

Jacksonville Tree Commission  
Meeting Minutes February 22, 2018  
Approved on March 8, 2018

**Commissioners:** John Crescimbeni, Chair  
**Present:** Curtis Hart, Vice Chair  
Jeremy Cooper  
Aaron Glick  
John Pappas

**Public:** John November  
Joseph Anderson  
Tracey Arpen  
Anna Dooley  
Alicia Grant

**Advisors** Sondra Fetner  
**Present:** Richard Leon  
Kathleen McGovern  
Joel Provenza

**Staff:** Cindy Chism

A. Meeting was called to order by Chair at 12:00. (Action items are listed in green)

1. All present introduced themselves. There is a quorum.
2. Submittal of Speaker's Cards.
3. Approval of minutes from February 8, 2018: Questions included:
  - a. CM Crescimbeni has several scrivener errors and will meet with Ms. Chism at a later time to go over those. He recalled not only praising Ms. Fetner for preparation of the Bylaws, which was included in the minutes, not included was his praise of the Secretary for preparation of the minutes. In the future that needs to be included as well.
  - b. There was also a question regarding the definition of the word "leaders" on Page 5, the 5<sup>th</sup> bullet points used in regards to the Laurel Oaks in Avondale. Mr. Leon said a leader is a large branch, a branch which would compete with main stem of the tree.
  - c. Ms. Fetner answer the question regarding Ms. Chism's title, the discussion was on page 3, 2<sup>nd</sup> bullet, the title was Public Works Staff.
  - d. Motion made by Mr. Pappas, seconded by Mr. Hart to accept the minutes with changes noted, to include CM Crescimbeni's scrivener corrections. None opposed
4. Fund balance (Attachment A) and Encumbrance report (Attachment B) for 15(F) and 15(N)
  - a. The Fund Balance for 15(F) and 15(N) of \$21,567,036.70 which is difference of \$418,585 from last meeting balance of \$21,148,451.70. Mr. Hart remarked that somebody paid.
  - b. Mr. Pappas asked Mr. Provenza about the Forest Street Ash Site (4<sup>th</sup> item down of Encumbrance Report, Attachment B), the status is project completed, return balance (\$5995) to tree fund. What does it take to get the funds returned back? Is it just a

memo, do you need something formal? How does that work? Mr. Provenza replied to move it we would have to do a budget amendment. CM Crescimbeni asked Mr. Provenza if we needed to come up with a mechanism to move this money, this residual from this completed project, back into the tree fund. Mr. Provenza's answer was yes, we do need to design a mechanism to move the money.

- c. Mr. Hart asked if there were any other items in the same category; projects which are closed but with residual money 15(F). **Mr. Provenza said there were and he would provide a better report for what you are asking about.** He further said we deduct appropriated balance which is the money you are discussing but we also added back the part that is in reserve, we view that as unspoken for, the Council reserve subobject. **CM Crescimbeni will schedule a meeting with Theresa Eichner, who speaks Finance and City Council so no interpreter will be required. Ms. Fetner will need to be there as well.**
  - d. Mr. Hart asked if at the end of the budget year if these types of projects would be cleared out? It seems like in a new budget cycle you would want to clear this out. If we wait until next year's budget would the money from a project that is completed go back to 15(F) or 15(N) or would they just stay here for an eternity. Mr. Provenza answered that these are all year's funds so they would just keep going forward. CM Crescimbeni reminded the Commission that this is Government and what sometimes seems logical is not necessarily the way it's done but we will fix it. Mr. Provenza was asked why this one is shown and not others you say there are. He replied those are encumbrances that have gone through the purchasing process for specific projects. Others are just residuals in a budget line item; projects are closed with residual dollars. **Mr. Provenza will provide a more complete report.**
5. Final Bylaws signature. Signed copies were provided to all Commission members. The final copy will be posted to the webpage once it's developed.

## **B. New Business**

1. Tree Commission Website, Cindy Chism, Staff
  - a. A meeting was held with ITD and several advisors to the Commission to discuss the mechanics of setting up a new webpage for the Tree Commission.
  - b. We do want to link to our page from the Public Works page, to link back & forth from the tree mitigation page. We also want to link from the City Council Tree Commission page to our page.
  - c. A plan was generated and a mock-up should be ready by the March 8<sup>th</sup> Meeting.
2. Life Expectancy Specifications, Richard Leon, Urban Forester Manager
  - a. Mr. Leon was asked if there should be a Life Expectancy Rule or Policy for any tree used in projects requesting funding from the Commission. He provided several opinions from Foresters around the country as well as an article from the journal of the Society for Conservation Biology (Attachment C). The consensus was not to

