

Parks and Parkways Commission
January 6, 2020

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Scott Discon and the secretary called roll.

Present: Scott Discon, Karin Crosby, Lee Frederick, Anne Marie Fargason, Will Afton and Eric McQuiston

Absent: None

Also Present: Catherine Casanova, City Arborist

Election of Chairman

Ms. Fargason moved to nominate Scott Discon to remain as the Chairman, seconded by Ms. Frederick and was unanimously approved.

Mr. Discon moved to nominate Eric McQuiston as Vice Chairman, seconded by Ms. Fargason and was unanimously approved.

Opening of the Agenda:

Annual Louisiana Arbor Day Tree Planting Giveaway

New Business:

1. West Beach Parkway planting

Ms. Casanova said the project was substantially complete. Mr. Discon asked with the low bushes was the electric line hanging very low. He requested the City contact Cleco or whoever owned the lines to raise the line since it was continuing to sag.

2. Marigny Avenue Edible Forest Planting

Ms. Casanova said Mr. Kyle was completing the plan and it would be forwarded to the commission. He would provide a planting list to source the planting. Mr. Afton said the commission had made suggestions which had been forwarded to Mr. Kyle. The staff was still trying to meet a February planting time.

3. Florida Street Grass Planting

Mr. Discon said there had been a meeting with Mayor Villere about putting this project back in the budget and presenting the project to the Council. At this week's City Council meeting there would be an ordinance introduction and a Council vote at the January 23rd meeting. He suggested the commission be present for any discussion. Mr. McQuiston asked if Mr. Perkins had worked on the project. Ms. Casanova said the ordinance would give Mr. Perkins a contract. Mr. Discon said there would be a three dimensional drawing. Ms. Casanova suggested that Mr. Perkins also present his Hammond project as an example with the preliminary proposals. Mr. McQuiston said there should be a preliminary plan for the proposal with a length of the area, scope of the work and plant materials.

Ernest Burguieres was questioning the cost of the project, why the City would plant on the north side of the roadway and why use Adam Perkins. The commission stated planting on the north side of the highway enhanced the corridor with other unseen benefits. Ms. Crosby presented the history that the City Council had required the City to approach the Parish to partner in the planting and they had removed themselves from the project. Mr. Discon said he had been told to present Phase 2 to the City Council for discussion. This would be a beautification project and if the north side planting was not approved, the City would still plant the south side. It was suggested to re-address the issue with a new administration coming in. Mr. Discon also suggested lighting similar to Girod Street.

4. Lakefront Fountain Garden

There were rosebushes planted around the fountain, and the garden needed mulching. The garden around the gazebo should also be checked for mulch. There was a discussion about fertilizing these gardens now and heavier in the spring. The commission suggested this could be a commission project to mulch, fertilize and prune the rosebushes after the tree giveaway.

It was decided to place further discussion of the lakefront fountain garden in the fall.

5. Causeway Underpass Plan

When Mr. Kyle completed the Marigny Avenue project plans, the Causeway plan should be the next project. There was a discussion if the cemetery should be the next project, but it was decided that the mausoleum was not under construction so it should be placed later on the project list. The commission members requested contacting DOTD to begin marking the lines and taking pictures. It was discussed to hold a preliminary meeting with Mr. Kyle to create a list of needs.

6. Cemetery

There was a further discussion that this project should be deferred until the new administration took office. Ms. Casanova said the plans should there would be a shed to hold the mud which the appearance was always an issue. Ms. Fargason said she thought the design and construction would be the City's responsibility. When it was built, the commission could have input on the plantings. Ms. Crosby said there had been complaints about the lack of care for the cemetery. Mr. Discon suggested the installation of an iron fence and oak trees. The grass cutters were destroying many of the plantings.

