

Jacksonville Tree Commission
Wednesday September 16, 2020 – 9:30 AM
Approved October 21, 2020
Via Zoom Platform

**Commissioners
Present:**

Chris Flagg, Chair
Curtis Hart, Vice Chair
Ron Salem
John Pappas
Mike Robinson

Staff: Cindy Chism

Public: Todd Little, COJ
Joe Anderson, JEA
Fred Pope, COJ
Jeff Lucovsky, COJ
Anna Dooley, Greenscape
John November, Public Trust
Mike Zaffroni, Liberty Landscape
Nichole Evans, COJ

Advisors:

Susan Grandin, OGC
Joel Provenza, Finance
Kathleen McGovern, City Arborist
Richard Leon, Urban Forester Manager

1. **Call to Order** - Chair
2. **Roll Call and Verification of Quorum** – Cindy Chism
3. **Submittal of Speaker’s Cards** – Chair
 - a) A raised hand icon as well as waving at the screen will be acknowledged by Chair or Ms. Chism.
4. **Reports:**
 - a) Fund balance and encumbrance report for 15(F) (Ordinance Tree Fund), 15(N) (Charter Tree Fund) and BJP (Attachment A) – Joel Provenza
 - b) Status of Pending Tree Projects (Attachment B)– Kathleen McGovern
 - c) Fund Status of 630-CITY, Remove & Replace and Level 2 Programs – Richard Leon
 - i. Project status for 630-CITY – 2840 trees have been planted since the program started, last summer. There is approximately \$250,500 left in the account; it’s time to refill the account.
 - ii. Level 2 balance - There were 9 projects encumbered last month for \$1.2 million leaving approximately \$400,000. There are 7 projects currently in discussion with Applicants and City staff.
5. **Action Items:**
 - a) Approval of Minutes from August 11, 2020 meeting – Chair
 - i. Motion to approve minutes Mr. Pappas, second by Mr. M. Robinson, none opposed.
 - b) Proposed Level 2 Projects – Kathleen McGovern/Todd Little
 - i. Atlantic Beach Tree Planting
 1. Presentation – Todd Little
 2. Public Comment – Mr. Jeff Lucovsky pointed out as Atlantic Beach doesn’t contribute to the Tree Mitigation fund should we be using those funds to plant trees there. Mr. Pappas agreed Atlantic Beach does not contribute but the Tree Mitigation funds are to be used throughout

Duval County, so Atlantic Beach qualifies. Ms. Grandin added the Ordinance Code and the Charter both say Duval County; it's not limited only to the City of Jacksonville.

3. Vote – Motion made by Mr. Hart to approve this project, seconded by Mr. Pappas. None opposed, project approved.

ii. Harlow Blvd. Tree Planting

1. Presentation – Todd Little
2. Public Comment – Mr. M. Robinson asked how were the sites chosen, why those medians and not others. Mr. Little answered a lot came down to design and creating a pattern along there. *There were technical difficulties and the discussion regarding Compton Oaks was not recorded.* Once recording resumed, Mr. Flagg said the discussion is currently about the Compton Oak which is not on the Approved Tree list. This tree is a hybrid tree; the “mother & father” are on the list but not the “child.” Medians are difficult locations for plantings and there are 9 trees used in this planting. Mr. Little agreed and added according to his reading, the trees are very well suited to lime rock, acidic soil, and urban areas. Mr. Flagg asked if there was a cost difference between the Compton Oak and a Live Oak. Mr. Little replied the difference is very minor.

Mr. Pope asked about doing soil amendments because the plantings are in the medians. Mr. Leon replied the last 2 median planting projects did not do any soil amendments and there are no problems. Mr. M. Robinson asked if any soil samples were tested during the planning process. Mr. Little replied that soil sample testing is not usually done however what is currently growing in the area, and what the soil looks like at the ground level doesn't appear to be a problem. Currently there are sycamore, pine, red maples, red cedar and live oak trees growing in the medians. The rule of thumb is to look around and see what's growing naturally and well and choose trees based on that. Mr. Flagg added that a 2 year warranty provides a safety net.

3. Vote – Motion made by Mr. M. Robinson to approve this project, including the Compton Oak as a test to see how well it does, seconded by Mr. Pappas. None opposed, project approved.

c) Equestrian Center Level 3 Application – Greenscape – Deferred

A meeting was held with Staff and Greenscape to discuss formatting and labeling of the Application.

6. Old Business

- a) Commission member vacancy – Criteria: Urban Planner or Attorney, should reside in At-Large Council District 1, 2, 3, or 5 - Cindy Chism
 - i. The vacancy is posted on the Tree Commission webpage as well as a link to the Application.

7. New Business

- a) Continued Review of Commission Intent, Purpose and Duties (Attachment E)– Chair/Susan Grandin
 - i. 94.106.e – *“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.”* Mr. Leon said there is an inventory of trees but nothing designated as historic

or trees of significance. Ms. Grandin suggested the Treaty Oak would be a historical tree. Mr. Leon pointed out on the Urban Forester website there is a Tree of the Month, a geo-located tree in Jacksonville, perhaps this could be considered a tree of significance. Perhaps Tree of the Month could be used to fulfill these objectives. Ms. Grandin added **there is no definition listed for historic tree or a unique and environmentally significant tree. These need to be defined.** An exceptional specimen tree is a tree which is a hardwood tree 24" and larger.

