

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE  
URBAN FORESTRY COMMISSION  
UNIVERSITY CITY, ST. LOUIS COUNTY, MISSOURI  
WEDNESDAY, MAY 11, 2022**

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

The meeting was called to order at 6:12 pm.

**Agenda Item B: Roll Call**

Those in attendance included Commission President Kristin Sobatka, Vice President Aaron Bitzer, and Commission Members Dianne Benjamin and Dana Barhard. Also in attendance was Council Liaison Aleta Klein and Forestry Supervisor Jacob Kaiser. Absent was Secretary Kathy Freese.

**Agenda Item C: Approval of Agenda**

Commission Vice President Aaron Bitzer motioned and Commission Member Benjamin seconded to accept the Agenda. The motion was approved unanimously.

**Agenda Item D: Approval of Minutes**

Commission member Dianne Benjamin mentioned that the t in Green Center should be capitalized. Commission member Dana Barhard motioned, and Commission Member Benjamin seconded to approve the minutes as corrected. The motion was approved unanimously.

**Agenda Item E: Citizens' Comments**

None.

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

- a) Gamma Tree Experts (Contractor) has completed the contract of removing hazardous trees in all wards of the city. Seventy trees in total have been removed and stumps ground.
- b) Monster Tree Service (Contractor) has started the contract to prune all trees selected in pruning area #1. The contractor has completed approximately 25% of the contract. Mr. Kaiser mentioned that this contractor has received numerous commendations from residents where they are performing work. Commission President Kristin Sobatka mentioned that she had seen some positive comments regarding the contractor of social media as well.
- c) Forestry crew has been reduced to 1 crew member since early April. The city is in the process of extending an offer to a suitable applicant.
- d) Removal to planting ratio as of April 30<sup>th</sup> is 141 removed and 41 planted. This is well below the desired 1 to 1 removed to planted ratio. This is due to having minimal staff at this time.
- e) Arbor Day was celebrated at the Green center on April 26<sup>th</sup> and a Chinkapin Oak was planted in Kaufmann Park with the help of students from Brittany Woods Middle School.

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

- a) Ms, Klein stated that there will be an informational meeting on May 17<sup>th</sup> at the Community Center regarding the renovation of the Annex and Trinity building. The meeting will take place at 6:30pm and is open to all residents.

- b) Ms. Klein mentioned that the south side of Olive near the Markets at Olive development has been approved for commercial development.
- c) Ms. Klein reported that the area on Vernon just west of the firehouse that was previously owned by Washington University will now be owner by a local plumbing company.
- d) Ms. Klein mentioned that with Prop F failing to receive a majority vote the city is looking into new ways to meet their obligations to the fire department.

#### **Agenda Item H: Unfinished Business**

- a) Future Meetings- Commission members all agreed that Centennial Commons was an acceptable venue for future meetings.

#### **Agenda Item I: New Business**

1. Management Policies– Forestry Supervisor Jacob Kaiser reported that while the Forestry Division does have some policies to guide staff in decision making none of them have been properly approved through city council. Mr. Kaiser presented some of these policies at the meeting for comments.
  - a. Policy #008 regarding city trees impacting sidewalks- Commission President Sobatka asked if city attorney should look at liability concerns pertaining to the cutting of tree roots. Commission member Benjamin mentioned that the policy should clarify whose sidewalk was impacted.
  - b. Policy #007 regarding pruning of Oaks and Elms- Commission President Sobatka asked if this is a necessary policy to have and mentioned that it might be limiting to city staff more than being helpful. Commission member Barhard mentioned that something like this would be better suited for the Forestry Master plan as opposed to a written policy.
  - c. Policy #011 regarding annual pruning cycle- Commission member Barhard mentioned that the fact that residents will have to receive a Forest Activity Permit needs to be more clearly stated. Commission member Barhard stated that the policy should state clearly a city approved contractor shall be used to prune city owned trees. Commission member Barhard mentioned that section VII should be clarified as it does not read clearly.
  - d. Policy #004 regarding stump grinding- Commission members agreed unanimously that no corrections were needed.
  - e. Policy #009 regarding replanting of city trees- Commission member Barhard stated that somewhere it should say something about residents having some say in what tree gets planted. Commission member Barhard also mentioned that the policy might suggest replacing “high value” trees with “high value” trees.
2. University City Vision 2040 Update- Commission member Benjamin is the commission’s representative on the 2040 task force. She explained that the goal of the task force is engage in residents to get an overall idea of what direction they would like to move in regarding a multitude of topics. Commission member Benjamin reported that the task force met their goal of surveying 500 residents and that the green environment was a topic that appeared to be important to them. She mentioned that a second survey will be sent out in the coming weeks and in June an in-person meeting will be conducted regarding public input for a new plan.

### **Agenda Item J: Commission Comments**

- a) Commission member Barhard asked the commission if the city has taken any organized approach to fighting climate change similar to other cities in the United States. Council member Benjamin spoke of Green Practices Commission and former staff liaison Jennifer Wendt. Council member Klein also mentioned that council looks to advice from Green Practices Commission regarding climate change.
- b) Commission President Sobatka mentioned an idea regarding the tree memorial program. She mentioned that people could donate money to place tree identification tags on trees around our parks. Commission members all agreed that this was a great idea.

### **Agenda Item #12: Adjournment**

Commission Vice President Aaron Bitzer motioned, and Commission Member Benjamin seconded to adjourn. The motion was approved unanimously at 7:28 pm.