Staff Update

- The Girod Street parking lot plans by LaLou's Restaurant was almost complete. There would be a butterfly garden in center with tree planting along the perimeter. Sycamores and elm trees would be planted.
- Girod Street, Phase 4. Adam Perkins was finalizing the plan to include rosemary drift roses and the removal of the Indian Hawthorne. The commission suggested planting Turks Cap. It was also requested to remove the palms by the Rusty Pelican and the Book and Bean.
- Tyler Thomas Park could be planted on the outer edges of the playground with blueberries and fig trees. The south side by the fence could be planted with blueberries. The playground area would be the area of construction and there was a concern about the line of site of the parents. There was not a timeline on the construction. It was further discussed that two cooking pear trees could be planted as well as a suggestion of Satsuma trees. It was agreed this would be planted in conjunction with the Marigny Avenue garden.
- Rob's Rockin Dog. The owners of the adjacent business, Rob's Rockin Dog, had submitted a letter complaint about the Wildflower Garden. There had not been a burn this year on the garden which would have been sufficient. It was also discussed to have the commission meet at the site and find any area to mow to create a site line. It was suggested to bush hog or burn the garden. Ms. Frederick said she did not understand the businesses complaint about a natural garden. Mr. McQuiston said people understood the idea of the garden but did not like it. Ms. Crosby said the west side suggestion of a second wildflower garden was turned down for these same reasons.

Part of the problem in the complaint was that people did not know how to get back to the businesses.

The commission suggested contacting Mr. Pasternack to discuss a burn or other alternative. Burning required a proper environment with the winds. Ms. Crosby said she had been seeing birds in the garden.

Mr. McQuiston suggested following up with Ms. Parker to attend a meeting for discussion and further input as a business owner. The commission would explain that a burn was a natural progression. The commission members decided to meet on Thursday at 10 a.m. at the site and make a determination of how to contact her.

Public Comment

Adele Foster requested trees be planted around the perimeter of the Lange House. One of the neighbors wanted to see the Lange House so he had removed the woods. About 10 saplings were planted to recreate a barrier. She requested an evergreen or native trees to create it as woody. The commission requested camellias be replanted since they were previously planted. Ms. Foster asked for a buffer. Mr. Discon said the plan should be amended to include a buffer. Ms. Foster said the property owner on the northeast corner facing Woodrow Street was constructing and needed a parking area. Mr. Discon said the bunny trail had been cleared. Ms. Foster said she was happy the planting in the back section was filling in. Planting of bamboo was discussed, but it was not native and did not support wildlife. Gardenias were discussed since they could grow 5-6' and would be evergreen with a flower. There had also been azaleas in this garden area. it was suggested to add a natural plant fence around the property. Ms. Casanova would send the plan to the commission. The commission was in agreement and would update Ms. Foster.

Ms. Foster was creating a small hill for the kids visiting the Lange House and requested any debris be donated to the Lange House.

Fontainebleau State Park

Buck Abbey, Villere Street resident, provided information from the Assistant Secretary of State Parks. The state parks had been moving backwards for at least 20 years. The state was trying to commercialize (capitalize) the parks to bring in business to generate a profit to share in the upkeep of the parks. It would be assumed they would continue to do it until proven different. He said to make any improvements would start with the creation of a master plan, prepared by Landscape Architects who would be lead designers on the project. There would be architects and engineers involved in the planning process to follow state rules for public facilities. He suggested that the commission needed to stay up to date on the process since they had the power to influence the master plan.

Ms. Crosby understood Fontainebleau Park was the only park operating in the black. Mr. Abbey disagreed with the concept. The parks at one time received \$10 Million annually from the state, and now they received 50% of the gate revenue. The state would lose the state parks if something was not done. Many places in the United States and Asia were where ecotourism was a huge industry. The Tammany Trace and the bike path go through the park and there were opportunities to bring in dollars for state parks. There was the possibility that the state could end up giving the land back to the heirs or sold off to developers. There was a great risk where the desire was not to manage a natural resource, but preserve it in its state.

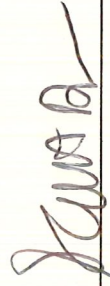
There was a lengthy discussion that the park was an archeological site and there were concerns about the proposed conference site being in competition with existing hotels that

were not doing well. The commission was in agreement that ecotourism was a great idea and could be the only viable option.

Ms. Crosby said Poverty Point was well promoted for ecotourism of the Native Americans back to the Egyptians. It would be better to do more promotion of ecotourism. Mr. Abbey said his message was that the commission had the power to look at this objectively and communicate the desire of the community. It will be required to be sustainable design methodology.

Ms. Crosby moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mr. McQuiston and was unanimously approved.


Lori Spranley, Secretary


Scott Discon, Chairman
Parks and Parkways Commission