are trying to sell it to the community, remember that our community is also JEA customers and JEA could help send a consistent message out not only from the City but coming from JEA. We could align some of the messages in with JEA’s communications with customers and be consistent and help get the message out. We have social media contacts, advertisements, keep us in mind and we will try to help you out. If you must go before City Council to pitch an idea and you would like a JEA representative in the room, let us know. Ms. Fraser said expand our partnership with JEA.
- aa. Mr. Flagg asked who takes point on media communication, is that Staff? How do we know when the best time? Mr. Gearhart said unless it’s directly related to trees my role is limited unless it’s a 630-CITY question, I don’t know how much my role can support communication about trees and Tree Commission. Ms. Grandin added for 630-CITY would be appropriate for it to go out in a JEA bill or social media because “pick the right tree for the right place! You do not want to plant an Oak Tree under your power lines.” Mr. Flagg added, we need a promotional person. Ms. Chism said the City does have a public affairs office which we could contact and ask for their help in putting out advertising. However, we must be careful to manage expectations, so we don’t have so many requests we cannot fulfil them in a timely manner. Ms. Fraser said we can talk to City Council and say we need more staff, there is a demand for our services for the trees, we literally don’t have the staff to process the applications from your constituents. It’s not like no one wants what we have to offer, it’s just the under-resourced issue is so huge.
- bb. Mr. Zaffaroni said if the Commission feels the 630-CITY program is an effective way to allocate dollars, and wants to continue, it historically has been a good way to do it. There were a few times people had waited too long so we set a new expectation with a flyer or email which said within 6 months you’ll get a tree, which gave Staff enough time to evaluate the area and gave us enough time. We have worked through a lot of the issues which came up initially and the process is much smoother. If that is a desirable way to continue to spend these funds, I would suggest advertising. Whether it’s new or social media it does seem a good way to promote the program especially if it dovetails with the request for an additional staff member to provide the support.

- cc. Mr. Gearhart said all the accounting information is there it just seems to the priorities have been inconsistently shown. There have been 3 or 4 financial pages, the numbers have always been there but what's discussed and shown has always been the larger number of available but not necessarily what's available for allocation; what do we have to spend. Just showing what we can spend is putting the correct priority on what we should be showing and consistently showing that so it's transparent. From a legal standpoint we should show the overall revenue somewhere, but for what's important to us, it's really those 4 buckets.
- dd. Mr. Zaffaroni agrees the numbers have always been listed however they do have to be "dug out." There have been situations where the buckets have become empty. To fill it back up, you must go through City Council which takes about 6 weeks. Those kinds of gaps are operational challenges. The strategy of working to improve the quality and the availability of the data related to the finances specifically, is important.
- ee. Mr. McDaniel asked Ms. Grandin if what is shown on the Mitigation webpage is required from Settlement Agreement? That is how much City Council controls right now. The Council has already given us the funds sitting in the Program buckets (allocated), it may not be tied to a specific project yet, but it is ready for projects approved by the Tree Commission. How do you want the information presented?
- ff. Mr. Long added, Mr. Gearhart, and Mr. McDaniel and I will meet before the next Tree Commission meeting and generate a few different spreadsheets with the information presented in different ways and the Commission can decide. Ms. Fraser said the information from Mr. Gearhart is at the operations level, but we also need policy level; the 2 funds combined received X dollars in revenue in fiscal year 2021; what was it in 2020, is there a trend is it going up or down yearly. At the end of the budget year, we need to know how much we've spent for that year and be able to compare it to last year. Mr. Long said that must come from Finance, the operational numbers can be done by Mr. Gearhart. Ms. Littlepage agreed, both sets of the numbers are necessary, for communication, public education as well as advocacy with policy makers.
- gg. Ms. Grandin said the Finance Department has no idea what is in the 4 Program buckets, that's why the report must be "blended" report. Mr. Pope said perhaps the term to use is Amount Appropriated. The Appropriation from the City Council can either be a lump sum budget, like Level 2, or individual projects. That would give the whole list of funds available. Then a list of projects which have purchase orders issued that would then show how much has been allocated to a project.
- hh. Ms. Grandin drew a graph on the whiteboard (attachment); there's the allocated amount, encumbered and what's available for each of the 4 programs. Then available for appropriation is what shows on the financial report listed as available for funding, that's the amount the City Council would need to appropriate from to one of the program buckets, or a new bucket. Or as an individual appropriation to special project. Ms. Fraser asked if the available 15F that's of the funds allocated by the City Council. Ms. Grandin corrected, appropriated by the City Council. The City Council appropriates funds, and Mr. McDaniel said, we allocate it to projects. Ms. Grandin continued, then it's encumbered with a contract or purchase order. Mr. McDaniel added that in my division, once the Commission approves it, the funds are encumbered. Allocated and encumbered are almost synonymous to us.
- ii. Mr. Anderson said the Florida Forestry Service has a monthly newsletter called In a Nutshell. Announced inside is a new resource, a book which became available by Dr. Robert Northrup and the Florida Forest Service on Urban Forest Management Planning. It's free and I will send the link to Ms. Chism for distribution.
- jj. Mr. November said he was proud of what has already been accomplished by Tree Commission and Staff. It's good that we want to make things better but don't forget all the good things already done.

