

The City of Lake Worth Tree Board
City Hall Conference Room
Regular Meeting Minutes
June 8, 2023

Call to order: 6:03

Members Present: D. Kerner, G. Powell, D. Brown and G. Timor

Members Absent: None

Staff Present: David McGrew, City Horticulturist/Board Advisor, Jamie Brown, Interim Assistant City Manager, Erin Sita, Assistant Director for Community Sustainability

Elected Officials Present: Mayor Betty Resch, Vice Mayor Christopher McVoy

Agenda additions, deletions, reordering: None

Approval of minutes:

Motion made by G. Powell to approve the May 8, 2022 Minutes. Seconded D. Brown.

Yay: 4 Nay: 0

Public Participation on non-agenda items.

Laura Devlin-Spoke in support of the Tree Board.

Jonas Read-Spoke about Tree City USA, artificial turf, and advisory board term limits.

Susan Guyaux-Spoke in support of the Tree Board.

Monica Bilotti-Spoke in support of the proposed South Palmway median native planting project and spoke about the Tree canopy Restoration Fund.

Vice Mayor Christopher McVoy-Spoke about native habitats, native plants and edible landscapes.

Greg Richter- Spoke in support of recertifying as a Tree City USA, native plant give aways, and proper reporting of code compliance issues.

Peggy Fischer-Spoke in favor of trees and proper reporting of code compliance issues. The board should focus on the City's landscape.

Richard Stowe- Read into the record by the advisor D. McGrew. Spoke about his experience while serving on the Tree Board, artificial turf and banning turf grass on residential properties.

Reports:

Advisor D. McGrew-no report

G. Timor-Spoke about tree removals, stated the tree ordinance needs to be strengthened because it does not protect our trees from crooked tree services from roaming our streets, and that the City should strengthen the City Arborist's

credentials by becoming an ISA Certified Arborist Municipal Specialist and becoming Tree Risk Assessment Qualified, establish a tree service registry to prevent further destruction of the tree canopy by unqualified tree trimmers and involve the Tree Board in the permit application process, Tree City USA, stated our greatest assets are our greens spaces our canopied streets and our shaded yards residents need to be informed so they can help safeguard trees on their own properties as well as our city streets and parks. The board has been working on how to best inform our residents and solicit their help. Asked about the Tree canopy Restoration fund and how the monies have been spent, this money should be used explicitly to replace trees, plants and native plants, and to help those who cannot afford to buy them. The Tree Board has no agenda other than to act on behalf of this environment.

D. Kerner- Introduced her self and spoke of her history in Lake Worth Beach and her interest in nature, tree protection and remediation. She stated that she had the best mangos in the north east historic district. The Tree Board is a volunteer advisory board that serves in a planning and advisory capacity that does not make decisions. Serves at the pleasure of the City Commission regarding tree preservation and protection by providing guidance on related policy matters and standards within the City's landscape ordinance. Policies established by the board as approved or authorized by the City Commission will relate to provision of educational materials on proper planting, pruning techniques, insect and disease control, planting native species, inventorying existing trees, permit guidelines including rules for tree removals, opportunities for citizen involvement, and city trees sales. Are a seven-member board currently with four members; we would welcome new members. Extremely concerned by misinformation of social media and at Commission meeting. Would like to provide information to clear up misconceptions and rumors; we are following our charter and duties. We are not a reckless bunch of power-hungry enforcers and HOA commandos, we are not using drones nor going into people's backyards spying on them. What we are working on is providing educational materials- Let's Plant Trees Brochure, working on the city webpage, giving input to the groundcover page, conducting public outreach meetings with neighborhood associations, working with city staff on landscape specifications for city owned properties. Tree City USA recertification is not a Tree Board duty; the application is completed by city staff, signed by the mayor, submitted to the Arbor Day Foundation. The City Horticulturist applied for recertification in 2013 which continued until 2021 when the Festival of Trees which was the City's Arbor day observation was canceled due to COVID-19 restrictions. The City can recertify for 2023 if there is an Arbor Day observance prior to the application deadline. The 2023 application opens in September and closes on November. We will be discussing this today further into the meeting. At a regular Tree Board meeting on March 16, 2023 the board was asked to review and provide input and recommendations to the commission about the landscape regulations section 23.6-1. The board provided recommendations on artificial turf and the installation of groundcover in yards with mulch or rock and added clarifying language. Then the City Manager asked the board provide its recommendation at the City Commission work session on the landscape ordinance on April 13, 2023. She provided the board's recommendation that artificial turf should be continued to be prohibited by exclusion as it has been for the longest time. The ordinance states very clearly that "All other lot areas not covered by driveways or structure shall be planted with living groundcover or other approved landscape materials". Artificial turf is not living plant material.

D. Brown-Everyone has already said a lot. No, she has not reported anyone, not spied in peoples back yards, don't have a drone. The one code compliance complaint that she reported did not have anything to do with artificial turf or landscaping. The board a was asked to comment on artificial turf and the landscape ordinance. The board was not aware that the scope was being changed and that it did not come from the board. Let's Plant Trees brochure revisions are almost complete. It's unfortunate that people are in attack mode and they think that it is ok to attack their neighbors that volunteers. This has to do with code and city ordinance not with the Tree Board who is very powerless. Only four on the board because there was not anyone else who applied. And if one of us isn't here we do not have a quorum.

