

**Parks and Parkways Commission**

**July 10, 2023**

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Chairman Scott Discon called the meeting to order at 6:07pm

The secretary called the roll.

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

Absent: Will Afton, Christy Kervin

Staff Present: Alex Weiner, Secretary

**Minutes**

Ms. Winstead made a motion to adopt the minutes from the May 1 meeting, Mr. Croff seconded, and all were in favor.

Mr. Discon said they would move the Longleaf Pine Maintenance Proposal to the front of the agenda so that Ms. Cole could leave earlier.

**New Business:**

**Longleaf Pine Maintenance Proposal**

Jess Cole: Was on the commission from 2015 – 2016. She is familiar with the Longleaf Pine area and owns a landscaping company in Baton Rouge. She is from the Mandeville area and always checks out the area when she is in town. She mentioned that she has not seen it being burned often.

Mr. Discon said that they do a yearly burn.

Ms. Cole asked if they still worked with Mark, Ms. Frederick said that Mark was currently out of the picture but consults if needed.

Ms. Cole said that she is intrigued by the space and said that she does lots of burnings with meadows.

Ms. Frederick said they are going to be adding more Longleaf Pines as there are not as many as they would like. There is a yearly burn and they have also added some grasses and wildflowers. The live oaks that are currently on site will be moved when it gets cooler. She added that there is talk of expanding the area.

Mr. Croff said they can put it on the project list.

Ms. Cole said that she has been watching over the years and was curious about the steward of the area.

Mr. Discon said her proposal was for \$3,100 for the first year and asked if she was interested in taking over as the steward of the area. Ms. Cole said she was intrigued to do so. She said they usually do established areas like this in three segments: See what is there, eliminate any invasives, and the burn. She would also add plugs of native plants to the area.

Ms. Frederick asked what the name of the company was, Ms. Cole said that it was Meadow Creek Native in St. Francisville.

Mr. Discon confirmed that the cost would be \$3,100 for the first year and then \$1,500 after that.

Ms. Cole said that it was in a good state. Ms. Frederick said they want to embellish with color and that it looks gorgeous up close. Ms. Frederick asked if Ms. Cole had a burn license, Ms. Cole replied that she did.

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Mr. Discon suggested that the property could include the addition of more wildflowers.

Ms. Cole said that there were not many invasive species in the area, but there could be some work done on the natives as they can still take over so a little clearing out may be needed. The bulk of what she would bring in is with seeds and plugs.

Ms. Frederick said that there are lots of native varieties that could be added. Ms. Cole said she has spent some time in other Savanna forests.

Mr. Discon asked if there were other examples of her work. Ms. Cole replied there were some examples in Covington, Amite, and St. Francisville. Mr. Discon asked if they were all done on private property, Ms. Cole said they were.

Mr. Discon said they could seed the area for it to bloom in season.

Ms. Cole said she has done multi area estates, and you typically do not see the fruits until about three years later.

Ms. Frederick asked if there was another area would Ms. Cole be interested in that as well, Ms. Cole said she would be. Ms. Frederick asked what the cost would be, Ms. Cole said it would depend on the site as there were multiple ways of installation. Ms. Frederick said they may be looking at expanding.

Ms. Cole said this was a manmade area, not a habitat. It could use more different native flowers, there are not many invasives but there are large areas of Golden Rod that could be thinned out.

Mr. Discon asked if there was anything else that Ms. Cole wanted to cover before opening it up to questions from the commission. Ms. Cole said there was not. She was interested in partnering for stewardship in any capacity.

Ms. Frederick asked if the \$3,100 and \$1,500 included the cost of burning. Ms. Cole said it did. Ms. Cole added that there was lots of time/money for plants in the first year.

Ms. Winstead said maybe they could make the area more exciting; she agrees that just passing by there is lots of potential.

Mr. Discon asked when the blooms would be, Buck Abbey said it would be around spring/fall.

Mr. Discon asked if more flowers in the summer were possible, Ms. Cole said that there is a bit of a second dormant season at this time so the short answer is there could be.

Ms. Frederick said that liatris do not seed well. Ms. Cole agreed and said that plugs would be used. This time of year, you would see the best number of blooms.

Ms. Frederick asked how Ms. Cole heard about the area, was she just passing through?

Mr. Discon said she was a previous commission member. Ms. Cole added that she is from the area, so she is around a lot.

Mr. Discon said that there are issues with some residents being into a more pristine look, while the commission is looking to keep things more natural. This could be a great teaching opportunity. Ms. Cole added that this is the last area for this habitat.

Ms. Frederick said that the biomass is huge in the area compared to a lawn.

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Ms. Cole said that the work the commission does is amazing, something like this would not fly in Baton Rouge.