Mr. Flagg agreed and added that does get lost in the shuffle. We all get frustrated because we feel as if we are not making progress quickly enough. We are trying to get the process right and keep the momentum going. That's why this is a critical junction point within this Commission's lifespan.

- kk. Mr. Pope suggested one of the short-term goals be to establish funding specifically for maintenance of young trees planted within the last 20 years using the general fund and tree fund. There are all these newly planted trees, there are some allocations for that but there should be more emphasis to guarantee our investment over time. Also, 2 terms have been used Urban Forestry Master Plan and Urban Forestry Management Plan, which is it. Ms. Grandin suggested there must be a Master Plan before you know what you are managing. Mr. Flagg pointed out there is already a note under the category of short-term goals to increase the current levels of funding for maintenance. Young trees were not mentioned specifically. Ms. Littlepage will make that addition.
- ll. Mr. November added, it seems a major take-away from this is that we will move forward with hiring an additional City Arborist role to plant more trees. At the next Tree Commission meeting can we create a subcommittee to develop the job description so by the January meeting it could be presented, and we could move forward. Mr. McDaniel suggested not creating a new job description but using the one for Mr. Gearhart's position and hiring another, which is what he would like. Before COVID there were discussions with Mr. Pappas about hiring another staff member. Mr. Long and I need go over the previous conversation with Mr. Pappas and myself. We don't necessarily need a subcommittee it may just be what we would be willing to present. For instance, if we have another Arborist position, 1 Arborist can come to the Tree Commission meetings or completing Grant Applications while the other is doing inspections in the field.
- mm. Mr. Flagg said on the finalized Strategic Planning Report will be on the Agenda for discussion so please read it beforehand. I want some action items to get done. Ms. Littlepage you could anticipate possibly appointing a subcommittee to do X. It sounds like you will address the financials already, what about the production numbers. You could anticipate 2-3 task assignments. Mr. Flagg said my 3 points are the Final Draft Approval and Review, Priorities identified, and subcommittees also identified. Do the subcommittees only contain Commissioners, what about the Stakeholders? Ms. Grandin said for a subcommittee of a Commission, at least 1 member of the Commission must be on it and they are the Chair. Ms. Fraser suggested in the email with the Final Report, sent before the meeting, the Commissioners be asked to review the report and identify their top 3 issues for subcommittee consideration and which subcommittee they would like to serve on.

VI. Public Comment

None.

