

**Parks and Parkways Commission**

**May 1, 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, Brien Croff, and Shawn Potter

Absent: Will Afton, Shelley Winstead, Christy Kervin (Absent at roll call, present at 6:10)

Staff Present: Catherine Fuselier, City Arborist; Alex Weiner, Secretary

**Minutes**

Mr. Potter made a motion to adopt the minutes from the April 3 meeting, Mr. Croff seconded, and all were in favor.

**New Business:**

**Spring Education Event Recap**

Ms. Frederick said that she was not there at the start but got there around 11:00. It seemed like a big turnout. She thanked the vendors for their time, and they seemed like they were all nice. She suggested getting a mic for next year to announce the speakers and help bring awareness for the upcoming talks.

Mr. Discon asked why not have the speakers where they were originally planned in the grass area. Ms. Frederick said that the depot works best as they need the projector. There just needs to be some awareness.

Mr. Kreller asked if there was A/V equipment by the stage they could use. Mr. Croff said that the stage was occupied during the event. Mr. Kreller said that they could just use it to make the announcements.

Ms. Fuselier said that is something that could be done for next year. She also suggested wayfaring signs to lead people to the depot for the talks.

Ms. Frederick said that Schmelly's Dirt Farm was the only vendor that was unable to show as they had a last minute issue.

Ms. Kervin said the location of the City Hall display worked well. Ms. Frederick asked what the plans were. Ms. Kervin said it was expanding the current building and adding more parking. The front porch would be enclosed and the council chamber would be the new finance department. The middle area would be for reception and the other side would be the Planning Department. The new council chambers would be able to hold about 150 people up from 75.

**Short Term Work Program**

Mr. Discon asked if the budget was done in July. Ms. Fuselier said she was not sure on the exact month. Mr. Kreller said that it is done usually at the end of June.

Ms. Fuselier said to rank them in a priority order. Mr. Croff asked if they do that now, Ms. Fuselier said no. Mr. Croff asked if they each order it based on their priority, Ms. Fuselier said that was correct, then based on all the recommendations they would be put in a final order.

Mr. Discon said to have the numbers done for next meeting. Ms. Fuselier said that they could also email their list in or drop it off at City Hall.

Mr. Potter said that he and a couple other commission members were meeting with Rebecca Bush to discuss projects for the west side of town. They wanted to try to meet before tonight's meeting, but the schedules did not allow for it. Ms. Fuselier said that as long as the meeting is before the next commission meeting they can add the ideas to the list.

## **Parks and Parkways Commission**

**May 1, 2023**

**Page 2 of 6**

### **Neighborwoods Decking**

Mr. Weiner said that Public Works requested that the commission vote on a new decking color for the Neighborwoods project. Ms. Fuselier said that this was only for the decking as the guard rail, hand rail, and posts would be the color of treated wood.

Ms. Kervin asked where this was, Ms. Fuselier said it was for Neighborwoods. Mr. Discon said that it was in Beau Rivage.

Ms. Kervin made a motion to recommend approval of the Saddle color, Ms. Frederick seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Discon asked what the start date would be, Ms. Fuselier said she was not sure but Public Works wanted a quick turnaround. Mr. Kreller said it would be in the next month.

Mr. Discon asked if there was a sign for Neighborwoods? Ms. Fuselier said that it has a wrought iron gate. Mr. Discon asked if there were highway signs. Ms. Fuselier asked if he meant wayfaring signs and she was not sure if there was one for Neighborwoods. Mr. Kreller said it was easily done.

### **Staff Update**

Ms. Fuselier said that the burn for the Savanna site was done and stuff is already coming back. The leftover wildflower seeds would be spread before the next rainfall.

Mr. Discon asked when that would happen, Ms. Fuselier said it would be before the next rain date. Mr. Discon asked if she would let people know, Ms. Fuselier said that she would.

Mr. Discon asked if they threw seeds last year, Ms. Fuselier said they did and planted stuff.

Ms. Kervin said there was a 60% chance of rain on Friday.

Mr. Kreller asked if the oaks would be moved. Ms. Fuselier said that they would be extending the site towards Park Avenue as there is an issue with people going over the curbing in the area. They are going to put the trees as a barrier. When they move the oaks to a better location they will also remediate the soil to aid with growth as they should be doing better. They will add some longleaf pines to the site as well when this is done.

Mr. Kreller asked if these were container grown trees, Ms. Fuselier said they were field dug.

Mr. Kreller asked what the survival percentage would be if they were moved. Ms. Fuselier said they would not be moved in the summer, it would take place in the winter. Mr. Kreller asked if there would be a problem with moving them. Ms. Fuselier said they would assess each tree to see if it was worth moving and if it would survive. It would be done on a tree by tree basis.

Mr. Discon said that there were lots of trees in good health after Ida. He would rather leave them and not kill them. Ms. Fuselier said there needs to be some remediation done as they are not doing well. They are 10 years old and should look better.

