

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE  
URBAN FORESTRY COMMISSION  
UNIVERSITY CITY, ST. LOUIS COUNTY, MISSOURI  
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 12, 2022**

**Agenda Item A: Call Meeting to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm.

**Agenda Item B: Roll Call**

Those in attendance included Commission President Kristin Sobatka, Commission Vice President Dianne Benjamin, Secretary Kathy Freese, and Commission Members Aaron Bitzer, and John Roman. Also in attendance was Council Liaison Aleta Klein, and Forestry Supervisor Jacob Kaiser. Absent was Director of Parks, Recreation and Forestry Darren Dunkle.

**Agenda Item C: Approval of Agenda**

Commission President Kristin Sobatka approved the agenda with no changes. The motion was approved unanimously.

**Agenda Item D: Approval of Minutes**

Commission President Kristin Sobatka. The motion was approved unanimously.

**Agenda Item E: Citizens' Comments**

None.

**Agenda Item F: Department Report** – Jacob Kaiser reported on the Forestry Reports.

- a) Reported on YTD overall numbers. Discussion took place regarding residents planting in the tree lawn. Mr. Kaiser stated that residents can legally plant and maintain trees in the tree lawn by applying for a Forestry Permit through his office.

**Agenda Item G: Council Liaison Report** – Ms. Klein reported on the following:

- a) Ms. Klein stated that the Costco site should be pad ready by the spring of 2022 with an opening in the fall. Developer is still acquiring property for the entire development. She further stated that the pile of dirt on the south side of Olive will eventually be spread out over the entire site to level out the sight as well as to bring it out of the flood zone.
- b) Ms. Klein stated that some of the dirt from the Costco development has been moved to the property owned by the city on the corner of Midland and Olive to bring the site out of the flood zone.
- c) Ms. Klein reported on the proposed ¼ cent sales tax that will be placed on the April ballot. If approved, funds could be used to add a third ambulance and crew as well as the Fire Departments portion of the pension fund. She further stated that there is a potential to add a home health care component to the third ambulance to provide this service to seniors.

**Agenda Item H: Unfinished Business**

- a) Memorial Tree Policy – Limited name for it and maybe it could be thought of as a different or more expanded policy.

## Agenda Item #10: New Business

- a) Tree Inventory – Commission discussed the report from Davey Resource Group. Mr. Kaiser reported that there was a total of 12,000 trees (9,000 Street Trees and 3,000 Park Trees). He further stated that the report identified that 1,800 trees needed to be pruned, 556 needed to be removed, 67% in good condition, 25% in fair condition, just under 10% in poor condition, and 1% dead; Two million in eco benefits annually calculated by a program called itree. Mr. Kaiser stated that he can send Commission Members a link to the tree inventory, or they can go on [www.showmetrees.com](http://www.showmetrees.com) to not only see UCity's tree inventory, but can also look at other cities inventories, etc. Mr. Kaiser further stated that the inventory only includes city owned trees and did not include private subdivision trees or St. Louis County owned trees.
- b) Urban Forestry Operations Review and Strategic Plan – Commission discussed the report that was done by the Davey Resource Group in 2009. Mr. Kaiser stated that he was trying to come up with the sectioning out of the city into five areas to create an annual pruning plan and is basically using the current trash schedule to prune and/or inspect trees within that ward/section on a five-year cycle. Just went out to bid for pruning in section one which is the east part of the city which covers all wards. Contractor will be working on the street trees while inhouse crews are focusing on parks and any emergency requests. As funds are available, it is the plan to have contractors to perform all of the pruning to street trees and use city crews on more detailed work within the parks. This plan will be in concert with the 2009 Plan.

Discussion took place by members of the Commission stating that they thought that this was a new plan as the action items to be the same as what has been discussed over the past year. Mr. Kaiser stated that due to the lack of resources and a priority of the city, most of the action items have not taken place since the report was completed. However, over the past several years more funding has been put into place for contractual work to assist staff to catch up with the pruning and removal of street trees.

- c) Washington University Cooperation – Commission Secretary Freese brought up the idea of having Washington University purchase and maintain street trees in front of properties that they own in University City.

Mr. Kaiser reported that Mr. Dunkle has stated that Washington University is a part of the Campus USA program that is similar to the Tree City USA program and was researching who was in charge of that program for Washington University.

Discussion took place regarding the city inspectors citing Washington University about their plant materials and maintenance. Further discussion took place about further education of the city inspectors and the benefits of native plantings etc. Commission stated that the city shouldn't be citing Washington University or residents on their native plantings etc. City ordinance should be reviewed, and interdepartmental cooperation should take place as the Planning Department does not have the expertise and should probably consult with the Parks, Recreation and Forestry Department.

Ms. Freese stated that there was a committee of the city (Mayor, City Manager, Council Members) to work with Washington University to gain better cooperation, and this might be a subject for discussion. Ms. Klein stated that she was unaware of any official committee or task force but would bring this up with the City Manager.

The Commission asked if the Director could provide an update on anything that he has found out and report back to the Commission. If more action is needed, the Commission can have further discussion and make a motion to move forward.

d) Election of Officers –

A motion was made by Diane Benjamin and seconded by John Roman to have Kristin remain President, Aaron Bitzer Vice President and Kathy Freese Secretary. The motion was approved unanimously.

Commission Member Roman announced that he would be moving to Philadelphia and would no longer be able to serve on the Commission. Ms. Klein stated that she would move forward with the recommendation of a new appointment to fill Mr. Roman's vacancy.

**Agenda Item J: Commission Comments**

- a) Commission Member Benjamin reported that UCity's pledge was listed on the Invasive Plant website.
- b) Commission Member Benjamin discussed the Arbor Walk and thought that this was something that the city could look at doing at some time.
- c) Commission Member Benjamin asked how to get an item placed on the agenda. Commission Secretary Freese stated that in the past she was told to contact Mr. Dunkle and the President at least a week ahead of time. Mr. Kaiser confirmed Ms. Freese's comment. Further discussion took place about Robert's Rules of Order etc. It was discussed that maybe things should be tightened up a little.
- d) Commission Member Benjamin stated that she was appointed to the 2040 Task Force and announced that the Task Force was going to have several Think Tank Meetings and she wanted to get the community survey out and asked if she could send an email out to the Commission members.
- e) Commission Secretary Freese gave an update on the Ruth Park woods project. Stating that they have been having several volunteer workdays and have been concentration on the removal of the Wintercreeper.
- f) Commission Secretary Freese brought up the idea of giving out free trees as part of Arbor Day. Further discussion took place regarding ideas and suggestions concerning an Arbor Day celebration. Mr. Kaiser stated that Commission members can call or email him with any ideas or suggestions.

**Agenda Item #12: Adjournment**

Commission Secretary Kathy Freese motioned, and Commission Member Roman seconded to adjourn. The motion was approved unanimously.