- VII. Adjourn – The next Tree Commission meeting is scheduled for November 16th, at 9:30am and will be a hybrid/Zoom meeting in the Ed Ball Bldg., 10th Floor, conference room 5.

INTRODUCTION

The Jacksonville Tree Commission, established July 2017, is an advisory commission to the City of Jacksonville created “to study and make recommendations to the Council regarding the planting of trees and the health of the city’s tree canopy.”¹

More practically, the Commission was created to expedite planting of trees across Duval County to replace those lost or destroyed due to development and other causes. While the City’s tree mitigation fees had resulted in an ample fund to support new tree plantings -- \$21 million as of Feb. 8, 2018² -- the City was struggling to deploy those funds in a timely manner.

“Because the dollars are being paid into the mitigation fund at a much more rapid rate than they are being expended they are not fulfilling their intended purpose,” said then-Councilman John Crescimbeni during the first meeting of the Commission³. “We are gathering green but it’s green sitting in a bank account but it’s supposed to be green sitting on public property.... I anticipate an opportunity to... come up with some kind of plan that pushes in the direction to disperse those funds and get them out of the bank account and into the ground.”

Despite the best efforts of the Tree Commission, almost five years later this challenge remains.

The Commission directs funds into **four programs** that not only allow the City to maintain existing trees on public property, but allow residents, city agents and public agencies, and community organizations to initiate planting of new trees on public property throughout Duval County.

Between 2019 and 2021, the Commission approved planting almost 9,000 trees (including about 900 that were replacements for sick or injured trees) at a cost of more than \$14 million⁴.

Yet as of August 31, 2022, the City’s tree funds held \$33.6 million⁵.

The businesses, developers and others who have paid tree mitigation fees have a reasonable expectation that the funds be used responsibly and in a timely manner.

Moreover, the City’s expanded efforts to address resiliency and mitigate for climate change and sea-level rise will require greater attention to the urban forest and, in all likelihood, accelerate strategic efforts to expand the tree canopy.

Mindful of these, and other, challenges, the Tree Commission conducted a series of workshops in fall 2022 to better understand the current circumstances and causes, and develop strategic recommendations to address them.

This report lifts up **XXXX issues** confronting the City and the Tree Commission, and potential remedies.

¹ Ordinance 2017-397, attachments to minutes of Tree Commission meeting Jan. 9, 2018.

² Jaxtreemitigation.coj.net as of Feb. 7, 2018, attachments to minutes of Tree Commission meeting Feb. 8, 2018.

³ Minutes of Tree Commission meeting Jan. 9, 2018.

⁴ Tree Commission presentation to City Council November 2021.

⁵ Tree Commission Combined Financials, Minutes of Tree Commission Sept. 21, 2022.

JACKSONVILLE TREE COMMISSION – DUTIES

(Sec.94.106, *Ordinance Code*)

TO DEVELOP AND MAINTAIN A TREE CANOPY AND EXISTING TREE INVENTORY.

Research & Data	To conduct research studies, collect and analyze data and prepare maps, charts and plans for the accomplishment of [the Commission's] purposes.
	To help coordinate the maintenance of an inventory of the urban tree canopy with an emphasis on historic trees, exceptional specimen trees and other unique, environmentally significant trees within the City.
Planting & Maintenance	To formulate a recommended priority project list, including an estimated implementation cost for each item, for tree planting and canopy maintenance, and to thereafter annually review the priority project list and report recommendations to the Mayors Office.
	To prioritize, with input from the District Council Members, proposed planting projects based on established criteria for recommendations to the Council, and, when requested, the Commission may also make recommendations on other proposed tree planting projects.
	To review expenditure proposals and plans for planting projects.
	To identify issues relative to the health and protection of public trees and recommend solutions to the problems identified.
Community Outreach & Education	To assist in the establishment of educational and outreach programs to encourage proper management and maintenance of trees on private property within the City.
	To act as a coordinator for programs, projects and activities related to planting projects and the health of the tree canopy between all public and private entities.
Administration	To recommend and help develop opportunities for the City's grant writing office for grants and solicitation of donations to support the City's tree canopy.
	To perform an annual audit of funded projects, the status of the inventory and tree permits submitted to the City to be included in an annual report to the Mayors Office and City Council.

