

**Parks and Parkways Commission**

**April 3, 2023**

**Page 1 of 6**

Chairman Scott Discon called the meeting to order at 6:02pm

The secretary called the roll.

Commissioners Present: Scott Discon, Lee Frederick, Christy Kervin, Brien Croff, Shawn Potter, and Shelley Winstead

Absent: Will Afton (Absent at roll call, present at 6:04)

Staff Present: Alex Weiner, Secretary

Mr. Potter introduced himself as he was a new commissioner on the board. He lives in Woodstone and is the HOA president and works for Tulane in data analysis. He has a passion for Mandeville and beautification.

Minutes

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

**New Business:**

**Spring Education Event Update**

Ms. Winstead wanted to acknowledge all the hard work that Ms. Frederick has done.

Ms. Frederick said that it seems like there will be great people at the event. Mr. Discon asked Ms. Frederick to give a rundown of the event since there was a new member of the commission.

Ms. Frederick said the event would take place on April 29<sup>th</sup>. This was the second event that was being put on, it would be located at the trailhead depot and there are speakers and vendors lined up. The first event was good, this one will have a bigger variety. She added that the event helps earn the City points.

Mr. Discon said the points go towards the Tree City Certification and said this event would be the nicest event yet.

Ms. Frederick said that Ms. Kervin and Bonnie Abbey would have a table for seed bombs and seeds. Ms. Kervin said they would be doing abbreviated seed bombs. They would not be mixing them at the event, just prepackaging to make them later. Ms. Winstead added that the Childrens Museum of St. Tammany has ordered some supplies.

Ms. Frederick said that responsibilities would have to be delegated to make sure everything goes smoothly. There will need to be a welcome person to show the vendors and speakers where to park, and to help set up tables.

Ms. Winstead said that Julie Mendez will be there for the Children's Museum, she is the director of programming. Ms. Frederick asked if they wanted to be on the stage; Ms. Winstead said that she will find out.

Ms. Winstead asked if there would be a speaker conflict, Ms. Frederick said there would not be as the speakers are all in the depot.

Ms. Frederick asked if Mr. Discon could welcome people.

Mr. Croff said that he could help with the tables.

Ms. Frederick asked since Mr. Afton was the first speaker if he would help keep things flowing with time reminders and such. Mr. Afton said that he could help.

**Parks and Parkways Commission**

**April 3, 2023**

**Page 2 of 6**

Ms. Frederick said that two speakers will also be vendors and may need people to watch their tables while they speak. She asked if Ms. Kervin and Ms. Winstead could confirm with the vendors and speakers to make sure they could still attend.

Ms. Kervin asked what she would have to do, Ms. Frederick said to just remind them of the date and see if they needed anything.

Ms. Frederick said that Dana with Urban Conservancy could not get there until 10:00 and asked if a table could be set up for her with a name plate or something.

Ms. Frederick said to check with the vendors to see if they had their own table or if they needed one.

Ms. Frederick said to make sure to talk to them and get them to RSVP.

Ms. Frederick said that no one will be on the stage, Mr. Kreller said that the depot and knoll are kind of far away. Ms. Frederick said that there will be an agenda with the speakers listed.

Mr. Kreller asked if there would be any logistical issues, Ms. Frederick said that the place was packed last time, it will be ok.

Ms. Christy suggested a diagram or something.

Ms. Frederick said the banner should go up the weekend before the event. Mr. Discon suggested having two banners on each side of the trailhead.

Mr. Afton suggested having the speakers on legal size paper with a little description of their talk.

Mr. Discon suggested creating an event page on Facebook.

Buck Abbey, 1129 Villere: There was talk of the Mayor doing a City Hall open house on the same day. Mr. Weiner said he would speak with Melissa Barclay, the Mayor's assistant about the matter.

Ms. Frederick asked if Ms. Abbey would be doing door prizes, Mr. Abbey said she would be.

**Short Term Work Program**

Mr. Discon said this was a list of projects for the upcoming budget year. He said that there needs to be some projects for the west side of town.

Ms. Kervin asked what the numbers meant, Mr. Weiner said they did not mean anything. The list was a priority list so the numbers would be based on each person.

Mr. Discon said that some of the projects are in progress currently. The Hwy 190 Overpass project is being drawn currently, Phase 2 of the Florida Street project is being modified, the service road planting is being worked on. The cemetery is waiting on the mausoleums.

Mr. Afton said there were a few things that needed to take place first for some of the projects. There was a project for the cypress swamp on Montgomery Street submitted by Mr. Abbey. Numbers 7 and 8 on the list were also in progress.