- make a list of what to plant but a list of what not to plant; diversity in species as well as life span. There are many times when you want to use short-lived trees to promote under canopy using trees which may only live 5-10 years.
- b. Last meeting there was a discussion about Bradford Pear trees. They were the hot tree to plant in the 80s with a life expectancy of approximately 15 years in an urban environment. CM Crescimbeni opined that landscape should not be driven by the latest fashion trend. Let's make an investment in our infrastructure which is going to last. We need to be careful we don't make an investment which won't have a real return. We may not have \$20 million in 5 years to do this again. Mr. Leon suggested that it would be worthwhile for the Commission to generate a list of trees not to plant. We could include the controversial Date Palms and others which would give real direction.
  - c. CM Crescimbeni asked if there were lists already by region or state of native trees. Mr. Cooper responded that there are many lists out there which are extensive, for north Florida, Southeastern Georgia region. He further stated there are so many species out there it will be more feasible to list trees not to plant than allowed trees. **Mr. Cooper will provide a very encompassing list of species native to our ecosystem.**
  - d. Mr. Leon pointed out that an urban environment isn't native. The closer you get to the urban core, the heat is different there is infrastructure so sometimes a native tree isn't always the best option, this is a man-made environment. A lot of cities use the Gingko tree, which is from Asia, but it has high tolerances for pollution and compacted soil. It has a fan shaped leaf, really good fall color; they get quite large they are also deciduous.
  - e. Mr. Cooper pointed out that with Mr. Leon had more urban environment knowledge; perhaps we should just list invasive species and not limit it to only native plants. There are non-native trees, Crepe Myrtle and Drake Elms for instance which are everywhere and do well. Mr. Leon went on to say another unique thing we are faced with here in Jacksonville is how far north we are, how close to the water, it's an odd transition where we are not quite sub-tropical but not quite to the level of Savannah. There are a lot of unique factors that Jacksonville faces with our transition in climate and the entire infrastructure.
  - f. CM Crescimbeni asked Mr. Cooper and Mr. Leon to generate a narrative identifying what we are going to pursue; what we can do and what we can't do i.e., try to plant native species when appropriate, and discourage certain types. Perhaps this can give us some ammo to put the whole Date Palm controversy to rest. For instance, "As a commission we don't believe these trees are the best trees to plant." **Mr. Cooper, Mr. Leon and Ms. Anna Dooley will work together to generate a narrative document for selecting trees to include life expectancy, maintenance and native and invasive species.**
  - g. CM Crescimbeni invited comments: do we want to include a life expectancy threshold of 5 years or do we want to take a more macro approach and give more points for longer life expectancy trees when we get into the grading process. We also need to take into account the lower canopy trees. Mr. Pappas agreed that there

- needs to be a life expectancy minimum. There is a value in what we are investing and what we're getting out of it. He also agreed with CM Crescimbeni's maintenance comments, which need to be a factor. 15 years sounds like a reasonable number for life expectancy. UNF has great list of trees for urban areas and one of the world renowned arborists on staff. [Mr. Leon will bring a sample from the UNF Urban Tree list.](#)
- h. Mr. Glick added that from a planning perspective and an urban development standpoint when you are planting a tree you want to plant it for at least a generation. That's how long it takes a neighborhood to mature and grow or if an older neighborhood is under resurgence it takes that long to come back. The bare minimum threshold in an urban environment is 25 years. You won't have enough time to grow a mature canopy in less than that amount of time. A redbud would barely meet that threshold.
  - i. CM Crescimbeni offered this analogy as an example of a way to score projects: City Council sets list of priority populations for grants. Grant money is set aside, about \$2-\$3 million, for public service grants. Then we publish our top priority populations we want serviced by these grants: Homelessness, elderly, etc., a percentage is assigned to each. Perhaps we can use this kind of approach for projects. Instead of getting hung up on an outright restriction on anything that won't live past 15-20 years maybe we try to focus or set some policy goals for longer living things but still leave some room for funds to be spent on understory. Mr. Cooper agreed that was a good analogy and good way to try to select projects.

### 3. FEMA Replanting Reimbursement, John Pappas, Director Public Works

- a. The question before the Commission was if FEMA will reimburse the City for replanting trees destroyed by natural disasters. Mr. Pappas provided the Commission with an excerpt from the Public Assistance Program and Policy guide (FP-104-009-2) which stated that they were not eligible for reimbursement. (Attachment D, highlighted portion)

### 4. ~~jaxdigstrees plan-it~~ GEO Objective Criteria Process, John November, Public Trust

- a. Mr. November provided a process suggestion to help the Commission determine criteria for new project submission using the layers from the jaxdigstrees tool to score projects. (Attachment E.)
- b. This is a suggestion on how to use the jaxdigstrees webtool to evaluate, make recommendations and score projects based on the criteria included in the tool. It is a work in progress, we need to be flexible and will need a lot of input for decisions. As this is the beginning hopefully we will take an adaptive attitude. Working with the technology for the last 6 months or so, there are some unique insights that may allow us to use it to create prioritization criteria. Perhaps prioritization is not as important to the City as actually getting trees in the ground right now because money comes in and money must go out.

