

Parks and Parkways Commission

March 6, 2023

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Chairman Scott Discon called the meeting to order at 6:03pm

The secretary called the roll.

Commissioners Present: Scott Discon, Lee Frederick, Christy Kervin, and Shelley Winstead

Absent: Will Afton (Absent at roll call, present at 6:13) and Brien Croff

Staff Present: Alex Weiner, Secretary

Minutes

Ms. Winstead made a motion to adopt the minutes from the February 6 meeting, Ms. Kervin seconded, and all were in favor.

New Business:

Spring Education Event Update

Ms. Frederick said she has six speakers with the timeslots all arranged. Each speaker will have a 30min timeslot and then there will be 10 minutes in-between speakers. There will be ten tables outside along with the six speakers. She added that Bonnie Abbey had the idea to do door prizes which should be added to the flyer.

Ms. Winstead said that there is the Master Gardner plant sale the weekend before the event, she could pick up some plants to be used as door prizes. Ms. Frederick said that she could do a bluebird house for one of the prizes, Mr. Discon said that should be the grand prize.

Mr. Discon said that there had been some discussion about using the outdoor stage as well as the indoor area and asked if that had changed. Ms. Frederick said that they were going to do both but the speakers needed access to the projector and wanted to have it inside so people could hear easier. Mr. Discon said the depot was a nice building.

Ms. Frederick suggested that the Children's Museum could use the outside area, Ms. Winstead said she would ask. Mr. Discon said that they could maybe do an interactive experience.

Ms. Kervin suggested changing the name to "Annual Pollinator" instead of "Annual Pollination" as the national event is pollinator. Ms. Frederick agreed.

Mr. Afton joined the meeting at this point

Ms. Kervin said that she had met with Ms. Abbey to work on the children's crafts. They are thinking of doing seed packets instead of the seed bombs as they were too messy.

Ms. Frederick read out the timeslots for the speakers which is as follows: Will Afton, 9:00 – 9:30; Seth Nehrbass, 9:40 – 10:10; Patty Zebrick, 10:20 – 10:50; Jeff Horchoff, 11:00 – 11:30; Michel Collier, 11:40 – 12:10; Wendy Rihner, 12:20 – 12:50.

Ms. Abbey asked about the door prizes, Ms. Frederick said that she was doing a bluebird house for the grand prize and Mr. Discon said that Ms. Winstead was going to get some plants from the Master Gardner plant sale to use as well.

Ms. Kervin suggested giving away seeds as well, Ms. Frederick said they could do plants and seeds.

Ms. Abbey said that she spoke with Ms. Fuselier who said the seeds would be coming in soon and that people would need to package them.

Mr. Discon said that the commission would be getting some shirts for the event.

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Mr. Afton asked what topic people wanted him to speak about, he had in mind to talk about native bees, everything but the honey bee.

Ms. Abbey said she would get together with Ms. Fuselier about the number of seed bombs. Ms. Frederick said she had some Mexican Sunflower seed pods but they were not native, Ms. Kervin said that it was for the kids and did not have to be native.

Mr. Discon suggested creating an event page on Facebook that people could share.

Ms. Frederick said to add the rain date to the flyer.

Ms. Frederick suggested something colorful like balloons, but more environmentally friendly. Ms. Kervin said that papier-mâché could be used.

Ms. Zebrick said that her topic was going to be "Homegrown National Park".

Parks and Parkways Graphic

Mr. Weiner said that there could not be a graphic specific for the commission as the other commissions did not have one. Further, the concept created by Mr. Croff was using the current City logo which was designed by someone else.

Mr. Discon suggested changing the words on the flyer "City of Mandeville Parks and Parkways Commission" to the color blue to be more like the City logo and to help it stand out.

Mr. Afton asked if the City logo could be incorporated into the flyer.

Short Term Work Program

Mr. Discon said these would be project ideas for the next budget year. Commissioners should create a list of projects and then they would go through and vote on them. He asked if Mr. Weiner could re-send the short-term work program list for them to add to.

Mr. Discon said that there were currently some incomplete projects. He said the Hwy 190 Phase 2 plan, Perlis Garden, Four Corners, and the Causeway Plantings were the current priority projects.

Ms. Kervin said she had some ideas. The first was the cypress tupelo swamp on Montgomery Street and adding a boardwalk to access the area. Mr. Discon thought that Mr. Abbey had put together something for this area in the past.

Ms. Frederick asked if the sign for the area had been received yet, Mr. Abbey said the city council has not done a resolution yet. Ms. Frederick asked if Mr. Discon could talk with Ms. Bartholomew about getting a resolution for the council to file the application. Mr. Discon said he thought that had already been done last year. Mr. Abbey said the city council has not approved it yet, Mr. Discon said it just needs to be added to the agenda.

Ms. Kervin said she spoke with Mr. Abbey to get ideas and this was one that was suggested. Ms. Frederick said they had to be careful to protect the area as people would want to fish off the boardwalk. Ms. Kervin said the boardwalk would be short, only about 30ft.

Ms. Kervin said another project was the old jail on Madison Street. There is no wayfinding for the building. Mr. Discon asked if the City was still storing stuff there, Mr. Abbey said he believed so.