Mr. Discon said he took a trip to Lake Hamilton recently and the Louisiana Highways are hideous. Once you get into Arkansas everything is very beautiful.

Ms. Frederick suggested Ms. Cole could possibly give some input on the Perlis project. Mr. Discon said that is a good idea. The concept is to make it more natural. Ms. Kervin is doing the plans for the area, but there could be some seeding done as well.

Ms. Cole said she was delighted to chat on any project.

Ms. Frederick said there is a slope at the ditch, and maybe a barrier would be needed. Ms. Cole said that is when plugs would shine. She added that she would like to get into more City stuff.

### **Meeting Policy and Procedure**

Mr. Weiner wanted to remind the commission of certain procedures that should be followed during meetings. He said that commissioners should remember to turn on and talk into their microphones. Secondly, the agenda items were for discussion by the commission members, and then any public comments would be taken. Talking from the audience was not permitted. Additionally, commissioners should refrain from any cross talk during discussions. Finally, any public comments need to be made at the microphone and must be limited to three minutes.

### **Short Term Work Program**

Mr. Discon asked if there was anything else to add?

Ms. Frederick asked how many more pines were to be added to the Savanna site? Mr. Weiner said 10-12 were decided on.

#### Hwy 190 Underpass

Mr. Discon said that plans are being drawn.

#### Florida Street Phase 2

Mr. Discon said that there was a contract and funding was received from the city council so they should be starting soon. It will be from Lafayette to Marigny and Wilkinson to the median by the Waffle House. There would be a continuation of the grasses.

Ms. Frederick asked if there was a discussion of the plants that did well? Mr. Discon said that Ms. Fuselier met on site with Adam Perkins and went through the plants.

#### North Causeway Service Road Plantings

Mr. Discon said that this was the Perlis project. It is being drawn as we speak, and he estimates it will cost about \$50,000.

#### Kierr Gardens

Mr. Discon said this has been completed.

#### Cemetery

Mr. Discon said that the City is installing mausoleums so they are waiting on that to be finished.

#### Cypress Tupelo Swamp

Mr. Discon said this was a Buck Abbey project, and asked if there was an amount. Mr. Abbey said he did not have an amount, but it would probably be under \$50,000.

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Ms. Frederick asked if that included a boardwalk. Mr. Abbey said that there would be some signage and a wetland seeding area.

Mr. Discon asked if they could do a fieldtrip there, Mr. Abbey said they could stop by on Saturday. Mr. Discon asked if it was included on the tour, Mr. Abbey said they were going to be by the Lang House.

Mr. Discon asked what the address was, Mr. Abbey said it was on Montgomery Street by Jackson and Foy and extends to Florida. It is a rare swamp. Mr. Discon added that it was by the cemetery.

Mr. Abbey said that a man from Hammond owns the middle lot, which the City should buy as there is no access to it. Mr. Discon asked if Mr. Abbey has spoken with Ms. McGuire, Mr. Abbey said he took her around the site.

Mr. Discon asked if the City was buying any lots in the area, Mr. Abbey said there were two lots to the east that would be approved on Thursday.

Ms. Winstead asked if they could look at the site on Saturday, Mr. Abbey said they could if everyone wanted to.

Ms. Frederick asked if it had been registered yet. Mr. Abbey said that it would have been the first certified habitat in the town. The commission recommended that it be certified and sent it to the city council but have not heard anything back.

Mr. Discon said they could add the application as part of the project. Mr. Abbey said the site is a good example, with more than 75% native plants.

Ms. Frederick asked if it could get added to the next agenda, Mr. Discon said he would get with Ms. Bartholomew.

Mr. Abbey said that the council just switched to having Jason Zuckerman as the chair for the next year and he is in favor of the project.

Marigny Avenue

Mr. Discon said it was discussed to place this in the capital projects budget. They have planted some trees and may not be doing any curbing so it might not be moved into the capital budget. He will check and see. If it goes into the capital projects budget it would not come from the Parks and Parkways budget.

Causeway Underpass

Mr. Discon said it is in the second phase, the first phase is done and got positive reviews.

Longleaf Pine Savanna Site

Mr. Discon said they would be adding 10 more trees.

Ms. Frederick said that Ms. Cole seems reasonable for the price.

Ms. Winstead asked how they would go about hiring her. Mr. Discon said they could vote at the next meeting and wrap it into the project and add it to the budget.

Mr. Discon asked what the size of the trees should be. Mr. Abbey recommended 3-gallon seedlings, and recommended planting bigger trees and the number should be upped to 20.

Mr. Discon suggested half and half, Mr. Abbey added that they should be planted strategically, as there is no design on the site.

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Ms. Frederick said that it is not supposed to be planned out. They do not want it to look orchestrated.