- c. This presentation is only related to jaxdigstrees plan-it-GEO, it does not include other factors the Commission may be considering such as reviewing proposed budget, administrative design and community engagement, potential proposals from public groups and City Council members, also making determinations about the viability and feasibility of the project will be a threshold issue that will need to be approved by staff before we can even consider ranking it.
- d. All Commission members please bring a list of items for possible inclusion on new project submissions such as maintenance requirements, life expectancy, and/or shade coverage.

5. Pending Tree Projects – Kathleen McGovern, City Arborist (Attachment F)

- a. 2018-007 – Has been approved and is now in progress. Harts Road and Dunn Ave will be first then the streetscape replacements on Riverside.
- b. 2018-043 – Pending legislation.
- c. King Street –Prepared and should be submitted in approximately 2 weeks. Several questions regarding Bald Cypress trees being planted in the median on King Street; the concern was if the trees put out knees which would disrupt the surrounding area. Mr. Leon mentioned that he has seen several instances in Texas where there are many Cypress trees planted in tree cutouts with no disruption of the hardscape.
- d. Avondale Tree Planting – Preparing to submit.
- e. San Jose Blvd – Beginning preparation
- f. Ms. McGovern will revise this report to a more standardized format next meeting.

6. **Postponed** - Proposed Project Application Process, Sondra Fetner, Office of General Counsel

- Discussion about who can apply
- Discussion about how Commission recommendation becomes legislation

7. **Postponed** - General Project Application, Sondra Fetner, Office of General Counsel -

**C. Public Comment**

John November, Public Trust – CM Crescimbeni at the last meeting you mentioned to me that if people were interested in being on a subcommittee to look at the ordinance and you would want them to appear here today; in order to make that appointment I invited some folks to be here today, I was hoping that you would move forward with that item in respect to those folks which showed up today. It may make sense to get FDOT involved or communicate with us since they will be so integral in some of our upcoming projects. I was also hoping that you might provide direction to staff to work with myself or any other stakeholders on the bigger picture related to the public private application process in preparation for the next meeting. Finally, I've talked to each of the Tree Commissioners and one thing that is really special about each of them is they have such diverse and unique expertise. As we take these next steps, I know there is a lot of important stuff on the front end to get our situation moving but, for

example, Rhodes knows about environmental restoration, he's so excited about looking at all the preserves and figuring out where we can make a big splash in the preserves. I just want to make sure the Commissioner's each feel empowered to take a particular project by the horns and move it forward.

Joseph Anderson, JEA – Provided a poster which has recommendations for native Florida trees (Attachment G) but it is not all encompassing.

Tracey Arpen, Greenscape – He reiterated that the Senate bill is going to be very important for the City with regards to the restoration of power costs, especially if it's not JEA. That could be a big price tag down the road. Regarding the location of trees to be planted and your plant or don't plant list. There are some trees which are appropriate to plant as under story trees or in a park setting but are not appropriate in a median, such as Holly trees. There are so few opportunities to plant canopy trees in Jacksonville. Perhaps we should make it a priority to plant trees in the ROW between the sidewalk and the street or in the medians to plant canopy trees. People always say this is a beautifully tree canopied street.

Anna Dooley, Greenscape – As Arbor Day and the festival tree give away approaches, would capturing the zip codes of those people who get a free tree be helpful? John November answered that the jaxdigstrees tool would not be able to capture the data in as fine a detail as we would need.

Alicia Grant, President, Scenic Jacksonville Inc. – We have gotten an agreement with FDOT that they will no longer be planting the Medjool palm trees when they are redoing the landscape on the roadways. One of our major initiatives is undergrounding. We are trying to get 3000 miles of overhead utilities, JEA, AT&T and Comcast utilities, in the ground over the next 30 years. We hope to have a plan to introduce to City Council soon.

Chris Flagg was invited to introduce himself to the Commission as the seventh serving member of the Commission.

## **D. Information**

### **1. Tallahassee Bill 574 and Bill 521, Sondra Fetner, Office of General Counsel**

Ms. Fetner provided the updated version of Bill 524 (Attachment H) as well as a Bill Analysis (Attachment H) to the Commission. She did point out that one of the amendments to Bill 574 is if a local government keeps a tree in an area that is blocking an electrical utility and the electrical utility has asked to have it removed and it has not been done, the local government can be held liable for any outage costs and for restoration activities. Also amended during a State of Emergency the City's ability to regulate the tree trimming & maintenance will be waived during that state of Emergency only application to signal family homes in residentially zoned areas.

## 2. Shade Tree Subcommittee

There is an ordinance regarding Shade Trees. What is the swap ratio to replace a shade tree? It is three cabbage palms or you can plant 3 trees that get a 15 foot spread at maturity in lieu of a shade tree. CM Crescimbeni would like a member or 2 of the Commission to work with some citizens. Mr. Glick and Mr. Hart were nominated and Ms. Alicia Grant and Mr. Tracey Arpen volunteered to meet and see if it's feasible to submit a revision to the provision in the ordinance code.

## E. Adjournment