TREE COMMISSION RESOLUTION

A RESOLUTION EXPRESSING AN OFFICIAL POSITION AGAINST THE PLANTING OF DATE PALMS (PHOENIX DACTYLIFERA) ON PUBLIC PROPERTY WITHIN THE CITY OF JACKSONVILLE OR ANYWHERE ELSE USING APPROPRIATIONS FROM THE TREE FUNDS (15F AND 15N); PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

WHEREAS, Date Palms (scientific name: Phoenix Dactylifera) have been planted in the City of Jacksonville for many decades; and

WHEREAS, Date Palms are not native to the City of Jacksonville or the United States Department of Agriculture Plant Hardiness Zone 9a; and

WHEREAS, a single Date Palm tree costs approximately $5,000.00; and

WHEREAS, a single Date Palm costs approximately $300.00 to $500.00 per year to maintain and the City already incurs approximately $45,000 to $55,000 in annual maintenance costs to maintain City-owned Date Palm; and

WHEREAS, the maintenance of a Date Palm requires careful pruning and trimming within a specific 3 to 4 week window of time; and

WHEREAS, if a Date Palm does not receive the required maintenance, the fruit and the large, heavy palm fronds of the tree will fall to the ground, decay and create a mess that could result in damage to property and injury to persons; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to Sec. 25.02(g), Charter, a Date Palm cannot be used as a Mitigation Tree (Replacement Tree) because it is not expressly identified as such and it is not an "indigenous tree that reaches a height at maturity of at least 45 feet and a
spread at maturity of at least 30 feet"; and

WHEREAS, based on research conducted by the University of Florida IFAS Extension, "Texas Phoenix Palm Decline" or "Lethal Bronzing", is a relatively new bacterial tree disease that kills certain species of palm trees and is spreading throughout Florida and the South; and

WHEREAS, according to the research, the Date Palm is susceptible to Lethal Bronzing, and the University of Florida IFAS Extension recommends avoiding planting Date Palms due to this susceptibility; and

WHEREAS, the City has two Tree Protection and Related Expenses Trust Funds - the Charter Fund (15N) and the Ordinance Fund (15F) (collectively "Tree Funds"), both of which are comprised of funds collected by the City for mitigation of the removal of certain trees within in the City and such funds are required to be appropriated for the planting of trees on public property in the City; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to Sec. 94.105(a), Ordinance Code, one of the Tree Commission’s purposes is to study and make recommendations to the City Council with respect to the planting of trees and the health of the City’s tree canopy; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to Sec. 94.106(h), Ordinance Code, one of the Tree Commission’s duties is to identify issues relative to the health and protection of public trees and recommend solutions to problems identified; and

WHEREAS, the City of Jacksonville Tree Commission desires to make a recommendation to the Council through the formal resolution process; now therefore

BE IT RESOLVED by the Tree Commission of the City of Jacksonville:

Section 1. Findings. The Tree Commission finds the
foregoing to be true and accurate.

Section 2. Expression of Opposition to the Planting of Date Palms in the City of Jacksonville and the Use of Tree Funds to Plant Date Palms in Public Property in the City of Jacksonville. The City of Jacksonville Tree Commission does hereby state its official position in opposition to the future planting of Date Palms or the replacement of existing Date Palms with new Date Palms in the City of Jacksonville and the appropriation of money from the Tree Funds to purchase, plant, or maintain new Date Palms on public property within the City of Jacksonville for the following reasons: 1) Date Palms are expensive to purchase and similar palm trees are available at a lower cost, 2) the maintenance of Date Palms are expensive and time-consuming when compared to other trees; 3) Date Palms are not indigenous to the area and therefore cannot be used as replacement trees using the Charter Tree Fund because they do not provide the required crown spread; and 4) Lethal Bronzing is a threat to Date Palms and the University of Florida IFAS Extension recommends not planting susceptible palm trees.

DONE AND ORDERED at the March 22, 2018 meeting of the City of Jacksonville Tree Commission.

John R. Crescimbeni,
Chairman of the Tree Commission,
City Council Member, Group 2 At-Large