

**City of Oxford Tree Board  
Regular Meeting  
Thursday, May 4th, 2023**

**Opening**

Be it known that the City of Oxford Tree Board did meet in special session on Thursday, May 4th, 2023 at 11:00 A.M. in the City Hall Courtroom. The following were present:

**Tree Board:**

Cowan Hunter, Co-Chairman  
Ed Croom  
Bill Freeman  
Hume Bryant, Co-Chairman

**Other:**

Alex Ballard, Mississippi Forestry Commission  
Matt Nielson, Green Grove Arborist

**Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 11:00 AM.

**Approval of Agenda**

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

**Approval of April 2023 Minutes**

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

## **Departmental Issues and Reports**

### **1. Buildings and Grounds**

- a. Inquiries from and assistance to property owners or others.*
- b. Hazards, removals, etc.*
- c. Upcoming Projects, priorities for FY24.*

Greg Pinion, Director of Building and Grounds, was not able to attend the meeting. It was indicated that his department had been focused on Double Decker as well as clean up around the City.

### **2. Planning**

- a. Updates on Gary Subdivision and other pending development issues.*
- b. Update on proposed tree related Code changes.*

Ben Requet, Director of Planning, was not available to attend this meeting.

### **3. Engineering / Special Projects**

Mark Levy, Director of Special Projects, was not able to attend the meeting and provide updates.

## **Business**

- a. Continue discussion and progress on proposal for arborist position.*

There was further discussion about the proposed full-time arborist position. More discussion was held regarding the qualifications, job description, parameters and skill sets for this position as well job duties. A sheet was handed out to those present and there was further discussion. Alex Ballard and Matt Nielson expressed their support for a full-time position as well as the goal of hiring someone with experience. Alex also suggested looking at people within the City who might be interested and able to complete the ISA Certification and work into the job. There was more discussion and Matt noted the person hired would need good people, speaking, writing, and computer skills since communication and data would be an important part of the job. They both suggested looking at other places in the South, such as Auburn, AL or Alpharetta, GA for a reference for possible job description.

*b. Discuss possible projects for grand funding through MFC, etc.*

Alex Ballard, with the Mississippi Forestry Commission, was present to discuss grant funding opportunities as well as the Inflation Reduction Act. Alex discussed the money available to help with trees in Mississippi in relation to the Federal Green Infrastructure grants did not bring Mississippi the type of money the MFC had been expecting. There was discussion regarding proposals written and the percentage of money awarded as well as the competitive nature of grant funding and appropriation being based on population and not on merits of plans and projects expected. Due to the lower than expected funds, the MFC decided to use the limited funds to help under sourced communities build capacity to manage and conserve their trees. Alex indicated Oxford should instead consider a project for the usual matching grants from MFC. There was discussion regarding a possible updated canopy study as suitable project, but Alex indicated he could do that himself using “shape files” and information from Tree Plotter. The Tree Board decided to accept his offer for him and indicated they would contact Lesley Rakestraw, City of Oxford GIS Analyst, regarding the information needed.

*c. Set a tentative date for Oxford Arbor Day 2023*

There was discussion regarding how to improve Arbor Day 2023 i.e. bigger ceremony, more publicized. The discussion included possibly having an art contest at the local schools. It was determined that more plans could be discussed during the summer. In relation to possible dates for the event, November 11<sup>th</sup> and October 20<sup>th</sup> were discussed. There was discussion regarding other parties involved i.e. The Oxford Garden Club as well as Alex offered to speak about the history of Arbor Day and do a tree planting demo. Alex also suggested bringing dogs and incorporation and costume contest. There was further discussion related to the Tree Board potentially hosting tree related activities and programs for the community. Matt offered examples of community events he had attended i.e. “Tree Walk” and “Sip and Stroll”.

**Move to Adjourn**

Commissioner Cowan Hunter motioned to adjourn. Commissioner Bill Freeman seconded; all members voted aye.