Mr. Discon said one of the roles of the commission is to identify projects for the City and make recommendations. They do not have the authority to approve something, but they can help influence things.

Mr. Discon said that some projects have lasted nine years.

**Parks and Parkways Commission**

**April 3, 2023**

**Page 3 of 6**

Mr. Discon said that Franklin Kyle is working on the plans for Marigny and Causeway, Adam Perkins is working on Phase 2 of the Florida Street project and the Hwy 22 overpass. The Four Corners project is being done by Mr. Kyle.

Mr. Discon said there is a Longleaf Pine Savanna and wildflower garden by Walmart which was done by Ms. Frederick and the City. Ms. Frederick said the next thing is for more pines to be added. There are plans for about ten to be added to the site. Mr. Discon added that it was burned last week.

Mr. Discon said that number 10 on the list was a parking lot by Girod Street. There were some tweaks needed for that project. He said that Sunset Point is on hold until the pier is rebuilt. The twelve benches are also on hold.

Ms. Frederick said that someone from Public Works said they have some blue benches. Mr. Discon said that he objected to those benches. They would replace the cement benches that are currently in place. The City has the mold to make new benches, they just need someone to pour the cement. He suggested an RFQ be put out but the City wanted to order new benches.

Ms. Kervin asked if these would be like the benches by the playground. Mr. Discon said they would be like what is under the gazebo.

Mr. Discon spoke with the Historic District Commission, and they want to keep some of the benches. The City does not want to have to pick up all the benches before a hurricane. They are currently at an impasse. The new benches have no characteristics of Mandeville.

Mr. Discon asked if Nancy Clark was involved with project number 13. Mr. Afton said it was a sustainable landscape program.

Ms. Frederick asked if that was the certain percentage of native plants. Mr. Afton said it was lectures. He said that Ms. Frederick was thinking of the certified habitat.

Ms. Frederick said she was circling back to the benches, were there places identified yet? Mr. Discon said there was a list made. He added that there was no seating by Castine park. He wanted to add more benches by the playground and throughout the town. Hurricane Ida came through and Public Works picked up the benches so they would not be taken. He is trying to come up with an easier way to do it but is not sure if there is a way.

Ms. Kervin asked if the benches would be the same everywhere or just along the Lakefront. She would not want to treat the City the same as there is nothing significant about the benches. She added that they are not comfortable so she would be in favor of only having them by the Lakefront.

Mr. Discon said he does not want to change the look of the Lakefront. He is trying to get someone to build the benches.

Mr. Discon said there was a bunch of little things on the list as well. The pocket park at the old jail has been an idea for about four years. The City currently uses the site as storage. There is no plan for the old jail, and Mr. Discon thought the commission could do something in house. It is on Jefferson by Girod and Lafitte. Mr. Abbey said it was 1926 Jefferson.

Mr. Discon said the replacement of 51 trees are what was lost in the park behind City Hall during Ida.

Mr. Discon said that number 14 on the list was an update to the tree plan. This is currently in progress; the total cost was about \$1,000,000 so it is being done in parts. It was started this year with creating an inventory of the trees and uploading it to a program to catalog everything.

**Parks and Parkways Commission**

**April 3, 2023**

**Page 4 of 6**

Number 15 is an educator program for the public. Mr. Discon said this was another project to support the Tree City designation.

Mr. Discon said the public education and research was money set aside to do more things like the pollinator event. He added that there can be other ideas as well.

Ms. Winstead said that there could be an afternoon walking program or an evening seminar for the education event.

Ms. Frederick asked if Schmelly's Dirt Farm could be added to the event flyer.

Mr. Afton asked if the education event would be like the landscape summit that was put on. Mr. Discon asked if that would continue next year.

Mr. Abbey said it would be a good idea to do it again, but he is not sure if it would be done next year. There should be focused sessions, with maybe the next one on Parks and Parkways information. It is important to get the word out. There were about 25 people attending in person but about 450 people watched online. He sees trees coming down all the time when he is walking. Some were in the planting area and there was no permit card displayed. The City is losing the urban forest. Most people cannot see it, but his eyes are trained to see these things.

Skelly Kreller, 280 Dona: The beautification of Monroe was mentioned, he has been working with Ms. Fuselier on that. It would provide canopy, sound and light protection to New Golden Shores. The cost is \$5,500. It should be added to the list and moved up on priority. It is on City property and would have crape myrtles and something between them. It is an easy project.

Ms. Kervin asked if it was located on the west side. Mr. Kreller said it was on the east side, but something like this could be done on the west side.

Mr. Kreller said they could plant some trees on the East Causeway neutral ground. Mr. Discon said that trees were ordered to replace the Japanese Magnolias.