Mr. Abbey said that from Madison to Jefferson Public Works should get out of the way and it should be made Open Space. A covered shelter as a mechanical craft arts area for demonstration to the public would be nice. He also said to add a seating area by the street at the old jail with a terrace and walkway to the building.

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Ms. Frederick said there is nothing cultural to look at in the area except the Lang House.

Mr. Abbey said small projects that could get done in a year are good to focus on.

Ms. Frederick asked if the space would be rented to artists, Mr. Abbey said that was not part of the project. He added that this jail was two cells, with one cell for white and the other for blacks.

Ms. Kervin said another project was to replant the 51 trees that were lost during Ida in the park behind City Hall. Mr. Abbey added that the mayor was interested in this project as well.

Ms. Kervin said another idea was to have money set aside for public education and research opportunities and people who can help the commission make decisions. For example, they could help with what to do about the recent accident at the Pine Savanna area. Mr. Discon said that would probably be public works.

Ms. Kervin said there were not enough pines on the site, Ms. Frederick said about 10 – 12 are being added and the burn has been scheduled.

Mr. Abbey said the Pollinator event is an example of the commission doing the work, not making decisions based on work that was done for them. The commission is who makes the decisions, they are not the worker bee. Their job is education about the urban forest and landscape of the community and they need information and facts to do so. The commission should ask for annual money to do public education like a seminar or workshop or some annual program that is done by an expert. It is worth the city fronting the money to have someone look through the suggested project list and then show up for the budget hearing with a proposal. The system should be put on a three year cycle where they identify the project and work through any issues, then talk about the project and either expand or drop it, then finally go to the council and build it in the fourth year. The Planning Department hire consultants from time to time, anyone the commission hired would go through the Planning Department budget, but work on Parks and Parkways projects. This would be the same process as the City Hall renovation and would look more professional.

Ms. Winstead asked if Mr. Abbey ever thought about serving on the commission, Mr. Abbey said he can do more off the commission than on it.

Mr. Afton said he liked the idea of smaller projects that could get done quickly.

Ms. Kervin said the playground planting would be nice, Ms. Winstead added that a wildflower garden could be added as well.

Ms. Winstead asked what the process would be if they wanted to move forward with the boardwalk project. Mr. Discon said that one of the upcoming meetings would be devoted to looking at projects. Mr. Weiner would send out the short-term work program sheets again, with the new projects added, and the commission would add projects they wanted as well. Then they would vote on them, get ballpark figures for the budget and submit them to the city council.

Ms. Winstead said she is looking for projects on the west side of town. Mr. Discon said he heard that they have been looking for a park for years now. He added that small projects that they could get done would be good as some of the current projects have been going on for years.

Ms. Kervin added another idea for a project, the parking lot on the corner of Girod and Claiborne. Mr. Abbey said it has poor soil as there is gravel underneath it. Mr. Discon thought it was under contract, Mr. Abbey said that it was done several years ago and he was not sure the City had that in the specifications. Mr. Discon agreed that the area does not look good and he

would check with Ms. Fuselier to see if it was under maintenance. Mr. Abbey said if the plantings were done poorly then they would die.

Mother's Day Caladium Bulb Sale

Mr. Discon said that there was a shortage of bulbs this year.

Ms. Kervin asked what the event was, Mr. Discon said that the City sells caladium bulbs for Mother's Day.

Ms. Winstead said that she thinks caladiums look bad, Ms. Kervin agreed. Ms. Zebrick said that they could do Louisiana Iris and use it as a teaching opportunity that the Louisiana Iris is not yellow. Ms. Kervin said that some were yellow but they were different variety.

Mr. Afton said he was open to discussions.

Ms. Winstead made a motion to cancel the event, Ms. Kervin seconded, and the motion passed with a vote of 4-1 with commissioner Discon voting against.

Staff Update

Mr. Weiner said that since Ms. Fuselier was absent from the meeting, the staff update would be deferred.

Public Comment

Bonnie Abbey, 1129 Villere: Asked if the meetings could be livestreamed as people do not know about the commission. There was a lot of internet turnout for the Landscape Summit livestream. Mr. Weiner said he would look into it.

Ms. Abbey also said that she was familiar with the financial aspects of a city. Just because a number is on paper just go to the council and bypass certain things.

Mr. Discon said to come up with project ideas.

Ms. Zebrick asked who owned the neighborwoods, Mr. Discon said it was the City and it was part of the capital budget. Mr. Abbey said he named that project about 10 – 12 years ago and it originated with the commission at that time. He helped write a grant that brought in money for that project, and the whole thing took five years to organize and build.

Ms. Winstead asked if it was behind public works, Mr. Abbey said it was at the end of Heavens Drive. Ms. Zebrick said that is was in Beau Rivage, go down Garden Avenue and you will hit the gates. It is a retention pond, and she is concerned with some invasive species located there.

Mr. Afton motioned to adjourn the meeting at 7:26pm, seconded by Ms. Winstead and was unanimously approved.



Alex Weiner, Secretary



Scott Discon, Chairman
Parks and Parkways Commission