

Parks and Parkways Commission

June 6, 2022

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Chairman Scott Discon called the meeting to order at 6:11pm

The secretary called the roll.

Commissioners Present: Scott Discon, Eric McQuiston, Brien Croff, Lee Frederick

Absent: Will Afton and Anne Marie Fargason

Staff Present: Cara Bartholomew, Planning Director; Alex Weiner, Secretary

Minutes

Mr. McQuiston made a motion to adopt the minutes from the May 2 meeting, Ms. Frederick seconded, and all were in favor.

Mr. Discon introduced the new Commission member Brien Croff. Mr. Croff said that he was happy to be on the Commission and was looking forward to working with them.

New Business:

Copal Pocket Park Discussion

Theodore Ralph, 198 Cindy Lou Place: The pocket park is located on the corner of Copal St. and the GNOEC service road. It is about 155' – 160' parallel to Causeway and about 90' – 100' along Copal St. It was dedicated in 1960 when Old Golden Shores was annexed into the City and is shown in both the City and Assessor records. Mr. Ralph asked for the Parks and Parkways Commission to make the location look nicer.

Mr. McQuiston clarified that Mr. Ralph was asking for the Commission to look at the property and determine if they can undertake it as a project and work with the Old Golden Shores residents to find a solution.

Mr. Discon said that the 2022 – 2023 budget has a miscellaneous beautification line item that they could use for this, they would just need to come up with a plan first.

Ms. Frederick asked how large the area is, Mr. Ralph said that he had sent the original plat to Mr. Discon but will resend it.

Ms. Frederick asked if it was multiple lots, Ms. Bartholomew replied that it was a single lot.

Mr. Discon asked for the name of the subdivision again, Mr. Ralph said it was Old Golden Shores.

Resolution 22-01

Mr. McQuiston asked how the process for being included on the list of certified sites and protected sites and a certified habitat was started, Mr. Discon said that Mr. Abbey had some knowledge of the process.

Buck Abbey 1129 Villere: Had the idea about a year ago to have the area certified as a Native Plant Habitat to show people what a native habitat looks like. He had filled out the application on behalf of the City to the Native Plant Society, it just needs to be signed by Scott and sent it. Then a representative would walk the site to determine the percentage of native plants.

Ms. Bartholomew said that as it is City property the City needs to be the applicant, and the process needs to go through the City and cannot be done by a private citizen.

Mr. Discon asked if the certified site and certified habitat were separate applications, Mr. Abbey replied that they were the same.

Ms. Frederick asked if there would be any signage involved, Mr. Abbey said that the Society would provide one, and that the City should get two so they can be placed on Florida St. and Montgomery St.

Mr. McQuiston said that the Commission is an advisory board so the Resolution would be endorsing the application to the City.

Pollinator Week

Mr. McQuiston gave a quick rundown of the event to Mr. Croff as he had not been to the one last year and let him know it would be on June 25th at the trailhead.

Mr. McQuiston said he and Mr. Afton would be among the speakers this year, and his topic would be about starting a pollinator garden for your home.

Mr. Discon asked if there were any suggestions for other speakers, Mr. McQuiston said that he was unsure if Ms. Casanova lined up any more speakers and did not want to suggest any right now.

Bonnie Abbey, 1129 Villere: Asked if they wanted her to do a table again. Mr. Discon and Mr. McQuiston said that she should.

Project List for the 2022 – 2023 Fiscal Year

Ms. Bartholomew said that she met with the Finance Director to talk about the budget, and it was noticed that not all of the projects could be done last year so it was suggested to focus on a few bigger projects and use the miscellaneous beautification fund for smaller things throughout the year.

Ms. Bartholomew said the Street Tree project was originally budgeted at \$30,000 and had to be adjusted to \$180,000 and mentioned that the City might have bitten off more than it could chew this year. She suggested thinking of some parameters for next time, such as one cycle instead of three and two trees instead of four. The budget limit is \$30,000 before it needs to go to bid.

Mr. McQuiston asked if this had already been approved, Ms. Bartholomew said she was going through last year's line items.

Ms. Bartholomew said that the Sunset Point plan got put on hold due to Ida. She also said that Public Works asked for anything to be done on the north side so as to not interfere with repairs. A possible avenue would be for a master plan to be developed.

Mr. McQuiston said that an outside consultant is needed for that and suggested pumping the breaks on that idea. Mr. Discon said that it was still under construction so not much physical stuff could be done, but the Commission could look at the plat to come up with parameters for the project.

Ms. Bartholomew said that there is an RFQ out for landscape architects to have a list to pull from for projects. Mr. McQuiston asked if the RFP would be publicly advertised, Ms. Bartholomew replied that it would depend on the cost of the project, but the Commission should get involved at that point.

Ms. Bartholomew said that bigger projects had money allocated and took longer than a year to accomplish and suggested scaling back to try and finish it in a year. She said that lots of landscape maintenance was added so the budget for that increased and will be put under contract to shift it away from public works.

Mr. McQuiston asked if the Commission could add to the budget in the year to come, Ms. Bartholomew said they could.

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Ms. Bartholomew said the North Causeway Overpass & Hwy 22 flagpole project should be going in under a month. Ms. Frederick asked what flags would be on the flagpole, Ms. Bartholomew said the American and Marine flags.

Ms. Bartholomew said the four corners project could possibly roll into next year.

