

**City of Oxford Tree Board
Regular Meeting
Thursday, February 2nd, 2023**

Opening

Be it known that the City of Oxford Tree Board did meet in special session on Thursday, February 2nd, 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, via video conference

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

*Ex-Officio, non-voting

City Representatives:

Mark Levy, Director of Special Projects

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 11:04 AM. Commissioner Cowan Hunter noted not all members were present, but that a quorum was present, therefore the meeting was called to order.

Approval of Agenda

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

Approval of November 2022 Minutes

Commissioner Cowan Hunter motioned to approve the January 2023 Minutes. Cowan noted nobody contacted Allison regarding any changes. Commissioner Cowan Hunter moved to approve the January 2023 Minutes, Commissioner Mary Hartwell Howorth seconded the motion. All commissioners voted aye; the motion passed.

Departmental Issues and Reports

1. Buildings and Grounds

- a. Tree hazards, Assistance / consults for property owners*
- b. Recent or upcoming tree maintenance projects*
- c. Recommendations / suggestions re UM Big Event*

Greg Pinion, Building and Grounds Superintendent, was able to be present for the meeting possibly due to tree work needed in the City due to inclement weather during the week.

Cowan noted he would speak to Greg in the next few days regarding the University of Mississippi "Big Event" plans for March 2023 as well as remarked on the project from last year at the Dog Park. Cowan noted there was time to prepare between now and the March meeting.

2. Planning

- a. Pending or upcoming development issues.*

Ben Requet, Director of Planning, not able to attend.

3. Engineering / Special Projects

- a. Update on City Hall Project and FY23 projects*

Mark Levy, Director of Special Projects, reported he was happy to update the board that the trees and landscaping had occurred for the City Hall Pocket Park as well as irrigation. Mark indicated the park was weeks away being finished as there a few more issues that need to be addressed before the park could open to the public. He anticipated the park would be available to the public later in February. Mark also noted the Cemetery Creek Project landscaping has finished. There was discussion.

Mark indicated his current projects include the conference center as well as the future police station, but that those projects are mostly interior. There was discussion. Also, Mark inquired with Cowan regarding the forestry grant. Cowan indicated he appreciated Mark inquiring and that the forestry commission indicated there should be grants available. There was more discussion. Cowan encouraged everyone on the board to think about what grants could be used for future projects. There was further discussion regarding the grant process as well as seeking to find a project that would be suitable to pursue that would help the City of Oxford, MS.

Mary Hartwell Howorth inquired regarding future plans for a possible Splash Pad. There was discussion regarding plans changing as well as other options for future plans for Splash Pad one day. There was more discussion regarding other partnerships regarding with groups within the community i.e. the garden club to work on possible projects i.e. butterfly garden, food forest, etc. There was further discussion regarding the nature of what's involved in a food forest project as well as the high maintenance nature of a food forest project. Mary Hartwell indicated she may reach out to the garden club. There was more discussion.

Business

a. Discussion of arborist recommendations, consideration of possible work session

Cowan noted the business goal for this meeting was to discuss the Green Grove Arborist project i.e. go through the proposal and determine a starting point. Cowan noted these discussions would not be suitable for a regular meeting. Therefore, in his opinion, a work session would need to occur and a special meeting would be necessary. Cowan indicated within the next month or so he would be going to the Board of Alderman to provide updates regarding the Tree Board and current projects as well the Green Grove project. Cowan discussed finding a date/time when the work session could be, however, he would need to consult with the other members of the Tree Board who weren't present. Cowan stated he was going to ask everyone to look at their calendars for March for possible work session dates. Cowan also discussed one aspect he thought the Tree Board could look at during the session could be assessing the current tree list. There was more discussion. Cowan motioned he work on determining when a special work session meeting could be scheduled to begin discussing the first steps for implementing some of the proposals that Matt Nielson presented to the Tree Board and City Officials. Mary Hartwell Howorth seconded. All voted aye; the motion passed.

b. MFC and MCTAB update

Cowan reported he hasn't heard from Misty Booth at the Mississippi Forestry Commission (MFC), however, he indicated when they spoke prior to Christmas she indicated someone had been hired for North Mississippi in regards to outreach etc. Cowan indicated he hoped the new person hired would attend a future meeting. Cowan also summarized the new hires role. There was discussion. Cowan stated he would be working to get with Lesley Rakestraw, the City of Oxford GIS Analyst, about the new tree record keeping system. Cowan noted it was a simpler system and the state of Mississippi was allowing the City of Oxford to utilize the system through

the MFC. Cowan discussed that he'd work on finding a time to meet with Lesley. There was more discussion, Cowan indicated he hoped to have an update at the March meeting.

Cowan remarked on the Mississippi Community Tree Advisory Board (MCTAB) met in Pearl, MS, but he was not able to attend the meeting. Cowan indicated more people could be added to the board in the future. Cowan stated the meeting was brief and located the MFC's new location in Pearl, MS, and there was not a big update at the meeting except confirmation more funding for grant projects should become available. There was further discussion regarding the MFC's encouragement to communities to be aware and proactive to think of projects that would fit within a grant opportunity as well as the importance of having a good proposal. There was more discussion regarding possible projects and the grant timeline process.

Move to Adjourn

Commissioner Cowan Hunter motioned to adjourn at 11:49 AM. Commissioner ED Croom seconded. All in favor. Meet adjourned.