

**City of Oxford Tree Board
Regular Meeting
Thursday, April 6th, 2023**

Opening

Be it known that the City of Oxford Tree Board did meet in special session on Thursday, April 6th, 2023 at 11:00 A.M. in the City Hall Courtroom with phone/video conference available. The following were present:

Tree Board:

Cowan Hunter, Co-Chairman

Mary Hartwell Howorth

Ed Croom

Hume Bryant, Co-Chairman

Bill Freeman

*Greg Pinion, Superintendent of Building and Grounds Department

*Allison Ferris, Secretary, Office Manager for the Engineering Department

*Ex-Officio, non-voting

City Officials:

Lesley Rakestraw, City of Oxford GIS Analyst

Mark Levy, Director of Special Projects

Colby McCammon, Building and Grounds Staff

Other:

Brad Walsh, Local Attorney

Jeff Williams, Local Engineer

Lindy Gary Graham, Local Property Owner

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 11:03 AM.

Approval of Agenda

Commissioner Cowan Hunter motioned to approve the agenda. Commissioner Bill Freeman seconded the motion. All commissioners voted aye; the motion passed.

Approval of March 2023 Minutes

Commissioner Cowan Hunter motioned to approve March 2023 Minutes. Commissioner Bill Freeman seconded. All commissioners voted aye; the motion passed.

Departmental Issues and Reports

1. Buildings and Grounds

a. Assistance to Property Owners, Hazard Trees, etc.

Greg Pinion, Director of Building and Grounds, reported since the last meeting there was some tree damage i.e. a pine and small cedar in Avent Park. There was discussion and Greg noted the damage was not significant.

b. Report on Historic/Heritage Tree Site Visit

Commissioner Hunter noted that he and Greg went to visit the site of the proposed Gary Subdivision as discussed in previous meetings. Greg discussed the process for measuring the tree and determining the drip line. Jeff Williams, local engineer, provided documents to the board regarding this area. Commissioner Hunter directed the Tree Board to site plans for review for this area on Lincoln. There was more discussion and Commissioner Hunter noted the discussion would continue in the Business portion of the meeting.

c. Spring Maintenance and Planting Update

In regards to spring maintenance, Greg noted his department was mulching etc. There was discussion. Greg indicated planting was not occurring unless on irrigation at this time. Commissioner Bryant inquired about tree re-growth. There was more discussion.

2. Planning

a. Staff Recommendations Re Gary Subdivision – Historic/Heritage Tree Issues

b. Update on Other Pending or Upcoming Development Issues

Ben Requet, Director of Planning, was not available to attend this meeting. Commission Hunter indicated he'd forwarded the Tree Board the Planning Staff's recommendation regarding the Gary Subdivision for review. Cowan noted Planning Staff's recommend there not be a Lot 4 as well to determine drip line.

3. Engineering / Special Projects

a. Progress Report on Transition/Data Transfer to Tree Plotter

Lesley Rakestraw, City of Oxford GIS Analyst, discussed the transition to Tree Plotter. Lesley reported all the data had been sent to Planet Geo via the MS Forestry Commission on March 20th. He indicated Planet Geo is supposed to notify him when the data has fully processed. Lesley also indicated he'd provided the login information to Commissioner Hunter. Commissioner Hunter noted he'd distribute this information to the board. Lesley reported he would notify the Tree Board once the data has processed. Commissioner Hunter summarized the transition to Tree Plotter for guests present.

b. Update on Pending or Upcoming City Projects

Marky Levy, Director of Special Projects, indicated he did not have big updates for the Tree Board since the previous meeting. Mark stated he was watching the Evergreens at Lamar Park to ensure they come back. Mark reported the two big upcoming projects he'd be working on would be the proposed new Oxford Police Department as well as possible new swimming pool, but he was not sure of the budget needs at this time. There was discussion.

Business

a. Gary Subdivision – Historic/Heritage Tree (Jeff Williams, PE/PLS)

Jeff Williams, local engineer for the Gary Subdivision project, discussed the proposed project and the owner wanting to build a house. Jeff referred to the document he'd provided the board and discussed the project plans i.e. building permeable drive within the dripline of the historic tree. There was discussion. Jeff noted the areas that would need to be filled. There was further discussion. Commissioner Hunter noted the proposed lots are small and inquired about spacing for the work being done. There was more discussion. Commissioner Howorth inquired about the permeable paver and Jeff described the process. There was more discussion. Commissioner Hunter noted the intention involved for trying to preserve trees. There was more discussion. Commissioner Hunter inquired what could be done to limit possible issues. Jeff noted that's mostly a question for the builder, but discussed a temporary construction of a fence. Brad Walsh, Lawyer for the Gary Family, discussed the deed regarding the Gary property and the intention to preserve and care for the historic tree. There was more discussion. Jeff inquired with Greg Pinion regarding pruning. There was more discussion regarding pruning and branches. Commissioner Hunter noted there would be tree maintenance that should occur as

well as discussed his personal concern regarding the roots of the tree. There was further discussion. Commissioner Hunter reiterated his main concern regarding the room for work on the site, but also preserving the tree. Jeff once again discussed his planning process and plans to account for spacing. There was further discussion. Jeff helped the Tree Board understand the area of the proposed project and layout. There was more discussion regarding the utilities and plans for the lots/locations.

Lindy Gary Graham, property owner, expressed her desire to build the home. There was more discussion. Jeff noted the neighbor's main concern was making sure the draining would be correct. There was further discussion. Commissioner Croom inquired about the Planning Department's recommendations. Commissioner Hunter once again indicated Planning was concerned about the sizing of the lots as well as the drip line. There was more discussion. Brad Walsh discussed his interpretation of the city ordinance as well as legal issues in regards designation of historic tree and impacts on citizens and private property. There was more discussion. Commissioner Croom indicated he was trying to understand the different professional opinions, facts, and plans. There was more discussion and Jeff inquired with Greg regarding his opinion on the pavers. Greg noted his major concern is the compaction of the soil. There was further discussion. Mark Levy, Director of Special Projects, discussed other areas within the city and encouraged the Tree Board to look at those areas for comparison. There was more discussion regarding the city ordinances as well as the role of the advisory board.

Commissioner Hunter summarized the discussion and noted the Tree Board's role was to grant or deny permission to work within the drip line of the historic tree as well as to advise in relation to proposed work. There was more discussion. Commissioner Bryant indicated he would like to see the plans in writing. There was further discussion as Jeff once again summarized the plans.

Commissioner Howorth motioned to allow the work, Commissioner Hunter seconded the motion, and the motion passed.

b. Discussion of Potential Duties/Responsibilities for Proposed Arborist Position

Greg expressed his desire to hear from the Tree Board regarding their ideas for the proposed arborist position. Commissioner Hunter inquired if the board has thoughts and ideas to share i.e. the job would require leadership and skill-set for pruning practices. There was discussion. Commissioner Hunter noted Greg's desire for this job to be a seasoned and experienced professional and not an entry-level position. There was further discussion. Greg discussed his desire for past job history and experience along with in-depth knowledge. There was more discussion regarding Greg's hopes for the position i.e. manage tree inventory, pruning. There was also discussion regarding the planning process as well as need for Board of Alderman approval. Commissioner Hunter asked the Tree Board to continue to collect their ideas for the proposed business.

Other Business

There was discussion regarding the grant process conference call and funds that may be available in the future.

Move to Adjourn

Commissioner Cowan Hunter motioned to adjourn at 12:08 PM. Commissioner Ed Croom seconded; all members voted aye.