Mr. Discon said they would do half of the 3-gallon and asked what the other size should be, Mr. Abbey said 30-gallon. Mr. Discon said they would do the half and half planting and increase the number of trees to 20.

Mr. Abbey said that there were ways to plant trees in both a natural and artistic way, which could be done at the site. Mr. Discon said that they would get the trees then figure that out.

### Parking lot on the corner of Girod and Claiborne

Mr. Discon said that it was done two years ago.

Mr. Abbey said it is under maintenance but the landscape was put in over a gravel lot so it is slowly dying.

Mr. Discon asked how to correct it, could the contractor amend the soil? Mr. Abbey said the gravel should have been excavated at first. The landscape beds will not change the geological nature. They were not installed correctly. Mr. Discon said he would check on it.

### Sunset Point

Mr. Discon said this was in the capital improvement projects, they were rebuilding the piers, so everything is waiting for that.

### Benches

Mr. Discon said they are holding off on this. They have the form but nobody to build the benches. He suggested that they could put out an RFQ to build a bench a week.

### LSU Ag Center

Mr. Croff said this may have been a project from Mr. Afton.

Mr. Abbey said he taught the program when it came out. It deals with sustainability, but he is not sure what Mr. Afton wants. It could be worked into the Landscape Code very well. He is a big supporter of this and feels that it should be introduced to the City and incorporated into the code.

Mr. Discon asked what the budget amount would be, Mr. Abbey said that would have to come from Mr. Afton.

### Pocket Park at Old Jail Site

Mr. Discon said the old jail is very small, and he was thinking about making it a pocket park. Public Works stores stuff there. He suggested that maybe it could be added to the tour list.

Ms. Winstead asked if they could get the City to move the junk and then they could develop it. Mr. Discon said it could possibly be screened.

Mr. Potter asked if there would be a cost issue, Mr. Discon said he was not sure.

### Replacing 51 trees in the park behind City Hall

Mr. Discon said this was easy to do, and asked if there was a cost estimate. Mr. Abbey said it would probably be about \$200 per tree. He added that the mayor is aware of this project and thinks it is appropriate.

Mr. Discon asked if the stumps would be removed, Mr. Abbey said not all of them.

Mr. Abbey said this is an opportunity for two things. To replace the trees and to educate the public on the protection from hurricanes that trees can provide. This could be turned into a tree walk area. You need to convince private landowners to plant on their property.

Mr. Discon asked why not introduce an ordinance that would require replacement if a tree is removed. Mr. Weiner said the City already has tree protection in place. For residential homes you are required to keep 50% of the current number of trees on the property, and there are minimum numbers of trees required that is based on the size of the lot.

Mr. Discon said they should look into requiring replanting on every tree that is removed to keep the canopy.

Mr. Abbey said lots of trees were lost in the storm, Mr. Discon added that chainsaws were going crazy after Ida.

#### Master Tree Plan

Mr. Discon said there was a long-term goal to inventory all the trees in the City. Malcolm Guidry is working on it and is mapping the trees, but he is unaware of the status. Mr. Discon added that the project is being done over the course of a couple years to spread out the cost.

#### Educational Programs for the Public

Mr. Discon said they will continue to do this.

#### Additional Projects

Ms. Winstead said to add West Causeway to the project list.

Mr. Discon said to add the mulch project as well, and asked if there was a dollar amount. Mr. Croff said he did not have an amount yet, he is currently writing a plan to act as a supplement to Article 9 in the CLURO.

Mr. Discon said there needs to be a budget. Mr. Croff said that they need to get a mulcher and designate a spot for it. Mr. Discon said suggested the old jail perhaps.

Ms. Frederick said they could use City Hall, Mr. Discon also added to check out Public Works.

Ms. Frederick said they need to establish standards. Mr. Croff said he will address that in what he is writing.

Mr. Discon said to share the research that way they can put together a resolution. They just need a location to start to stockpile. If a hurricane comes trees will be lost. He asked if we would want to mulch a tree that had bugs. Mr. Croff said that Ms. Fuselier could comment better on that than he could.

Ms. Frederick asked if this would be for both City and residents. Mr. Croff said that the City would always make mulch from their removals and they could accept donations from other sources. They would have to talk about who the mulch would be available for. He suggested that maybe it could be accessible to residents for a certain amount of time.

Mr. Discon asked if it would be mandatory for any removal. Mr. Croff said he was unsure if that could be done.

Ms. Frederick said with new construction they add in red clay and then the trees all die.

Mr. Potter asked if they had the authority to force this on private property. Mr. Discon said they could try, then shift to donation.

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Mr. Croff suggested offering incentives, or that the contractor could mulch at the site and then the City would pick up a certain volume.

Mr. Discon suggested that the tree removal companies could drop the trees off at City Hall. Ms. Frederick said that lots would do that.

