

**City of Oxford Tree Board
Meeting Minutes for Special Meeting
September 8th, 2022**

Opening

Be it known that the City of Oxford Tree Board did meet in special session on Thursday, September 8th, 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
Bill Freeman
Greg Pinion*, Director of Building and Grounds
Allison Ferris*, Secretary

*ex-officio, non-voting

Representatives of the City of Oxford:

Ben Requet, Director of Planning

Others

Brad Altenhofen, Director of Operations for Zaxby's
Rodney Warner, District Manager for Zaxby's
Matt Neilson, Green Grove Arborist

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 11:04 A.M.

Approval of the Agenda

Commissioner Cowan Hunter motioned to add the Zaxby's representatives to the first item of the Agenda under the Business section. Commissioners Ed Croom and Bill Freeman seconded. All voted in favor. Cowan motioned to approve the agenda. Commissioner Hume Bryant seconded the motion. All Commissioners voted aye; the motion passed.

Approval of the Minutes

Commissioner Cowan Hunter motioned to accept the August Minutes. Commissioner Bill Freeman seconded. All commissioners voted aye.

Departmental Issues and Reports

1. Buildings and Grounds

a. Assistance to property owners, removals, etc. –

Greg Pinion, Director of Building and Grounds noted his department was pruning and maintaining trees. Greg indicated there was a big tree lost on 14th street. There was discussion. Cowan inquired with the board regarding the trees on S. 14th street mentioned at the previous meeting. There was discussion as Greg explained his opinion on the trees i.e. they were the wrong trees in the wrong spot. There was further discussion. Greg noted he'd like to remove the trees & replace them with more appropriate trees for the area. Cowan noted he agreed with Greg and there was more discussion. Cowan moved to approve the removal of the trees, Freeman seconded, all aye.

b. Update on tree maintenance, Fall plans, etc.

Cowan inquired with Greg if Friday, October 21st would work for his department for Arbor Day 2022. Cowan encouraged Greg to be thinking of a possible location.

2. Planning

a. Tree impacts, mitigation, etc. re current or upcoming projects

Ben Requet, Director of Planning, noted there was a site-plan in consideration for a new service station that would require trees to be removed. Ben also noted a new submittal has been received for a day-care facility on Hwy 30 and evaluation was beginning. There was further discussion.

3. Engineering, Special Projects

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

a. Update on current projects

Cowan noted the Tree Board would plan to receive an update on current projects at the next meeting in October. Greg indicated the Board of Alderman approved development for the Chickasaw/Molly Barr roundabout.

b. Expiration of TreeKeeper / switch to Tree Plotter

Cowan noted the subscription for the TreeKeeper service was expiring as well as the price had increased, therefore, Cowan stated he discussed with Mark budget constraints. Cowan indicated he talked with someone from the forestry commission regarding using the Tree Plotter service. Cowan informed the Tree Board that, due to the help of the forestry commission, Tree Plotter would be used for at least the next three years. There was further discussion. Matt Neilson, Green Grove Arborist, indicated Ole Miss is using Tree Plotter as well. Matt indicated his opinion was Tree Plotter was easy to use and a good system. There was further discussion regarding who the contact person within the City might be for utilizing the system. Matt also noted possibly applying for a grant next year in relation to the coordination of this system and updating records. There was discussion.

Business

1. *Zaxby's Representatives*

Brad Altenhofen, Director of Operations and Rodney Warner, District Manager, came to discuss potential tree hazard/safety issues at Zaxby's due to visibility. The representatives provided pictures to the Tree Board. Brad stated they were inquiring regarding approval that would be needed for removal if trees were on City property, and he indicated he was specifically referring to the large tree in the picture provided. Greg indicated the large tree was on City right-of-way. There was further discussion. Cowan let the representatives know he and the Tree Board would need to go look at the trees causing issues. There was further discussion. Cowan let the Zaxby's representatives know they would be on the agenda for next month. There was further discussion regarding different options in maintaining and dealing the issues in relation to the trees. Cowan once again noted the need for the Tree Board to assess this area.

2. *Brief report re Hill Country Roots*

Cowan met for coffee recently with Matt Knerr, former president of Hill Country Roots. Matt told Cowan that he was back at Ole Miss from traveling overseas and still involved with HCR. He reported good progress on the group's tree farm project and they discussed possible ways HCR and the city might collaborate in using trees from the farm which will be available in the coming months. Matt also provided Cowan with contact info for the group's new president, Christian Boudreaux. Cowan promised to send board members recent images Matt shared of the tree farm at the university's biological field station.

3. *Discuss location and plans for Arbor Day 2022*

Having previously settled on October 21 as the date for this year's Arbor Day celebration, the board turned its attention to deciding on a location for the event. In the discussion that followed a few possible locations were considered. But the last location suggested, Birney Branch Park, was the unanimous choice and will host this year's event. Cowan will contact management at Core Logic across the street about possible participation as well as inform the Notting Hill HOA. Hume has also contacted the Garden Club about their participation.

4. *Project update from Matt Neilson, Green Groves Arborist*

Matt came before the tree board to give a progress report on his recently extended FY22 project looking at the city's current tree conservation measures and ways to improve ordinances, practices, etc. for potentially better results in both the near and long term. A planned Power Point presentation could not be used due to technical issues, but Matt told board members the process, which started last spring, was moving closer to completion. He said that a key step, site tours with city leaders, remained to be done. He also noted that in reviewing Oxford's ordinances, he had reviewed ordinances for comparison from Tupelo, Hattiesburg, Auburn, Alabama, Collierville, Tennessee, and other cities. He reported good cooperation and information from the city department heads and officials he has met with. He also reported making site visits to various locations in Oxford such as Grand Oaks and Oxford Farms to gauge the effectiveness of current practices. Matt says his recommendations will likely include changes to the tree list, simplifying ordinances, incentivizing developers, etc. Longer term goals might include updated inventories and assessments. Matt acknowledged Hume Bryant for providing important data and information for his study. Questions and discussion followed with Hume, Ed and Bill expressing frustration regarding specific ordinance issues and chronic recurring problems.

Matt also noted that the Tree Board would be pleased with our announced changeover to Tree Plotter software for inventories, etc. He said he uses it regularly and that it should be a significant improvement over the previous program.

Adjourn

Cowan Hunter made a motion to adjourn. All members voted aye; the motion passed.

According to Cowan, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 12:15 P.M.

