

**City of Oxford Tree Board
Regular Meeting
Thursday, December 7th, 2023**

Opening

Be it known that the City of Oxford Tree Board did meet for a regular meeting on Thursday, December 7th, 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

Ed Croom

Mary Hartwell Howorth

*Allison Ferris, Development Services - Engineering Department, City of Oxford, MS

*ex-officio, non-voting

Other:

Bart Robinson, Chief Operating Officer, City of Oxford, MS

Nick Matthews, Maintenance Supervisor, Building and Grounds Department, City of Oxford, MS

Mark Levy, Director of Special Projects, City of Oxford, MS

Drew Stevens, Resident of City of Oxford, MS

Call to Order

Commissioner Cowan Hunter called the meeting to order at 11:05 AM.

Approval of Agenda

Commissioner Hunter motioned to approve the agenda. Commissioner Mary Hartwell Howorth seconded the motion. All commissioners voted aye; the motion passed.

Approval of the October 2023 Minutes

Commissioner Hunter motioned to approved the November 2023 Minutes. Commissioner Howorth seconded. All commissioners voted aye; the motion passed.

Departmental Issues and Reports

1. Buildings and Grounds

Nick Matthews, Maintenance Supervisor for the Building and Grounds Department, attended the meeting in place of Greg Pinion, Director of Building and Grounds.

a. Public Assistance Requests or Inquiries

Nick discussed a tree removal on North 11th Street as well as other tree planting. There was discussion.

b. Fall Planting Update

Nick reported their department should be done with Fall planting, but was not certain. There was discussion.

c. Tree City USA

Commissioner Hunter discussed information needed to renew the status for the City of Oxford for Tree City USA. Commissioner Hunter asked Nick to check with Greg regarding the renewal process.

d. Signage for Tribute Tree Groves

Commissioner Hunter noted he briefly spoke to Greg regarding the signage for the Tribute Tree Groves. Commissioner Hunter and Nick indicated the first tree had been planted in the Tribute Grove in Avent Park. There was discussion.

2. Planning

Ben Requet, Director of Planning, was not available.

a. Update re current/pending development tree issues.

Commissioner Hunter noted he hadn't heard from Ben Requet, Director of Planning, but did discuss with the Tree Board the proposed development on Old Taylor Road, discussed at the previous meeting, went before the Planning Commission. Commissioner Hunter briefly discussed the approval of the proposed development by the Planning Commission and noted they could watch the Planning Commission meeting online.

3. Engineering/Special Projects

a. Update re Brittany Woods

Mark Levy, Director of Special Projects, provided the Tree Board with an update regarding the Brittany Woods Project. He reported he obtained two quotes for the project, but is waiting on the authorization before proceeding. There was discussion.

b. Update re Cemetery Creek

Mark provided the Tree Board with an update regarding the Cemetery Creek Project. He reported he'd walked the Cemetery Creek Project and identified what trees had not survived. Mark discussed the process and indicated he'd obtained quotes for replacing those trees. There was further discussion. Mark reported he should have further updates at a future meeting.

Commissioner Hunter inquired with Mark regarding upcoming projects for FY24. Mark indicated the new Oxford Police Station as well as the City Pool could potentially be upcoming in regards to funding needs. There was further discussion about potential timelines i.e. planting.

Mark thanked the Tree Board for the support in relation to the City Hall Pocket Park.

Business

1. Review of Cemetery Creek Project, Complaint, etc.

Bart Robinson, Chief Operating Officer for the City of Oxford, gave a brief overview of the history of the Cemetery Creek Project over the past seven years i.e. funding process/budget. Bart

reminded the Tree Board the original planting plan was removed from the project approval by FEMA and summarized the process in regards to the tree planting i.e. multiple versions. He also discussed the budget in relation to the project, including the tree planting. Bart indicated the City had addressed the project components i.e. erosion and planting. He indicated the replacement of plants that didn't survive would be the outstanding item to be addressed. Bart made the Tree Board aware City Staff had been instructed to not have further communication with residents in relation to this project by the City of Oxford, MS attorney. Mark Levy, Director of Special Projects, discussed the success of the planting for the project and plans for re-planting. There was further discussion regarding the different plants in the area. Commissioner Ed Croom and Commissioner Hunter discussed evaluating what was not perennially surviving. Bart briefly summarized the budget approval process for the Board of Alderman, particularly in relation to the Tree Escrow Fund. Commissioner Hunter inquired regarding the plans in relation to the residents and Board of Alderman. There was discussion.

Commissioner Hunter allowed Drew Stevens, resident of City of Oxford, MS, to speak. Mr. Stevens inquired regarding the budget approval in relation the project. Commissioner Hunter summarized the Tree Board's role in the approval process. There was discussion. Commissioner Hunter encouraged the Tree Board to view the project area and reach out to City staff if they had questions for a future meeting.

2. Discuss Tree Plotter data updates, workshop, etc.

Commissioner Hunter reported Alex Ballard, with MS Forestry Commission, was not available for the meeting. Commissioner Hunter discussed changes at the MS Forestry Commission. Commissioner Hunter expressed desire for a workshop for Tree Plotter at the Building and Grounds office. There was discussion. Commissioner Hunter discussed the role of Tree Plotter i.e. inventory of trees that belong to the City. He summarized for the Tree Board his recent meeting with a staff member from the IT Department for the City of Oxford, MS. There was discussion.

Move to Adjourn

Commissioner Hunter motioned to adjourn at 11:57 AM.