Mr. Discon said they need to find locations. Ms. Frederick said that he needs to talk with Ms. Bartholomew about jurisdictional power.

Ms. Frederick suggested an incentive on their permit and added that it should be mandatory for tree cutters.

Mr. Discon said they could draft the ordinance that way and if it gets shot down, they could revise it. He asked what the permit incentives would be? Would they waive the fee? Ms. Frederick said it could be a percentage.

Ms. Winstead said she is against waiving the fee. Ms. Frederick said it could be a percentage. They can come up with a plan to make this better. There are no green infrastructure incentives in the City.

Ms. Winstead said the best thing they can do is education as commission members. Most people just do not know.

Ms. Frederick said that builders do everything cheaper. There needs to be incentives for green infrastructure.

Ms. Winstead said there was a phone conversation with Rebecca Bush about a project on the west side of the City. She is thinking about something small scale currently. The medians in the area have 90° curbs, which Mr. Afton thinks will help the trees fare better.

Mr. Discon said that with better curbs you can have better trees.

Ms. Winstead said they were thinking about unity with East and West Causeway. Their first proposal is for some crape myrtles to be planted on West Approach.

Ms. Frederick said there are some trees currently planted. Ms. Winstead said they would like to add more. Ms. Frederick said that they tried in the past, but DOTD would not let them.

Mr. Discon said to just go for it, but the causeway commission needs to sign off on it. They will add it to the list.

Ms. Frederick said the Japanese Magnolias dies and suggested planting Hollies. Mr. Discon said they are not doing well. Everything was just trimmed and mulched and said that crape myrtles always work.

Mr. Discon asked if there was a dollar amount. Ms. Winstead said \$5,000. Mr. Discon said that was too low and to do \$15,000 at least.

Mr. Potter said the area is under construction and they just added curbs. Ms. Frederick suggested adding more cypress.

Mr. Discon said the bridge should be seeded with wildflowers to look better. He said the bridge should be included in the project. East and West Approach are under contract and the bridge could be added to that.

Ms. Frederick said that there are likeminded people on the board. They have certain power and see everything. She would like to write up some recommendations to give to the city council from the board that would hit some major points to change in the CLURO. She wants to try to

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address a couple big points, protect trees, address fill, and embracing green infrastructure. You need to work with the water. There are only eight spots allowed to be pervious parking, and that should be reversed. The City needs to acquire more greenspace and needs to do more to help with green infrastructure.

Mr. Discon asked about offering incentives, Ms. Frederick suggested 10% off of the water bill if a rain barrel is used. Mr. Discon asked how the negatives like mosquitos would be controlled. Ms. Frederick said a mesh screen could be added. She said that New Orleans is ahead on stuff like this.

Mr. Croff suggested the next education event be a rain barrel workshop. The City could buy the materials and the people could sign up and then take home the barrel they make.

Ms. Frederick said it was a big thing in New Orleans.

Ms. Winstead said this would be great for the lakefront.

Mr. Discon suggested that the workshop could be added as a project.

Mr. Discon said that they need to make some findings and then turn that into a resolution to the city council. They need to have goals and then they can move to the CLURO changes. The first step is a resolution for their goals, then they can apply pressure to the city council to change the CLURO.

Ms. Winstead asked if it was written up could they vote by email. Mr. Weiner said they could not.

Mr. Discon said that there is a new code enforcement officer who is a police officer who will be in the position full time. Mr. Weiner added that you can report code enforcement violations online as well.

Ms. Frederick said there are four major areas for thought. Protecting trees, fill, embrace green infrastructure, and acquire greenspace.

Mr. Abbey said that this was a wonderful idea. He would add changes to the landscape ordinance, and that is where you could bring in green infrastructure. It has not been changed in 20 years. The commission needs help to do their work, money should be put into the budget to hire a landscape architect to define the project list. They need all of them, but they cannot do all of them. They need to retain a landscape architect to define their project list.

Ms. Frederick said she understands what he is saying but the City has Franklin Kyle. She is trying to stick with major points to make a shift in thinking, not trying to make anything too complicated.

Mr. Abbey said that the City needs someone at the executive level to take charge of the urban forest. They should hire a landscape architect to be in charge of all of these things. Ms. Fuselier is currently in charge and she is too busy. To really make a change you need to have someone at the executive level to get things done.

**Staff Update**

Mr. Weiner said there was nothing for the Staff Update

**Public Comment**

Ms. Winstead said that she was contacted by the Daughters of the American Revolution who want to help plant trees. They could help with the replanting of the 51 trees.



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Ms. Winstead motioned to adjourn the meeting at 7:57pm, seconded by Mr. Potter and was unanimously approved.



Alex Weiner, Secretary



Scott Discon, Chairman  
Parks and Parkways Commission