

# City of Gainesville

City Hall  
200 East University Avenue  
Gainesville, Florida 32601



## **Minutes - Final**

**May 19, 2021**

**4:00 PM**

## **Tree Advisory Board**

*Erick Smith (Chair)*  
*Marc Frank (Member)*  
*C. Elisabeth Manley (Member)*  
*Russell Adams (Member)*  
*Ryan Klein (Member)*  
*Elisabeth Staten (Student Seat)*

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**CALL TO ORDER - 4:20 PM****ROLL CALL - 4:00 PM**

**Present** 5 - Member Frank, Chair Smith, Adams, Student Seat Staten, and Klein

**Absent** 1 - Member Manley

**ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA**

**A motion was made by Adams, seconded by Member Frank, that this matter be Adopted. The motion CARRIED by the following vote:**

**Aye:** 4 - Member Frank, Chair Smith, Adams, and Klein

**Abstain:** 1 - Student Seat Staten

**Absent:** 1 - Member Manley

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**A motion was made by Adams, seconded by Member Frank, that this matter be Adopted. The motion CARRIED by the following vote:**

**Aye:** 4 - Member Frank, Chair Smith, Adams, and Klein

**Abstain:** 1 - Student Seat Staten

**Absent:** 1 - Member Manley

[201217.](#) Approval of Minutes from the Tree Advisory Board Meeting of April 14, 2021

Strategic Connection

This item is connected to Goal 3: A Great Place to Live and Experience - a normal priority item.

RECOMMENDATION

*The Tree Advisory Board approve the minutes of April 14, 2021.*

**OLD BUSINESS**

[201067.](#) **Discuss Updated Approved Tree List for the Tree Ordinance (B)**

Arborist Conser explained he placed this topic as the only item on the agenda, designed to allow for its discussion and completion.

Member Adams opened discussion with two questions (1) How was this list initially generated, and (2) what is the intent of the list? He asked these questions to the prior city staff and Tree Advisory Board members who assisted developing the list years ago and they were unsure of the answers. He felt clarification was

desperately needed.

Member Frank said the list is used for Development Review and for Mitigation purposes, per Member Manley's discussion in prior meetings. Member Adams asked if the list was a mandate. Board discussed how the different interpretations of use, purpose and reference creates confusion. Member Staten commented on her interpretation of the list's purpose.

Board was in agreement that the tree list needs a narrative of purpose inserted in the code. Board agreed the narrative be written by staff. Board agreed this narrative/paragraph of explanation or preamble should make it clear to the public or layperson as to (1) the intent of the list and (2) include the definition of a high quality shade tree.

Moving forward, Arborist Conser suggested the most efficient way to discuss the tree list would be to go through the list species by species. Chair Smith and Board agreed.

#### Green Ash

Member Adams asked if the Emerald Ash Borer is a concern. Arborist Conser recently asked Forest Service staff about this. Their feeling was the insect is stopping to the north, the local climate is not conducive to epidemic spread. Member Klein wanted to keep climate change issues in mind moving forward and not to use this species in mass plantings or as monocultures. Board agreed Green Ash be included on the list.

Red Bay was discussed, having similar concerns with pest issues. Member Klein said the merits and concerns with specific trees, even though science based are subjective inputs. He suggested species with concerns may need an asterisk, yet these concerns can change over time.

Member Frank urged caution with these discussions. He felt the Board should not remove a tree from the list due to personal concerns, there will be repercussions. There are merits to each native tree on the list. His suggestion would be to only remove or exclude invasive or exotics with documented spread. These are justifiable. Board agreed and then discussed only those species.

Board unanimously felt the following trees were to be removed from the list for documented proof of spread into natural systems: Drake Elm (any Chinese Elm), Jerusalem Thorn, Black Locust, Loquat, Bradford Pear and Podocarpus.

Crape Myrtle and Japanese/Oriental Magnolia were left on the list due to their sterility, lack of spread in the wild and urban benefits as ornamentals. These trees have a place in the urban forest.