THE TREE COMMISSION SEEKS FOR DUVAL COUNTY
 A STABLE, WELL-MAINTAINED, RESILIENT TREE CANOPY THAT IS EQUITABLY
 DISTRIBUTED, MITIGATES FOR CLIMATE CHANGE
 AND IS SUPPORTED BY AN INFORMED PUBLIC.

*Jacksonville Tree Commission and community partners
 October 2022*

IMMEDIATE GOALS

Accessing resources to adequately staff the work of the Commission.	Improving the quality of data that informs the Commission’s decisions.	Obtaining an Urban Forest Management Plan to guide future actions.
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SHORT TERM GOALS

Maintaining or increasing current levels of tree planting; ensuring adequate funds for maintenance of those trees.	Taking a pro-active, data-driven approach to tree plantings.	Monitoring development of the Urban Forest Management Plan.	Building and maintaining constructive relationships with policymakers.
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LONG TERM GOALS

Increasing the community voice in support of the urban forest.	Preserving and enhancing the tree canopy that exists on private land throughout the city.
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IMMEDIATE GOALS

(To be accomplished before year-end 2023)

GOAL #1 – Accessing resources to adequately staff the work of the Commission.

BACKGROUND: The Tree Commission has seven members – five are community volunteers, all with full-time obligations outside of their work for the Commission; two are agents of the City: a City Council representative and a representative of the City Public Works Department.

While tree planting is the most visible of the Tree Commission’s duties, it is not the only duty. Moreover, the task of enhancing or accelerating tree planting across Duval County requires many ancillary tasks, among them:

- ✓ Engaging community organizations and stakeholders who can advance ideas, adopt projects or advocate for tree canopy growth and maintenance;
- ✓ Collaborating with other City initiatives, such as resiliency, parks development, neighborhood development and others, to maximize benefits and avoid duplication of effort;
- ✓ Educating the public about the benefits of trees, teaching homeowners how to maintain a safe canopy around the home, growing the next generation of citizens who appreciate the importance of the urban forest, fostering a community culture that respects and works to preserve the tree canopy;
- ✓ Commissioning research to monitor the health of the tree canopy over time and guide the distributive planting of trees.

However, the only funds available to the Commission are those in the City’s Tree Funds, which are strictly limited to supporting planting and maintenance:

Charter Fund 15(N) is “exclusively for the planting or replanting of mitigation trees, and for their maintenance...”⁶

Ordinance Fund (15F) funds “shall be expended for providing trees and incidental landscaping and maintaining trees... The funds... may also be used to pay the salary and benefits of one City Arborist position. The City Arborist... shall be exclusively focused on the planting of trees and other activities directly supporting planting projects in the City which utilize monies from this trust fund.”⁷

To fulfill its duties and responsibly serve the City of Jacksonville, the Tree Commission needs adequate staff support. This could be achieved in multiple ways:

- ✓ Add staff to the Urban Forestry Program of the City of Jacksonville to support the work of the Commission.
- ✓ Allow Tree Fund dollars to be used to support the full range of the Tree Commission’s duties through the hiring of contract personnel.

Funding for these staffing changes could come from three sources:

- ✓ The City General Fund.
- ✓ The Tree Funds.
- ✓ Revised mitigation fees that provide funds in addition to and independent of the amount associated with the tree mitigation fee calculation.

⁶ Minutes of Tree Commission meeting Jan. 9, 2018.

⁷ Ibid.

STRATEGY #1: The Tree Commission will work with the Mayor's Office, City Council, the General Counsel's Office and others to secure adequate staffing to support the full scope of duties of the Commission.