Ms. Bartholomew said that Franklin Kyle did the plan for Hwy 190 & Ashbury and is talking to RCI about material cost. Mr. McQuiston asked where it would be located, Ms. Bartholomew replied behind Homegoods.

Ms. Bartholomew said the Marigny Avenue wall and signage was almost done and reminded the commissioners that there would be a special joint meeting on June 22nd to discuss the project and gather resident input.

Skelly Kreller asked if there was any discussion with the residents about the walls, Ms. Bartholomew replied that she was not with the City at the time but there were public meetings held. Mr. Kreller said that he is getting lots of negative feedback and said nothing was reviewed. Ms. Bartholomew said that it went before the City Council for approval. Mr. Kreller said the person who reviewed it was not a landscape architect but someone under them, and it looked terrible as it was too massive and wide.

Mr. Discon said there is a PO to get them sized down, Ms. Bartholomew said the PO was already approved. Mr. Discon said the sides will be cut on both and the height has already been reduced.

Mr. Kreller said the City Council will not let this happen again, Ms. Bartholomew replied that was why the joint meeting was happening on the 22nd.

Ms. Frederick said the street looks nice now under maintenance.

Ms. Bartholomew said the wildflower garden was moved under maintenance for the burn every year. Ms. Frederick asked if some money could be allocated to that project to finish removing the remaining oak trees, Ms. Bartholomew said they could allocate \$10,000 like last year.

Ms. Bartholomew said there was discussion about adding signage to Pottery Hill to keep the site natural as it is an archeology site.

With regards to planting pollinators at the trailhead, the parish owns the right of way and did not want anything planted so Ms. Bartholomew said the idea was scrapped.

Ms. Bartholomew said the Tree Inventory was started, but they will have to reallocate money to finish.

Mr. Discon asked if all these projects were from last year, Ms. Bartholomew said that was correct.

Mr. Discon asked if the Hwy 190 plan was budget adjusted, Ms. Bartholomew replied yes, and that Phase 1 was done, and Adam had plans for Phase 2.

Ms. Bartholomew said that Phase 2 for the Underpass on the North Side was considered along with the fence on the service road on North Causeway.

Mr. Discon said that he had talked with Nancy Clark and the DOTD will install the fence if the City pays for it. It will be a black fence and plantings will be discussed for a later phase.

Mr. Discon said that the landscaping by Perlis was talked about, trying to mimic what is on the opposite side of it, and design it in house by the Commission.

Ms. Frederick asked if a sign was in the works for the Longleaf site, Ms. Bartholomew said it is in fabrication.

Mr. McQuiston asked for Buck Abbey to talk about Pottery Hill.

Mr. Abbey said he was visiting the site recently to look at the signage and commented that the area is not very accessible to the elderly and the handicapped. He suggested some clearing done, including a large pine with a hanger that needs to be removed. He also commented that it looked like someone had used some chemicals to remove some of the vegetation.

Mr. McQuiston said that improper chemicals could cause legal and environmental issues. Mr. Discon said he talked with Public Works to add some bollards by the border.

Mr. Abbey suggested putting together a written plan to manage the site. Mr. McQuiston said that due to the Historic and Environmental nature of the site the plan should be as thorough as possible before moving forward.

Mr. McQuiston made a motion to open the agenda to discuss a resolution for project procedure. Mr. Discon seconded, and all were in favor.

Mr. McQuiston said he wanted to discuss this as there seems to be some confusion on the process, and he understands the Commission is an advisory board. He said the way he understands the process is that a project is submitted to the City Council for approval once a project is identified. He is concerned that there is little to no discussion about the project, with most of the time no plans are done. He said that the commission never saw any plans or renders for the Marigny wall project to vote on and send to the Council. He recommended doing future projects in a phase structure, outlined in his proposed resolution. It seems to him that the Commission is submitting requests, and not advising the Council. Ms. Bartholomew said she had no problems with the Commission taking a more hands on approach for future projects.

Mr. Discon said that the Underpass and Hwy 190 project were done in a back-and-forth manner and then voted on. He felt that the Commission has had input on the previous projects and agreed with the phase approach that was suggested.

Mr. McQuiston said that a deliberate process is needed for projects to have the most success, which is why the resolution was proposed.

Skelly Kreller said that he hoped that the Commission would have more decorum. He went on to say that the City Council will not approve big projects with no plans in front of them. The Parks and Parkways Commission has the responsibility to provide as much information as possible.

Ms. Bartholomew said that process wise, getting plans developed costs money so some funds need to be allocated to move forward. No plans will be seen unless money is put aside.

Mr. McQuiston suggested discussing some type of operating budget, Ms. Bartholomew replied that is what they are doing. The Parks and Parkways Commission is included in the Planning Department operating budget.

Ms. Bartholomew said that they could do a lump sum for all the projects or allocate money for certain projects. Projects have been suggested in the past with a loose idea of a cost and they were never gotten to.

Mr. Discon suggested having four or five big projects on the budget with plans and landscape architects. The smaller projects were in a more gray area.

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Staff Update

Ms. Casanova was not at the meeting for the staff update

Public Comment

None

Mr. McQuiston motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:07p.m., seconded by Ms. Frederick and was unanimously approved.



Alex Weiner, Secretary



Scott Discon, Chairman
Parks and Parkways Commission