Mr. Discon asked when the trees for East and West Causeway would be coming in. Ms. Fuselier said that Ms. Bartholomew said to hold off. Ms. Frederick asked why, Ms. Fuselier said she was not sure.

Ms. Fuselier said the only trees that were going to be ordered were to replace the Japanese Magnolias that died. They would be focusing on other places like the North Causeway buffer by Bendicts.

Ms. Kervin said that she went by Pearlis and look around and there are lots of overhead lines. She said that there is a cypress tree planted by the Southern Hotel in Covington in between the

powerline and the building and it does not seem to be a problem. There is more room at this location for maybe some taller things. Ms. Frederick suggested doing some layers with larger stuff in the back. Ms. Kervin said there is nothing drawn yet as she needs a map.

Mr. Discon asked if a drawing of the plot could be provided, Ms. Fuselier said that she would ask around as the property did not belong to the City, but to DOTD or the Causeway.

Ms. Frederick said that some wildflowers would look beautiful, Ms. Kervin said they might be hard to see as they would be on a slope. Ms. Frederick suggested that the flowers could be higher with some grasses lower. Ms. Kervin said she would like to see some trees as that is what is needed.

Mr. Kreller said it was a wasteland. Ms. Kervin said trees would be the most bang for buck.

Mr. Discon said there was talk originally about leaving the area natural and suggested some cypress as they grow fast.

#### **Public Comment**

Bonnie Abbey, 1129 Villere: She spoke with the mayor about livestreaming the meetings as people at the Pollinator Event did not know who the commission was. Most people watch the livestreams so it would be a good idea to have them livestreamed.

Mr. Kreller asked why the meetings were not livestreamed. Ms. Fuselier said that not all meetings are, only the Planning and Zoning and city council meetings are livestreamed. Mr. Kreller asked if there is a cost associated with livestreaming, Ms. Fuselier said she is not sure as she is not involved with that. Mr. Kreller said that he would speak with Andrew about it.

Mr. Discon said that it would be good to grow awareness of the commission, Mr. Kreller said that if the meetings are livestreamed there would be more attendees.

Mr. Croff asked if it would be streamed to Facebook, Mr. Kreller said it was and the last city council meeting had 360 viewers.

Mr. Discon asked if Mr. Kreller would talk with Andrew tomorrow, Mr. Kreller said he would.

Mr. Kreller said that what is being planned for Perlis should be done by the donut shop on East Causeway.

Ms. Frederick asked about the beds by Chenier. Mr. Disco said he thought the commission could do those themselves and just throw seeds into the open beds.

Mr. Kreller asked if this would be in the medians. Mr. Discon said there were originally grasses there but they got mowed over and died. They would throw seeds this year. Ms. Fuselier added that she can always order more seeds.

Mr. Discon said they just need to throw the seeds, Mr. Kreller said there was no need to penetrate the ground.

Ms. Frederick asked if more seeds should be ordered, Mr. Discon said they should use what they have.

Mr. Potter said that he took some photos during the event and suggested posting to the website or Facebook. Mr. Weiner said to send the photos to him and he can post them to the website.

Mr. Discon said that the stage needs to be washed and painted and all the buildings need to be touched up.

**Parks and Parkways Commission**

**May 1, 2023**

**Page 4 of 6**

Buck Abbey, 1129 Villere: There are a couple of new members, and he is not sure of their background. He thinks it would be worthwhile to take them on a walk to talk about trees and teach them about trees as well. He assumes that they do not know much about trees. Mr. Croff said that if he was quizzed, he would fail.

Mr. Abbey asked if it was ok to take two members on a walk like this if he can find a place with diverse enough trees. Ms. Fuselier said that was fine as long as they do not discuss commission business.

Mr. Discon said that Pottery Hill has some native trees, Mr. Abbey said that there is not much diversity there.

Mr. Abbey said that the main job of the commission is to advise the city council. Some members of the commission talk with people at the City, but that is private talk. The commission does not talk publicly about what they do. Their most important advice is the project list. Last year the budget for the commission was \$1,000,000. Ms. Fuselier added that half of that is devoted to maintenance and the rest is under the Planning Department budget.

Mr. Abbey said the biggest piece of advice is the list and it is never on paper. Mr. Discon said they have done it during the previous years.

Mr. Abbey said they have the list, but they need to go further than the name and budget. They need to tell the city council what the project is and why it is important.

Ms. Frederick said that is what they do. They get preliminary plans and present them. Mr. Abbey asks if it is on paper, Ms. Fuselier said that a packet is made for the city council.

Mr. Kreller said that when there is a large project the council sees everything. What needs to be done is Mr. Discon needs to come before the council in the next month and address them concerning the list and the importance. He always says that the commission has a lot of power.

Mr. Discon said after they are ranked they will present them to the council to see if they like one. The city council decides the money that is spent. He has fought for previous projects and has jumped the Planning Department and gone to the council before.

Mr. Kreller said they have an avenue through him to get things done. Beautification is extremely important, need to get naked areas planted.