- A. Build awareness of Commission work among City Council.

Commissioners will develop a set of talking points about the Tree Commission, the Urban Forest and opportunities to strengthen the work of the Commission.

During calendar 2023, Commissioners, in teams of two, will meet with all current City Council members, with special attention to those newly elected in 2023, and mayoral candidates.

- B. Take appropriate steps to provide additional financial support for the work of the Commission through the tree funds, either by relaxing the restrictions on use of tree funds, or changing mitigation fees to provide a revenue stream for Commission work.
- C. Advocate for additional staff to support the Commission's work.

In 4Q 2023, Commissioners will work with the City Public Works Department to draft a job description for additional staff and include additional staffing funds in the city budget for the upcoming year.

- D. Encourage the City to enhance the salary being offered for the existing Urban Forestry vacancy to attract more candidates.

GOAL #2 – Improving the quality of data that informs the Commission’s decisions.

BACKGROUND: Two important streams of data guide the decisions made by the Tree Commission:

Financial data – specifically the revenues that go into the tree funds, the expenses incurred through tree planting projects (and support of the arborist), and the net amount available for future projects, both on a monthly and year to date basis.

Through the years, changes in the selection of data reported and the format of financial reporting have contributed to a lack of transparency about Tree Fund finances.

Tree Canopy Data – specifically the changes to the tree canopy over time, by development area, council district and census block. While there is an excellent report (An Assessment of Urban Tree Canopy in the City of Jacksonville) prepared in 2017 using 2015 data, the data has not been updated, making it impossible to gauge changes over time.

The fact that the Commission has planted almost 9,000 trees is of limited use without a contextual understanding of canopy shifts over time. Additionally, there is no readily available data on the cumulative loss of trees through development. The fact that the tree funds have grown robustly suggests a high volume of tree loss.

STRATEGY #2: The Commission will work to Improve the quality and availability of data related to finances and tree canopy available to the Commission.

- A. The Commissioners will work with the City Arborist and City accounting staff to develop and implement a standardized method of reporting Commission financials on a monthly and YTD basis, and develop historical financial perspectives as necessary.
- B. The Commissioners will work with the City Arborist to develop and implement a standardized method of reporting Tree-fund-funded tree plantings on a monthly and YTD basis, and develop historical perspectives as necessary.
- C. The Commissioners will decide what benchmark they wish to use to monitor changes in the tree canopy over time, develop or identify the baseline data for that measure and develop a plan to update the data regularly.
- D. The Commissioners will formally request data from the City Planning Department regarding the loss of mitigated trees since XXXX (last five years? 2015?) by location and date lost; and develop a plan to renew the request and review the data (annually?).

GOAL #3 – Obtaining an Urban Forest Management Plan to guide future actions.

BACKGROUND: The Tree Commission has several excellent studies that provide assessments of the current state of the tree canopy and the benefits of protecting and growing the urban forest. Most of those studies recommend development of a comprehensive Urban Forest Management Plan to guide decision making and investments going forward.

[The City should] “set ambitious goals and implement a major plan for tree planting to effect stormwater, heat index and beautification.” -- *The Report of the Special Committee on Resiliency*, Jacksonville City Council.

[The City should] “develop an urban forest management plan to provide a shared vision.... [and] relate urban forestry efforts to greater citywide initiatives and priorities.” – *An Assessment of Urban Tree Canopy in the City of Jacksonville, Florida*, Plan-It GEO.

[The City should] “develop an Urban Forest Management Plan (UFMP) for the city.... A UFMP details a vision for urban tree canopy. It meshes local government and community interests to proactively manage the urban canopy and provide long term benefits. The city should develop an UFMP which describes the condition of the urban forest, the current maintenance costs, and the urban tree canopy coverage goals and methods to achieve them.” -- *Trees to Offset Stormwater, Jacksonville, Florida*, Green Infrastructure Center, Inc.

