

**City of Oxford Tree Board
Meeting Minutes
August 4th, 2022**

Opening

Be it known that the City of Oxford Tree Board did meet in regular session on Thursday, August 4, 2022 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
Hume Bryant, Co-Chairman
Ed Croom
Mary Hartwell Howorth
Bill Freeman
Greg Pinion*, Director of Building and Grounds
Allison Ferris*, Secretary

*Ex-Officio Member

Representatives of the City of Oxford:

Ben Requet, Director of Planning
Mark Levy, Director of Special Projects

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 11:06 A.M.

Approval of the Agenda

Commissioner Cowan Hunter noted a change to the agenda due to Matt Nielson being out of town. Hume Bryant requested to add Arbor Day to the agenda. Commissioner Cowan Hunter motioned to approve the agenda. Commissioner Ed Croom seconded the motion. All Commissioners voted aye; the motion passed.

Approval of the Minutes

Commissioner Cowan Hunter motioned to accept the July Meeting Minutes. Commissioner Mary Hartwell Howorth seconded the motion. All commissioners voted aye.

Departmental Issues and Reports

1. Buildings and Grounds

a. Assistance to property owners, removals, etc.

Per Greg Pinion, Director of Building and Grounds, normal maintenance and tree trimming has been on-going. Greg requested the Tree Board look at two trees on 14th Street. There was discussion about the request to remove the trees due to the concrete/sidewalk as well as regarding the health of the trees and what type of trees might be more appropriate for the location. Cowan encouraged members of the Tree Board to look at the trees at their earliest convenience in order to further discuss at the September meeting.

Greg remarked on tree removals that would occur at the Cemetery Ditch, per the project plans. Ben Requet, Director of Planning, recommended trees on the Molly Barr Trail could use trimming. Greg indicated his department would assess them.

Cowan remarked on the tree removals occurring at the roundabout being built on Chickasaw. It was noted the Board of Alderman approved the plans in the past. Cowan notes that Greg indicated there's a scope for re-planting. There was further discussion regarding the process of plans and approval of projects as well as when they would be presented to the Tree Board. Cowan notes that Reanna Mayoral, City Engineer, indicated the project was approved by the Board of Alderman two years ago & it was noted they should speak to the Tree Board. There was further discussion. Croom as well as Bryant expressed frustration regarding the project/development process as well as a desire for written clarification and guidance. Cowan noted he's been speaking to city officials regarding the frustration with the process and timeline of awareness in relation to projects. There was further discussion.

b. Recommendations re FY 23 projects

The FY 23 Project recommendations were discussed later in this meeting.

2. Planning

a. Update re South Grove and The Lamar

Per Ben Requet, Director of Planning, the South Grove project went to the Planning Commission and was discussed at length. According to Ben, the Planning Commission approved the site-plan, however, a resident appealed the approval, but the Board of Alderman upheld the Planning Commission's approval. There was further discussion. There was also discussion regarding Wellington Place. Ben noted they were modifying their approved site-plan, noting this would lead to tree preservation. There was discussion.

In regards to The Lamar, Ben noted the developer at The Lamar is responsible for the roundabout at Chickasaw. Cowan asked Ben to clarify the process regarding the development plans in regards to improving traffic flow. Ben summarized the process of plans and funding i.e. Tax Incentive Financing, legal work, and plans being discussed with the Board of Alderman for approval. There was further discussion.

b. Any recommendations re FY 23 tree conservation

Ben acknowledged he's interested to see the recommendations from Matt Neilson, Green Grove Arborist, however, he did not have any further recommendations to add at this time. There was further discussion regarding the tree conservation of projects. Ben summarized land development code history, updates, and evolution over the last several years. Ben noted the collective efforts of the maintaining and conservation of trees as well as highlighted developers and landscapers responsibility for private property during a certain time-frame. There was further discussion.

Cowan noted he looked into the process for planting trees at Oxford High School, but the Oxford School Board would have to grant an easement. There was further discussion.

3. Engineering, Special Projects

a. Status of FY22 Projects

Mark Levy, Director of Special Projects, referenced a summary he sent of FY22 project statuses. Projects also discussed: Price Street, City Hall Pocket Park, Woodlawn, Cemetery Shed, Cemetery Creek Project, and Green Grove Arborist.

Cowan noted being mindful of projects that fall within tree escrow fund/mitigation in comparison to trees that would fall within tree maintenance funds that come from the Building and Grounds Department i.e. trees not under warranty. There was further discussion.

b. Project Priorities, Budget Info, etc. for FY23

There was discussion regarding recommending the following projects:

- Price Street – \$20,000 currently recommended, however, Tree Board to recommend \$10,000 from Tree Escrow fund. There was further discussion.
- City Hall Pocket Park – \$25,000, Tree Board approved as project recommendation. Mark noted there's a possibility the budget for the City Hall Pocket Park could be less. There was discussion.
- Cemetery Creek Project– \$75,000 currently, but Cowan noted possible recommendation for decrease in budget for project to \$55,000. Bill motioned to challenge staff to look into the plans further as well as a new recommendation for the budget for tree mitigation. The Tree Board agreed. There was further discussion regarding the budget for the project, past plans, and possible options i.e. past estimates, FEMA's lack of funding, and budget constraints in light of the pandemic. Mark noted property owners have discussed plans with city officials. There was further discussion regarding the budget and plans. Cowan once again acknowledged the Board of Alderman oversight over projects. There was further discussion. Mark acknowledged the Tree Board could attempt to make a request for less funding to the Board of Alderman. Mark noted he believed this project would be an appropriate use for the tree mitigation fund/escrow fund. There was further discussion about possible future discussions with the Board of Alderman. Mark noted he could speak with

Reanna as well as Planning regarding the plans and process of possible modifications.

- Matt Nielson - \$5,500 – Tree Board approved as recommended funding.

Mark requested it noted he did request small funds for Price Street and East Jackson. There further discussion regarding use of tree mitigation funds. Cowan acknowledged Greg is willing to fund tree mitigation for damaged/vandalized trees from the Building and Grounds Department budget. There was discussion, and Mark noted he would speak to Greg.

Business

1. Update from Matt Nielson, Green Groves Arborist

Matt wasn't able to attend the meeting, but it was noted he should be at the next meeting. Bill noted he'd like to discuss with Matt the Tree Board's wish for further process clarification in regards to projects within the City. There was discussion.

2. Discuss and finalize FY 23 tree projects budget recommendation

Per the project recommendations noted above, Cowan moved to recommend up to \$25,000 for the City Hall Pocket Park, \$55,000 for the Cemetery Creek Project, \$10,000 for the first phase of Price Street, and \$5,500 for the Green Grove Arborist. Hume seconded. All in favor.

3. MFC update

There was discussion regarding options of applying for grants. Cowan noted possible discussion at future meetings.

4. Arbor Day

Tree Board discussed possible options for Arbor Day plans i.e. Fall vs. Spring as well as regarding possible dates for October. October 21st was tentatively discussed.

The Tree Board all voted the next meeting would be a special meeting on September 8th, 2022 due to the Labor Day Holiday.

Adjourn

Cowan Hunter made a motion to adjourn. Mary Hartwell Howorth seconded the motion. All members voted aye; the motion passed.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:32 P.M.