Mr. Flagg added there was a canopy assessment done for us a year or 2 ago, perhaps that could be utilized in identifying where our stands of older live oaks are and maybe any exceptional specimen trees. We need a more specific definition for unique and environmentally significant trees. Mr. Leon suggested we don't actively search for these trees but identify them as we find them. They could then be posted on the Urban Forester webpage or as the Tree of the Month. There are currently several inventories of street trees and trees planted on City right-of-way which have been done in the last 5 years listed on the Urban Forester webpage.

- ii. Mr. Flagg suggested instead of going through each one of the duties listed below, perhaps a list of each duty and then next to it a green dot (completed), yellow (in progress) or red (not done) could be entered. This would provide a visual matrix to enable the Commission to keep track. Ms. Grandin and Mr. Flagg will generate the matrix and then provide it to staff too enter status. Mr. Pappas agrees this would be a roadmap on what has been accomplished and what has not. This along with the visual of the trees planted with a layer by City Council district, another layer for the CPACs, with the final layer the existing canopy. If it doesn't get too confusing this will be an excellent source for demonstrating the Tree Commission's accomplishments.

b) Requesting more funding for 630-City

- i. As the funds are now down to \$250,500 for this account, more funds need to be allocated. CM Salem agreed to sponsor the legislation. The last legislation was passed February 2020, for \$2 million. If \$2 million lasted 6 months, perhaps \$3 million should be requested. Mr. Leon agreed and added that the tree planting process is getting more efficient. CM Salem asked if there was a danger in the \$3 million going too quickly, should we slow the program down. Mr. Leon answered that the current pace is working well. There has been no social media advertising since the very beginning, we are running on word-of-mouth now.
- ii. Mr. Leon asked as we are going to submit legislation for more funds, perhaps we could change the wording to omit or redefine "up to 2 trees." Citizen's see they can get 2 trees and want them both whether they will fit in the right-of-way or not or they request 2 smaller trees in lieu of a larger one which would fill the canopy better. Perhaps right tree, right place principles could be used instead of a maximum of 2 trees. Because the trees are being planted only in the right-of-way, there really isn't much danger of anyone taking advantage of the program. Todd Little and Mr. Leon look at every site and some are turned down due to lack of space. Several times a large tree has been designated for the space, but the resident notices their neighbor has received 2 trees and our crew gets stopped from planting so 2 smaller trees may be planted instead.

- iii. Ms. Grandin suggested changing the language from maximum of 2 trees to right tree, right place. Mr. Flagg agreed the principles of right tree; right place gives the oversight for the program to prevent the program being taken advantage of. Mr. Pappas pointed out these trees in this program only have a warranty of 3 months after that we ask the resident to agree to water them. Therefore there are only 2 trees at risk per property owner, if we remove the restriction; we are opening the door too many more possibly being at risk.
- iv. Mr. Hart agrees with changing the ordinance to say right tree, right place. If this program becomes the 1 we want to continue in the future and if tree mitigation is bringing in \$400,000 per month and this program uses \$3-4 million a year, there will still be a surplus of \$4.8 million after the current \$25 million has been spent. At some point we will need to prioritize. How about legislation for \$2 million dollars which comes up every 6 months or is triggered by the account dropping to a specific amount, such as \$300,000. This would require a discussion about continuing the program as a priority. It is our duty to review the program periodically and not just fund it for the next year. CM Salem pointed out there were some comments about the cost of legislation. There needs to be a balance, perhaps 6 months is the time frame. Ms. Grandin added that this program could be evaluated every 6 months even if the money hasn't run out.
- v. Ms. Grandin asked if Mr. Leon and Mr. Little discuss with the resident the principles of right tree, right place. Mr. Leon responded that yes that is discussed with them as well as where the funding comes from. Mr. Little does try to make contact with the home owner at each site visit if not he will leave a door hanger. Many times the home owner requests 2 Crepe Myrtles instead of the Live Oak recommended. Ms. Grandin agreed the legislation could be amended to reference right-tree, right place. Mr. Hart made a motion for legislation requesting \$2 million to refund the program, update the ordinance to remove "maximum of 2 trees" and replace it with right tree, right place principles. Also, the program will be evaluated every 6 months for priority. Seconded by Mr. M. Robinson, none opposed.

8. Public Comment

- i. Anna Dooley, Greenscape – If there were some mechanism in place to simplify the Level 3 Application process for non-profits. Historically Greenscape would meet with whoever initiated the request, lay out the plan, funding would allocated, which would be administered by Mr. Pope, everything went very smoothly. This current process is very onerous for a non-profit. Any adjustments would be most appreciated.
- ii. Joe Anderson, JEA – the Florida Urban Forestry Council has opened the award nominations, the deadline is November 20th. There are very few programs operating at the level Jacksonville is operating. To have planted nearly 3,000 trees within a year, it's incredible. This is an opportunity for this Commission to be nominated for a State Award. 630-City did receive an award last year. Mr. Anderson will send an email.

9. Adjournment – the next ZOOM meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, October 21.