Member Klein reminded the board that the Gainesville Tree List is for Planning and Code Purposes. It does not dictate what a homeowner can or cannot plant on their property. Chair Smith also reminded the board that just because a tree is on the list,

staff has the option to use alternates.

Member Manley's advice was to eliminate the columns and matrix data of the list. Forester Wolf discussed how the information in the columns being codified caused issues in development review causing city staff to devise workarounds. Having just a list makes the review process more streamlined for both sides. Board agreed to codify only the listing of species. The tree matrix and its associated information are for reference purposes only.

Chair Smith asked if the designation of a tree as "high quality shade tree" is to encourage to retain them and save these species. The high quality shade tree designation would increase the cost of mitigation thereby making them expensive to remove and encouraging their preservation. Member Staten said her interpretation of the "high quality" designation was similar, to have development preserve existing strong and healthy shade trees. Arborist Conser concurred. He suggested removing "high quality" to eliminate confusion and to simply call them "shade trees", a standard industry, arboricultural and forestry term and is defined in the dictionary. Members agreed.

Arborist Conser used a recent example for clarification. Gainesville Health and Fitness wanted to remove a 20" DBH Live Oak as it was interfering with their building, roof and causing increased maintenance. To remove this tree they would pay \$6,000 in mitigation as well as the cost for removal. They declined, as it was cost prohibitive to them. Arborist Conser suggested trimming vs. removal. However the trimming would be a workaround and not a long term solution.

Member Klein asked if only certain species can fall into the "high quality" category. The answer was unclear. Member Adams said a Dahoon Holly is not and should never be a high quality shade tree. Member Frank reiterated the need for a preamble or introductory statement to the code to clarify these issues.

Member Adams said understory diversity is missing in Gainesville and anything we can do to help would be a benefit. His industry is initiating education and training for responsible ornamental diversity in upcoming projects.

**RECOMMENDATION**

*The Tree Advisory Board 1) review tree documentation; and 2) arrive at a consensus for a suggested revision to the Tree Ordinance Code.*

## **PUBLIC WORKS UPDATE**

City Arborist Dave Conser is conducting interviews to fill Emily's vacant position. The position was upgraded to reflect its duties. His budget got approved. Trees are ordered and the planting on SW 40th Blvd is expected to begin soon. He has a tree watering contract in place and is requesting quotes from local vendors.

[201224.](#)

**Public Works Comment (NB)**

RECOMMENDATION*Tree Advisory Board to provide input as necessary.***PLANNING UPDATE**

Arborist Conser read Chelsea's printed update which was included in the agenda. Member Adams asked if other nurseries would be included in purchasing trees for the give a way. He will touch base with Bruce at Half Moon Growers. Arborist Conser indicated since the funding is coming from the CBB, they have a small staff and starting off with one vendor and keeping it simple is best. There will be growth as they move forward. Chair Smith commented the more trees the better!

[201221.](#)**Planning Department Update (B)**RECOMMENDATION*Tree Advisory Board to provide input as necessary.***GRU UPDATE**

Joe Wolf discussed budget cuts for the next fiscal year (October 1, 2021 - September 31, 2022). Contract Tree crew budget will be cut by \$260,000. This represents multiple crews and employees laid off. Internal GRU budgets are also being cut throughout the utility. Cuts include everything: equipment, training, travel and office supplies. His department has lost 5 positions over the last few years (2 analysts, senior staff assistant, streetlight worker and coordinator). Their duties have been transferred to remaining staff.

[201222.](#)**GRU Update (NB)**RECOMMENDATION*Tree Advisory Board to provide input as necessary.***PUBLIC COMMENT**[201223.](#)**Public Comment (NB)**RECOMMENDATION*Tree Advisory Board and staff to consider comments and respond as necessary.***MEMBER COMMENT**

Arborist Conser will see if the next meeting can be held at the Thomas Center now that COVID restrictions are relaxing. Next meeting was scheduled for June 16, 2021.

**ADJOURNMENT - 6:12 PM**