

**City of Oxford Tree Board
Meeting Minutes
April 7, 2022**

Opening

Be it known that the Oxford Tree Board did meet in regular session on Thursday, April 7, 2022 at 11:00

a.m. in person and via phone/video conference with the following present:

Tree Board:

Cowan Hunter, Co-Chairman

Hume Bryant, Co-Chairman

Mary Hartwell Howorth

Ed Croom

Greg Pinion, Tree Mgr/ Director of Bldgs & Grounds *

Allison Ferris, Board Sec/ Engineering Office Mgr *

(* Ex-Officio/ non-voting)

City of Oxford Representatives:

Bart Robinson, Chief Operating Officer

Megan Baker, Building Administrator

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 11:03 a.m.

The new secretary for the Tree Board, Allison Ferris, was introduced.

Approval of the Agenda

Hunter moved to approve the agenda. Howorth seconded the motion. All members voted aye; the motion passed.

Approval of Minutes

Hunter recommended approval of the March 2022 minutes, but first clarified, that regarding use of tree escrow funds to replace vandalized trees on E. Jackson Ave., the money would be from funds already budgeted for FY22. The available funds were originally for a small planting project abandoned following the departure of Gray Parker. New funding for the replacement trees was unnecessary. Hunter moved to approve the March 2022 Minutes. Howorth seconded the motion. All members voted aye; the motion passed.

Departmental Issues & Reports

1. Buildings and Grounds

Hunter thanked Pinion for all the preparations Bldgs & Grounds did for the UM Big Event project at the Dog Park. Pinion reported no recent tree removals, tree hazards, requests for assistance or tree damage that needed to be dealt with by Bldgs & Grounds. Instead he noted his department was gearing up for summer and mulching in various areas. Hunter also urged

Pinion to be thinking about upcoming needs and opportunities for the FY23 budget that the Tree Board might support.

Bryant expressed concern to Pinion that the Black Walnut tree at 10th and Tyler appeared in significant decline. Discussion followed and it was suggested that Pinion check the tree. It was also suggested that, considering the location near First Presbyterian property and its status as a specimen tree, Pinion consider having an arborist assess the tree as well.

Croom referenced current and past fiber optic work on S. Lamar and asked Pinion if he had a sense of the impact/ damage it might be having on trees there. Discussion followed. Pinion stated work crews seemed to be doing a good job overall of avoiding tree roots. Robinson also noted that Engineering has a permit process and strict guidelines that companies must follow in doing such work. And, that those guidelines include measures to reduce impacts to trees.

2. Planning

Planning Director, Ben Requet was unavailable for the meeting. So, there was no update on the vacant planner position or development issues. However, Hunter mentioned he had given thought to Requet's suggestion at the March meeting that the Tree Board consider a tree planting project for Oxford High School. While there were a number of potential impediments to such a project, Hunter indicated that he thought use of easements might offer a way. He said he would at least look into it.

3. Engineering / Special Projects

Mark Levy, Special Projects, was unable to attend the meeting. Hunter said Levy had let him know demolition is currently on-going for the green space project next to city hall. There was brief discussion regarding the removal/ replanting of a Holly Tree and efforts by the construction worker to preserve and retain a large Magnolia tree on the project site. Next, Hunter reported to the Tree Board how in mid March he and Bryant were contacted by Drew Stevens expressing concerns about a drainage project and tree removals behind his property along Cemetery Creek. Hunter replied to Stevens emails about tree mitigation, etc. saying the Tree Board would first need to know more about the project to better determine how we might help. To that end, he said he met with Robinson and asked him to come brief the Tree Board on the background and current state of the project.

Robinson, presented the background of the Cemetery Creek drainage project to the Tree Board. Important aspects of his presentation and the ensuing discussion were that Stevens and neighbors initially sought help from the city with erosion and flooding of their properties along Combs St. At least six years ago the city began applying to FEMA and MEMA for funding to do this work. The project was finally awarded funding in 2019, but FEMA said the tree planting plan submitted for the project was ineligible for funds. However, the city has funds for the tree planting within its budget. There is also an existing planting plan to work from that could be revised and updated. Copies of this planting plan were provided to the Tree Board for review. Robinson also noted that neighbors and residents had met with city officials throughout the process and would continue to be able to give input. Hunter encouraged board members to

visit the site, much of which can be viewed from the cemetery, and to voice any concerns or recommendations regarding the planting plan.

Business

a. Ole Miss Big Event

Hunter reported the event did not go as expected. In fact, Saturday was a no-show, with event organizers calling to apologize for issues that left them with no volunteers to send. They asked if a group could come work at the Dog Park Sunday instead. Hunter said yes. Happily this time six volunteers showed up and worked hard on mulching, pruning and other tree maintenance projects around the Dog Park and Animal Resource Center.

b. Information from Fulgham's inc.

David Fulgham, consulting arborist, recently contacted Hunter about a type of ground penetrating radar his company was purchasing that would permit non- invasive inspection of tree root systems and trunks. He also provided information pdfs about device's capabilities. Hunter promised to forward the pdfs to Tree Board members. Fulgham indicated a demo of the unit would likely be possibly once delivery and training are completed.

c. Splash Pad/ Tree Removal

Howorth inquired regarding possible removal of tree at site of new Splash Pad. Brief discussion ensued but no one seemed to have any accurate information. Hunter stated he would attempt to find out more information about the potential tree removal.

Adjourn

Hunter moved to adjourn. Bryant seconded the motion. All member voted aye; the motion passed. The meeting was adjourned at 12:07pm.