Mr. Discon said to speak with your council representative to try and speed things up.

Ms. Frederick said she is not sure they could add more due to the DOTD but they could replace what was dead. Mr. Discon said it would have to be approved by DOTD and the Causeway due to sight lines. They are sticking with trees that work.

Mr. Kreller said that it would be crape myrtles and cherry laurels for Monroe. Ms. Kervin said that cherry laurels are picky with soil. She likes them a lot but is not sure if they will make it.

Jim Russell, outside City limits: He was asked to come by Patty. He thought there would be a big emphasis on pollinators but everything he has heard is exotic which does nothing for pollinators. A lot of the stuff being planted is useless. Why spend money on a pollinator festival if the commission is going to be lackadaisical. They should reconsider what their long-term goals are. Are they trying to make it look like Cleveland?

Mr. Discon said that they have spent 2 ½ years developing a native plant list to use for projects. They are also pushing native grasses and plantings, crape myrtles are an easy fix to put in. The commission passed an ordinance to prevent brush cutting and reduced the diameter of trees that need to be protected from 6" to 3". They are trying to get projects done.

Mr. Afton said that they are trying to include more native plants.

Ms. Frederick asked if they would work at the fence along Causeway, there was talk of adding wildflowers.

**Parks and Parkways Commission**

**April 3, 2023**

**Page 5 of 6**

Ms. Kervin said they could plant trees that act as hosts for pollinators in the larval stage. Mr. Russell suggested native oak and willow.

Mr. Discon said that originally they were going to match the wildflower garden on the west side but the residents did not want it. Ms. Frederick said they could put one by the Causeway, it is a good place to experiment.

Mr. Discon asked what the status of the bike path was, Mr. Kreller said it was going at the next budget as part of the capital budget. \*Mr. Kreller turned the microphone off at this point\* Mr. Kreller asked if he was off the microphone and not getting recorded at this point. He said he had a sit down with the mayor, who was trying to push the budget on the commission, but it is going to the capital budget. \*Mr. Kreller turned the microphone back on at this point\* He said it should be starting soon. It would connect the whole City.

Mr. Kreller wanted to follow up on what Mr. Abbey said, the commission can have lots of power. There are people on the city council that will go to bat for the commission. He said that they did not cut their budget, they have never cut their budget. That was the Planning Department, not the council. He wants to restore it and has spoken with Mr. Discon about this. If the commission provides stuff to the city council they will support it. He does not believe that Parks and Parkways should pay for grass cutting, that should be public works. He will argue that again.

Mr. Discon said that the previous mayor only allowed edging and only recently got them on board. Mr. Kreller said that at least half of the current budget would go to public works, and then when he gets reelected he would go for the rest.

Mr. Kreller said that he loves crape myrtles, if the commission can come up with something to act as a sound barrier then he will listen.

Ms. Kervin asked if the commission is allowed to raise money outside of the budget to fund projects. Mr. Discon asked if the City had a grant writer? Mr. Kreller said it did, but then she quit.

Ms. Kervin asked if there could be private contributions where people donate a pool of money. Mr. Discon said the City could match funding for neighborhood entrances.

Mr. Kreller said this was a legal question and asked where the money would be kept. Mr. Discon said someone could leave money upon a death perhaps.

Mr. Potter said he read that the commission advises city officials on seeking money, which is how he interprets it.

Mr. Discon said that the commission only advises, they do not have any authority which is where they want to keep them.

Mr. Abbey said they have leadership. They can get people behind them. Mr. Kreller said that getting the public behind you is easy.

Mr. Discon said that maybe previous councils did not want to spend money, but now the new council may support it.

Ms. Frederick asked for Ms. Winstead and Ms. Kervin to send the vendors the flyer when they contact them.

**Staff Update**

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

**Public Comment**

Mr. Croff said he had a mulch recycling idea for the short term work program. He saw a webinar hosted by the Urban Wood Network. Ms. Frederick said it should be added to the list. Mr. Croff said he could make some changes to have it work with the City.

Mr. Discon said to send it to Ms. Fuselier and Mr. Weiner to have them add it to the form.

Ms. Kervin said there was a contrast issue with the current colors on the form, Mr. Weiner said he could change them.

Ms. Frederick said if anyone needs anything from the spreadsheet to call her.

Mr. Afton wanted to give the city recognition to the improved drainage on the Lakefront, and allowed some trapped surface water to drain.

Ms. Winstead motioned to adjourn the meeting at 7:20pm, seconded by Mr. Afton and was unanimously approved.



Alex Weiner, Secretary



Scott Discon, Chairman  
Parks and Parkways Commission