STRATEGY #3:

The Commission will work with the City grant writers and others to access funding and contract for an Urban Forest Management Plan for Duval County.

SHORT TERM GOALS

(To be accomplished before year-end 2025)

GOAL #4 – Maintaining or increasing current levels of tree planting and ensuring adequate funds are available for maintenance of those trees.

BACKGROUND: Roughly 9,000 trees have been planted across Duval County during the life of the Tree Commission, through four different tree planting programs:

Remove & Replace – removes damaged, diseased or dead trees on public property and replaces them.

630-City – plants trees on public rights of way at the request of adjacent property owners.

Level 2 Tree Planting Program – responds to requests from individuals or organizations, public or private, to plant trees up to 200 trees per site on public property.

Level 3 Tree Planting Program – provides grants to local community and not-for-profit organizations for the design, management and implementation of tree planting projects on publicly owned land.

The Tree Commission intends to work toward maintaining or increasing this level of tree-planting in the coming years.

As the inventory of trees on public property increases (it is believed that most of the tree losses throughout the county occur on private property), so does the burden for maintenance of those trees. Maintaining healthy trees is preferable to replacing diseased or damaged trees as mature trees provide the most benefits to the environment.

At present, the Tree Fund contributes to the tree maintenance budget of the Public Works Department an amount not to exceed 25% of the maintenance budget.

STRATEGY #4-1: Work with City Arborist and community partners to advance tree plantings.

- A. Maintain and advance relationships with key community partners and City agents to encourage tree planting projects enabled through the existing four programs.

STRATEGY #4-2: Work with City Arborist and Public Works Department to advocate for adequate tree maintenance budgets.

- A. In meetings with City Council and Mayor's office representatives, build understanding of the role the Tree Fund plays in maintaining the existing tree canopy and the way additional resources might be added to that program.

GOAL #5 – Taking a pro-active, data-driven approach to tree plantings.

BACKGROUND: Since its creation, the Tree Commission has responded to requests for tree plantings from City departments, other public entities (such as the Duval County School Board) and community organizations. Consequently, its work has been almost exclusively reactive.

The Commission, however, has a wealth of research that has been funded by others identifying the ways in which tree plantings can be used strategically to improve environmental and public health concerns, such as stormwater retention, air quality, heat island reduction, energy conservation, wildlife corridors, etc. Some of that research identifies areas of the county that have extraordinary needs as well as opportunities for plantings.

To date the Commission has been focused on establishing the processes associated with awarding projects to its partners. This effort is nearing completion, however, and the Commission may now focus on using the available data to prioritize and lead project selection.

STRATEGY #5: During the next 12 months, the Commission will work with the City Arborist and community stakeholders to identify and fund a Commission-initiated, data-driven tree planting project.

- A. Relying on existing research as a guide, the Commissioners will select three priority tree-planting purposes (ie stormwater retention, shade/comfort/heat island, wildlife connectivity, etc.).
- B. Working with the Arborist and/or invited key partners (ie Greenscape, Scenic Jacksonville, St Johns Riverkeeper, etc.), the Commission will select a tree-planting project that fits within those priorities, determine the appropriate programmatic home (ie Level 2, Level 3) and approve the project.
- C. The Commission will carefully track progress of the project, and monitor its impact over the next three years, with the goal of applying lessons learned to future endeavors.

GOAL #6 – Monitoring development of the Urban Forest Master Plan.

BACKGROUND: The Tree Commission has important relationships with City agents, community organizations and experts in the forestry field. Those relationships can be useful to consultants as they develop an Urban Forestry Management Plan.

The Urban Forestry Management Plan will be of maximum use to the community if it is

- Shared with the community
- Championed among policymakers and community leaders
- Implemented in a faithful and timely manner.

The Tree Commission can play a role in each of these activities.

STRATEGY #6: As the Urban Forestry Master Plan is prepared, the Commission will stay updated on progress and offer assistance as appropriate.