Mr. Discon said that they have to jump to be heard. If they sit back and wait for the Planning Department then nothing would happen.

Mr. Abbey said that he helped start the commission about 15 years ago. They always had to define and explain their projects. The commission has a lot of power. They are in a community where people want what they are offering. The commission is not being effective. The community is losing the urban forest and all the commission has been talking about has been pollination. No one is talking about it but him. There needs to be a plan for backyard planting.

Mr. Discon said that they did that. There was the street tree program after Ida where four trees were offered, with two being planted in the rear. Ms. Fuselier added that there is always the option to have the trees planted in the rear.

Mr. Discon said they will rank projects and then campaign.

Ms. Kervin said that in the mission statement it says that the commission can "seek grant money, public funding and private contributions to implement the Annual Work Plan and further the work of the Commission". She wondered if they could solicit for private donations and go around the budget if it is an issue.

Mr. Kreller said it is not illegal for someone to donate money to the commission.

Mr. Discon said that he reads that as someone can leave money to the commission in a will. Ms. Frederick said they would have to respect what it was earmarked for.

Ms. Frederick asked if the City had a grant writer, Ms. Fuselier said not anymore.

Mr. Kreller said they are not hard to find. He got one earlier with Mr. Danielson, but they went another way. It does not have to be in house and can be a private firm. Ms. Frederick suggested college kids in the summer.

Ms. Frederick said they should look at the project list and anything that was just planting a few trees they should mark as number one as they are easy. Mr. Discon agreed.

Mr. Kreller asked how many projects are on the list, Mr. Discon said there are 18.

Mr. Discon said there is no excuse for why five trees cannot get planted by Times Grill. There should not be any pushback for it.

Mr. Kreller said that if they came before the city council before the budget to request to plant trees he guarantees a vote of 5-0.

Mr. Abbey said it was possible to do a mass tree planting and have one contractor plant them all.

Mr. Discon said that the city side of things takes forever. They say that you need an architect for a project and then they go in a circle.

Ms. Frederick said that there are DOTD hurdles as well. Mr. Discon said that everything costs more money the way it is set up. There is talent on the board so they could draw plans in house.

Mr. Kreller said the City side is the most frustrating thing. There are hoops to go through for the City.

Mr. Abbey said that some communities have a Landscape Architect on staff. Mr. Kreller said that the council wanted one but the administration said no. The City needs to have a landscape architect look at every plan for drainage. The City says they have one but they do not.

Ms. Fuselier said that she reviews every plan.

Ms. Kervin said that it would be nice to have more people like her.

Ms. Fuselier said that they need a department for greenery. Ms. Kervin said that you also need to police people which is too much for one person.

Mr. Croff said that he had a mulch idea for a project at the last meeting. Mr. Kreller asked if it would mulch fallen trees.

Mr. Croff said that he drafted some language that could maybe added to the guidelines. Mr. Kreller asked if he wrote something, Mr. Croff said he revised some language.

Mr. Discon asked if Mr. Croff sent it over to Ms. Fuselier yet, Mr. Croff said he had not yet.

Mr. Discon asked how much a grinder would cost, Ms. Fuselier said she was not sure and she would have to check.

**Parks and Parkways Commission**

**May 1, 2023**

**Page 6 of 6**

Ms. Frederick asked if this would be for private citizens. Mr. Croff said that some locations in the City could be established for the public where if they remove a tree they can bring it to be re-used. Ms. Frederick said that she does not see someone loading chips to bring over.

Ms. Frederick suggested an incentive that the City could provide. Ms. Kervin said that they could not issue the permit.

Mr. Discon said that a rule could be made that the City gets the tree after the removal and puts it in the shredder.

Mr. Kreller asked if other cities do this, Mr. Croff said that there was one city that picked up the mulch from people's properties. This could be a good incentive.

Ms. Frederick said to present it to the City Council and get the CLURO changed. Ms. Fuselier said that this could be done as a policy change, it would just have to be approved by Public Works as they would be the boots on the ground.

Mr. Discon said that he thought the City was supposed to be mulching under the oaks at the Lakefront. Ms. Fuselier said that there is not a big enough mulch budget. It gets topped out just doing the garden beds.

Mr. Kreller said that when Zeigler cuts down a tree the City still owns the tree. We could tell them to bring it to a place to be mulched. This could be done even on private property.

Ms. Kervin said that the property owner could be forced to pay for the mulching and delivery, that way it would incentivize not cutting down trees. Mr. Discon said they cannot put too much expense on the property owner, they are already paying for the removal of the tree.

Ms. Frederick said she was not clear on what would be mulched, would this be leaves as well or just chips. Ms. Kervin said that you could not be sure what you get with leaves.

Mr. Discon said that they could reject trees that have beetles as well. Ms. Fuselier said it would depend on the type.

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



Alex Weiner, Secretary



Scott Discon, Chairman  
Parks and Parkways Commission