G. Powell- A 30-year resident and a Tree Board member for four year and retired from the county environmental department in 2018. Once she had more time she thought that serving on the tree board would be a good fit for her based on her education and experience. Never did she think serving on the Tree Board would be so fraught. I her years on the board there were probably less that 20 members of the public the meetings. Pretty boring, non-controversial and non-political. There is a hot button issue right now which has changed everything. The board was asked the by City Manager to provide an opinion on the current landscape ordinance and that is what the board did. The majority opinion

was to keep as is which prohibits artificial turf by exclusion. It is only an opinion, recommendation to the commission and it is not binding in any way, shape, or form. Now it appears that a number of folks who did not like the opinion want to discredit and malign the Tree Board with the hope of ousting the Tree Board members, or getting the city to dissolve the Tree Board, or getting members to resign. Have never seen this level of animosity that we have in our city now, not just this issue but many issues. This is most likely due to the power of social media and folks feel that it is just fine to say anything that comes to mind; true or not. It is one thing to not like city rules and regulations and be a disgruntled citizen but quite another to malign and spread mis-information about people because you do not like their opinions or decisions. Had a problem with the Historic Preservation department about ten years ago over something that that wanted her to do after already receiving board approval for work on her house, didn't like it, cost more money and thought it was overreach but it never occurred to her to spread lies and mis-information about the educated people who the decision about the project. Did what was asked although she could have won the argument had it gone to a higher level but is now happy that she did what the City recommended because the house looks better. Regarding the current situation at first the lies and inuendo beat her down but then thought "no" but has resolved to continue to work and hopefully work better with the Sustainability and Public Works department, the City Manager, the City Commission and hopefully residents to protect the trees and landscape in our city. Some residents have claimed the board has failed to become a tree city, while a good thing to achieve being a tree city is not officially one of our duties. The city has held the designation off and on for 16 years. This was discussed at the May 2023 meeting and will continue that discussion at our meeting tonight. It would be more productive if concerned citizens would make a concise list of their Tree Board complaints and present it to the Sustainability Department for review and feedback. Will defer to city staff and the city attorney to see if that's a reasonable ask.

New Business:

A. Discuss and plan Arbor Day observation – Required to recertify as a Tree City USA

The advisor D. McGrew gave background and analysis on the history of Tree City USA. The City Commission has requested that the board work with staff to pursue this designation. The City's participation began in 1990 and continued through 1998. It is unknown why the city did not apply for recertification from 1998 through 2012. In 2013 the City Horticulturist applied for recertification which continued until 2021 when the Festival of Trees, which was the City's Arbor Day observance was canceled due to COVID-19 restrictions.

To qualify as a Tree City USA community four standards established by the Arbor day Foundation and the National Association of State Foresters must be met.

1. Maintaining Tree Board or Department - The City has both a Tree Board and a department - Meets criterium
2. Public Tree Care Ordinance - The City has a landscape ordinance that has tree planting, pruning and protection provisions. Meets criterium
3. A Community forestry program with an annual budget of at least \$2 per capita – Meets Criterium
4. Arbor Day Observance and Proclamation – the City has not had an Arbor Day proclamation and observance since 2020. – Does not meet criterium

Staff recommends that The Tree Board should begin working with staff to plan a qualifying Arbor Day observance in order to re-certify as a Tree City USA for 2023.

The advisor then informed the board that the application for 2023 opens in September and closes in November and that the required observance does not have to be on Arbor Day.

E. Sita informed the board that staff discussed having a proclamation and a smaller Arbor Day event this year to qualify for 2023. And that staff has been discussing a tree give away more focused on low income areas of the city.

Typically areas that have difficulty purchasing are areas that are often shade tree deserts and often tree give always like the ones the city has done in the past are often attended by people who already have trees, already love trees or going to a tree event. A lot of time those type of give always attract people who can afford to buy trees. She asked the board to start thinking how we could create an event to help our more vulnerable communities that have the least shade in our city. D. Brown asked if planting trees on City property qualified as an Arbor Day Observance. D. McGrew responded that he contacted the Arbor Day Foundation to get clarification on what qualifies as an observance. D. Kerner asked what location was being considered for the tree planting; in front of City Hall? D. McGrew responded that the south side of the City Hall Annex building in the open green space on each side of the walkway leading to the building entrance that does not have any trees could be a potential location. The suggested trees for that location is Green Buttonwood which complies with the City's Major Thoroughfare Design Guidelines which has a plant palette which requires that certain trees be planted along specific thoroughfares. He recommended Green Buttonwood because it is a large canopy trees and the available planting area would support their growth. G. Powell asked if the tree planting had to take place prior to recertifying. D. Kerner asked if there is anything that the board had to do related to the planting. D. McGrew responded that he would check with staff to make sure that there are no conflicts with planting at the City Hall Annex location. Once the location and date has been decided upon and the mayor reads the proclamation the will meet the requirements and the application will be submitted. G. Powell asked what the planting would entail; a ceremony, invite residents, do the event on a Saturday, advertise the event? The interim Assistant City Confirmed that it would be a City event with advertising on the webpage, press release. E. Sita suggested that the board decide by consensus on a few locations so the advisor can follow up with staff to pick a site that will work logistically. The board discussed possible locations as City Hall Annex, Spillway Park, South Palm Park, 5th Ave South greenway, or Howard park.

B. Discuss providing 'blurbs' for social media posts

a. Butterfly garden

C. Discuss and plan targeted tree give away

Old Business

A. Landscape webpage update

B. Tree Board community outreach – Brochure - final review

Board and advisor assignments/tasks

Adjourned: 8:23 PM