- A. The Commission will request regular updates on the progress of the Urban Forest Master Plan from the selected consultant.
- B. The Commission will support the presentation and roll-out of the master plan and develop a process for sharing it with the public and policymakers.

GOAL #7: Building and maintaining constructive relationships with policymakers.

BACKGROUND: For the foreseeable future, the Tree Commission's work and effectiveness will be closely tied to public policies affecting land use in Jacksonville and the elected and appointed individuals who draft and enforce those policies. If the Tree Commission is to effectively serve the people of Jacksonville, it is critical that the Commission members and the staff who support it have constructive working relationships with public policymakers.

These relationships must be nurtured and maintained over time, as election cycles come and go and the community landscape evolves and changes,

STRATEGY #7: Establish an annual plan for meeting with policymakers, sharing the work of the Commission and identifying areas of mutual interest.

- A. Identify the individuals and/or positions whose public responsibilities are relevant to the work of the Commission.
- B. Annually prepare a report on the work of the Commission to be shared with policymakers.
- C. Meet regularly with identified policymakers and influential to share information about the Commission's work and learn about policymakers' interests.
- D. Work with community partners to anticipate emerging issues and be prepared to respond appropriately.

LONG TERM GOALS

GOAL #8 -- Connecting with potential and existing urban forest supporters and increasing the community voice in support of the tree canopy.

BACKGROUND: A healthy, thriving urban forest relies upon the support of the people who live and work around that urban forest. Their respect for, their willingness to preserve and support and their vocal championship of the forest create the environment that offers the best chance for the forest to provide optimal community benefits.

As Jacksonville continues to grow in population and as the effects of climate change create new and significant challenges, the urban forest could be caught between the pressure to remove trees and the pressure to retain trees for environmental benefits. In such tumultuous times, it will be critical for Jacksonville to have an informed body of stakeholders who can advocate wisely for the urban forest in the context of contemporary circumstances.

STRATEGY #8: Build an expansive network of stakeholders who can support the urban forest.

- A. Maintain connections with known existing stakeholder.
- B. Identify potential stakeholders who are not yet at the table.
- C. Connect with those residents who request trees through 630-city via email, social media.
- D. Develop a network of urban forest experts outside of Jacksonville and remain informed about work happening in other communities.
- E. Identify strategies to expand education about the importance of the urban tree canopy in general, throughout Jacksonville and within specific communities.

GOAL #9 -- Advocating for changes that would help preserve the existing tree canopy on private lands throughout the city.

BACKGROUND: Most of Jacksonville's urban forest exists on private property. Recognizing this, Jacksonville policymakers established ordinances to protect trees on private property from demolition, requiring that those who destroyed mature trees must either replace them or pay a mitigation fee.

Through the years, however, it has become more common for those cutting trees to pay the mitigation fees than to work to replace (or preserve existing) trees. As a result, the burden of maintaining the urban forest has shifted from the shoulders of those who are diminishing it to the City of Jacksonville. It increasingly falls to the City to replace the trees that are being lost on private property.

The City, however, is limited in where it can plant replacement trees. And clearly the benefits of trees along medians or rights-of-way are not equivalent to the benefits of a multi-acre mature stand of trees.

STRATEGY #9 – Identify, enact and enforce policies, procedures and laws that more effectively preserve the tree canopy on private property.

- A. Suggest changes to the landscape code that would change the incentives for removal of trees to incentives for the retention of existing trees within residential and non-residential developments.
- B. Establish opportunities that encourage preservation of the existing tree canopy: tree mitigation bank (like wetlands); conservation easements and use restriction easements. Consider expansion of the use of tree mitigation funds to include compensation for voluntary restrictions for approved locations/projects.
- C. Educate tree maintenance companies about regulations in hopes of reducing unauthorized cutting on private lands
- D. Advocate for enforcement of existing ordinances