

City of Gainesville

*City Hall
200 East University Avenue
Gainesville, Florida 32601*



Minutes – Draft

March 10, 2021

Tree Advisory Board

City Hall Auditorium

Erick Smith (Chair)

Ryan Klein (Member)

Russell Adams (Member)

Marc Frank (Member)

C. Elisabeth Manley (Member)

Elisabeth Staten (Student Seat)

Call to Order - 4:28 PM

Roll Call

Present 6 –Member Adams, Member Frank, Chair Smith, Member Klein, Member Manley, Student Seat Staten. Also present were City Arborist Dave Conser and GRU Forester Joe Wolf

Approve Agenda

A motion was made by Member Manley, seconded by Member Frank, that the agenda be approved. Chair Smith requested to add the following items: approval of 10/14/2020 minutes, Public Works Update, GRU Update, Planning Update and a brief discussion of the community outreach presentation. Chair Smith stressed keeping on track to facilitate the meeting and complete the agenda as amended.

The motion to approve the amended agenda carried by the following vote:

Aye: 5 – Member Adams, Member Frank, Member Klein, Chair Smith, and Member Manley
Abstain: 1 - Student Seat Staten

Approve Minutes of October 14, 2020 Meeting

Chair Smith reviewed the minutes of the last in-person meeting (pre-COVID). Due to the extended timeframe, he proposed to give members time to review them and approve during the next in-person meeting. Board agreed.

New Business – Discussion of Pending Referrals

Arborist Conser gave the board background and reasoning for considering the tree resolutions separately instead of making them all one referral – each referral dealt with a distinct, separate item. Board agreed.

200928

This draft proposed immediate funding to offset an immediate budget shortfall for the current Fiscal Year 2021. After brief discussion, A motion was made to approve 200928 as presented by Member Adams. Member Frank seconded, with unanimous approval.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 5 – Chair Smith, Member Adams, Member Frank, Member Klein and Member Manley
Abstain 1 – Student Seat Staten

200930

This draft proposal presented baseline operating budgeting for the next two Fiscal Years (2022 and 2023). Arborist Conser reviewed this proposal for the board. Discussion and clarification ensued. Member Adams asked for justification of budget numbers which Arborist Conser provided. Board was satisfied. Member Frank asked how the total presented compared to the prior years to which Arborist Conser responded. Chair Smith mentioned the typical budgeting process for the City is two fiscal years ahead. Member Klein asked about current watering contracts and any cost increases, He also asked how much the TMF brings in annually. Arborist Conser addressed cost increases (to which Member Adams supported through his current experiences). Dave also mentioned how the program is currently short staffed, had prior vacancies and didn't get their mission or objectives accomplished in years past. Arborist Conser stressed it is integral to be good stewards of the Tree Mitigation Fund and use it wisely. Chair Smith asked if the requested funding included street or landscape trees, to

which Dave replied it included both street and park plantings. Member Manley questioned if funding included both hard costs and labor. She remembered push back on including labor in the past. Board discussed their perspectives and memories. Since time had passed, Board asked for review by the City Attorney for clarification. Chair Smith suggested making a motion to approve as is pending legal review. Member Frank agreed with that direction. Member Frank made a motion to approve 200930 as presented with pending legal review of Section 2 and Section 5 that discusses outside contracting work. Member Adams seconded, with unanimous approval.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 5 – Chair Smith, Member Adams, Member Frank, Member Klein and Member Manley
Abstain 1 – Student Seat Staten

200929

This draft proposal presented use of the Tree Mitigation Fund consistent with the Board's understanding of eligible spending for the rest of Fiscal Year 2021. Discussions revolved around the proposed Senior Horticulturist Position. Chair Smith discussed his past experiences as City Horticulturist, volume and nature of work. Board discussed budget implications and positive impacts of another position. All members were in agreement that the Department was understaffed with the current volume of work and another position would greatly benefit the program. Members Frank and Adams asked if the requested amount is enough and what would be the actual cost to the TMF? Arborist Conser provided his perspective and board further discussed use of the TMF and allowed uses. Member Adams made a motion to approve 200929 with the following amendments (1) legal review of Section #2 and #5, (2) proposal as presented had two Section 8's, so change the last one to Section #9, and (3) add "50% of payroll for Horticulturist" to Section #9. Member Klein seconded with unanimous approval.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 5 – Chair Smith, Member Adams, Member Frank, Member Klein and Member Manley
Abstain 1 – Student Seat Staten

Members Manley and Frank brought up the need for a better accounting of the TMF as in year's past. In past meetings, Staff was able to show a current monthly accounting of expenditures and incomes. Board requested that document/spreadsheet be brought back on a recurring basis to the meetings.

200197 – Continue Discussions Regarding Tree Ordinance Revisions

Member Frank opened this topic urging members to discuss where we're at and where we want to go, summarizing actions to keep on track and be able to complete the rest of the agenda in the allotted time. Board agreed.

Arborist Conser used a recent example of an unpermitted tree removal to highlight the problems with current code. A Heritage Live Oak valued at \$30,000 was removed. This tree was illegally removed without the property owner's knowledge or permission, yet they were still responsible for fines, not the party doing the illegal removal. He urged the following:

1. Amend code to specify an exact mitigation fine, dispense with ambiguity
2. Consider having staff determine who had culpability and how to apportion the fine
3. Have legal review the above ideas

4. Request board input

Member Frank requested staff draft resolution language and bring it back to the board for consideration and approval. Member Klein described a recent instance in his neighborhood where a tree wasn't removed but trimmed to an extent that it damaged the tree beyond repair. He felt any draft language should include this type of damage (both above and below ground disturbances). Board discussed that damage beyond repair equals removal. Member Klein suggested language that would include any unauthorized tree work that affects the structural integrity of the tree be included to cover all cases. Board agreed to let staff develop language for review at a future meeting.

PowerPoint Presentation/Community Outreach

Board briefly discussed the community outreach program. Member Manley offered to put the content into the City's template and dynamically update that as Board worked through it at the next meeting. Members Manley, Adams and Joe Wolf offered to join Dave at any in-person outreach events. Dave and Joe are working with GRU to add information into their Bill Stuffer.

Public Works Update

City Arborist Dave Conser said they are making progress on current budget issues. They are pursuing the illegal cutting and removal of trees as high priority (SW 13th Street and SW 18th Place used as an example). Citizens have done a good job of calling in and alerting staff to such activities. Current planting projects include two edible groves (105 total trees), 200 low growing trees (including edibles) at Depot Park and SW 40th Blvd (another edible grove installed along with trees and shrubs). Emily's position has been advertised and interviews are expected soon.

GRU Update

Joe Wolf described GRU's bare ground treatment of Electric Substations (required by Code for safety and fire prevention). GRU continues to daily monitor fuel prices to produce the lowest cost electrical power for the community. Natural gas and biomass are currently being dispatched. He described the removal of messenger cables in the distribution system. These steel cables were installed years ago in an effort to prevent tree related outages by having trees and branches deflect off the cables. The cables had the opposite effect. Trees falling on facilities were breaking poles, pinning wires to the ground and causing extended outages. Removing the messenger cables will improve system reliability and safety. Funding is provided through a FEMA program.

Public Comment

There was no public comment

Member Comment

Chair Smith asked the board if this time and space worked for everyone's schedules. Board agreed it did and appreciated the safety precautions and in person meeting. Dave reserved the Auditorium through July. Next meeting was scheduled for April 14, 2021.

Adjourn -- Meeting adjourned at 5:48 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted, Joe Wolf/GRU Forester