

**City of Oxford Tree Board
Regular Meeting
Thursday, October 5th, 2023**

Opening

Be it known that the City of Oxford Tree Board did meeting for a regular meeting on Thursday, October 5th, 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

Hume Bryant, Co-Chairman, via Teams Meeting

Ed Croom

Mary Hartwell Howorth

*Greg Pinion, Director of Building and Grounds, City of Oxford, MS

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

*ex-officio, non-voting

Other:

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

Matt Nielson, Green Grove Arborist

Drew Stevens, Citizen

Call to Order

Commissioner Cowan Hunter called the meeting to order at 11:04 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 September 2023 Minutes

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

Departmental Issues and Reports

1. Buildings and Grounds

a. Updates re Oxford Floral tree and Lamar Blvd tree loss –

Greg Pinion, Director of Building and Grounds, noted the Oxford Floral tree is still being addressed. There was discussion regarding replacement of different trees around town and a timeline for planting. There was also discussion regarding the tree on North Lamar that was lost due to the wind storm. Commissioner Hunter inquired with Greg if there would be a need for someone to assess the trees on North and South Lamar. Greg noted it would more than likely be done next summer. There was more discussion. Commissioner Hunter presented an idea to the Tree Board regarding possibly inquiring about posting notices on the City of Oxford website to encourage property owners to think about the importance of tree maintenance.

b. FY24 budget priorities and Fall tree planting/maintenance plans

Per Greg, 362 hollies on bike trails have been trimmed, and he noted that fall planting for replacement trees would begin this month. Greg indicated he would be working with a family on a tribute tree. Greg encouraged the Tree Board to ponder the type of certificates or recognition they would like to do for the Tribute Tree Project. There was discussion regarding future plans for this project as well as the designated groves for this project. There was more discussion regarding the Tribute Tree process.

2. Planning

Ben Requet, Director of Planning, was not able to attend the meeting.

a. Updates re tree impacts, mitigation, etc. of development projects

Commissioner Hunter noted he had not discussed anything with Ben Requet, Director of Planning, but he did speak to the Tree Board regarding an email he received from a concerned citizen regarding the development process. Commissioner Hunter indicated he forwarded Ben

this concern and Ben indicated he would reach out to the citizen, but informed Commissioner Hunter there was not a current development at the location. Commissioner Hunter indicated the tree maintenance that had occurred was fine. There was discussion. Commissioner Hunter indicated he attempted to reach out to the concerned citizen, but has not heard back from her.

3. Engineering / Special Projects

a. Update re Brittany Woods connector and tree plan

Brittany Woods Connector:

Mark Levy, Director of Special Projects, discussed the proposal of trees for this project. He indicated he sent the proposed plans to the Tree Board. Mark discussed planting limits due to the utilities in the area. There was further discussion.

b. Upcoming FY 24 project tentative timeline

Oxford Police Department:

Mark indicated the planting for this project would more than likely not occur until next year. There was discussion

Business

1. Drew Stevens Re: Cemetery Ditch Project

Drew Stevens, a citizen of Oxford, came to the Tree Board to discuss his property near the Oxford Memorial Cemetery. Drew summarized his past concern regarding the tree removal in regards to the Cemetery Ditch Project. Drew indicated he had corresponded with City Officials over the summer and wanted to bring his perceived issues to the Tree Board. Drew provided the Tree Board with a handout regarding email correspondence and pictures. Commissioner Hunter discussed with Drew the process for how the Tree Board Escrow funds go to the Board of Alderman i.e. budget approval process. Commissioner Hunter also explained the Tree Board's role as an advisory board. Drew and the Tree Board discussed the Escrow Fund and what was or was not allowed. There was further discussion regarding the budget plans for this project and what was spent. Commissioner Hunter indicated he would review the information presented in the handout. Commissioner Hunter attempted to summarize the concern i.e. the tree planting plan for the Cemetery Ditch Project. Drew expressed concern regarding lack of trees and exposure to services in Oxford Memorial Cemetery. Commissioner Hunter inquired with Drew regarding his request. Drew indicated he would like more trees to be planted in this area. Commissioner Hunter indicated he would contact the proper City departments regarding this concern. Mark Levy, Director of Special Projects, discussed the tree planting plan and what was available at the time of the project. Mark indicated he would be assessing what trees need

to be re-planted as well as that it was expressed throughout the process that an “instant screen” was not possible. There was further discussion. Mark indicated there was an oversight on the original plans in relation to size. There was discussion. Drew expressed his belief regarding what should be there and his frustrations regarding the process and the desire for larger trees. Commissioner Hunter indicated this issue would be looked into further.

2. Final Planning and Discussion for Oxford Arbor Day 2023 Celebration

Commissioner Hunter indicated to the Tree Board that the City Hall Pocket Park dedication would be occurring prior to the Arbor Day Celebration. Arbor Day is scheduled to occur on October 20th, 2023 at 10 AM. Commissioner Hunter asked Mark to consider saying a few words about the City Hall Pocket Park as part of the Arbor Day program. Commissioner Hunter inquired with Commissioner Bryant regarding the program for Arbor Day. Commissioner Bryant indicated that he had prepared a proclamation to be presented to the Board of Alderman. Commissioner Howorth discussed the poster contest with the Tree Board i.e. Top Five posters being displayed in Square Books, Jr. Commissioner Hunter inquired with Commissioner Bryant regarding the Garden Club’s role in participating with the Arbor Day Program. There was discussion. Commissioner Hunter indicated the MS Forestry Commission representative was not available and there was discussion regarding who would fulfill this role in the program.

Move to Adjourn

Commissioner Hunter motioned to adjourn at 12: 06 PM. Commissioner Howorth seconded; all members voted aye.