

CITY OF BILOXI TREE COMMITTEE MEETING

Location: Community Development Conference Room

Minutes

April 2, 2025

- I. The meeting was called to order at 3:32 p.m.
Members present: Debra Carr (1), Mark Dubaz (3), Jeremy Herring (7), Wendy Lally (5), Susan Peterson (4) and Jamie Tamburo (2).
Excused: Doug Deluca (6).
City Council or Staff present: Mr. Jerry Creel, Director of Community Development and Rod McGilver, Ward 4 Council Representative.
- II. Minutes: April Minutes were approved.
- III. Public Comment: I welcomed the guests that were in attendance and asked them to sign in. I reminded everyone that they have a total of 10 minutes to speak. We do not usually allow discussion but if you would like to speak, please wait to be recognized. There were several people who made comments about mitigation trees and developments. I asked if they would like for Mr. Creel to address their concerns and they agreed.
- IV. Ongoing Business:
 - A. Updates / Comments from City Arborist: Mr. Creel told us the City Arborist position is posted and is still not filled. There have been some applicants but they are not qualified. The City has increased the pay and they are waiting for the Civil Service Commission to approve some additional arborist requirements for the position. Mr. Creel is acting as temporary arborist but with restrictions for granting tree permits. He is only approving permits for removal of protected dead or diseased trees and for trees that need to be removed because of insurance requirements. He has made sure they have photos of these trees. No protected trees that are healthy have been removed. He has provided a printed list of the trees that have been granted permits. This list will be attached to the minutes.
 - B. Action Tracking (15 min): Temporarily on hold.
 - C. Site Visits and Recommendations:

All Tree Committee members were emailed a copy of the Hawk Creek Phase 2 subdivision in Woolmarket along with a follow up text message that these documents were sent. This Tree Hearing recommendation is due on April 3rd. It does not meet our required timeframe so I have requested it be postponed. We still need for that property to be cleared and the arborist report. A working tree committee meeting will be scheduled when we have the required paperwork.

D. Committee Reports:

- DRC Attendance: Susan Peterson attended these DRC meetings: March 12th and March 26th. No one attended on March 19th or April 2nd. (There were no trees on the agenda.)

- PR/ Communications and Upcoming Events:

A City-Wide Public Workshop was held on March 27th, here at 676 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd at 5 p.m. in the large auditorium. The workshop explained how to register a Majestic Tree with the Societe Des Arbres and the City of Biloxi. It was advertised in the March edition of the BNews. Susan Peterson also did two interviews with WLOX for this program earlier in the week and following the workshop that evening. Several people contacted me before and after the meeting about information on registering their Majestic Trees along with a couple of local Garden Clubs.

An article was written by Susan Peterson about the Querens Magnolia Tree for the April BNews to be followed by an article about the Old Brick House Live Oak tree in the May BNews. I am hoping these trees will be included in the City May Preservation Program along with some other MajesticTrees?

- Majestic Tree Program:

*I have submitted the paperwork for the Danny Guice Live Oak Tree behind City Hall. This tree has already been recognized by the City of Biloxi Council but had not gone through this additional process of registration. This tree was recognized by resolution at the August 1, 2023 City Council Meeting.

*Eleven Arbor Day native trees have been planted the week of March 10th and 17th. Four were planted at the Planning Office and I watched four trees planted at the Dog Park on Popps Ferry Rd on March 18th by Sherry Bells Parks and Rec department. These trees were requested by Rod Mc Gilvery, Ward 4 Council Representative. Parks and Rec has also planted 3 more trees at Savarro Park on Irish Hill Dr. I spoke to the foreman and he assured me they would be taken care of. They have mulched and staked these trees. Just a reminder that Parks and Rec sponsored and held our annual Arbor Day Tree run on February 22nd at Point Cadet Plaza. This was the 37th year.

Harrison County donated 350 native trees and bushes for this event. I shared that information and the advertising for the event with all the tree members beforehand. It was advertised locally and is usually held the last Saturday in February.

*A request for 6 Mitigation Live Oak Trees has been submitted to the Planning Office, the Mayor and the City Council for approval. These trees were requested by David Shoemaker, Ward 7 Council Representative, for Eagle Point Park. This request had been discussed at an earlier Tree Committee meeting. This property has water access.

- City Beautification Plan:
Temporarily on hold.

V. Current Business:

A. Tree Committee Comments: None

B. Chairperson / Secretary Comments:

I've been tracking down tree information from our last arborist that our last arborist didn't have time to share before he resigned. I've met with the MSU county Extension Office, Mr. Tim Ray both at his office on Popp's Ferry Rd and followed up on County Line Rd on March 15th to get information. He was most helpful. After contacting Jim Hancock, MS Forestry Commission Region IV, who put me in touch with the MS State Forestry Commission Urban and Community Partnership Coordinator, Loren Erickson. He arranged to come to Biloxi for our first meeting on March 12th at the Planning Office. He presented the Arbor Tree City award for our city to us. This is the 41st year for our City and we are the second oldest city designated on MS. Debra Carr attended the meeting with me and we spent about 2 hours with him.

I am presenting our Arbor Tree City documents and certificates to Mr. Creel now so they can be eventually placed in the City.

Loren Erickson worked with Zach Harris and the City to help protect the Querens Magnolia Tree when Esposito Street along the railroad track was being installed. He will be assisting us as needed since we do not have an arborist. He has returned two more times and I have met with him while he was assessing the Querens Magnolia Tree. He is assisting with writing up a request for protective measures since I let him know that they are closing the railroad crossing at Querens Avenue in May or June? The City has already approved this closure. He will oversee the work done. He is also going to assess the Danny Guice Live

Oak Tree. Both these requests will be forwarded to the Planning Office, the Mayor and the City Council for approval. He has also offered to work with our tree committee to get our mitigation requirements more in line with the rest of the coastal cities and the State.

C. Committee Reports: None

D. Reports to the City: None

VI. Old Business:

Jamie Tomburo and Wendy Lally brought up their motion from our last tree committee meeting which had been seconded to vote for new Tree Committee Chairperson, Vice Chairperson and Secretary. However, this motion was not voted on. They felt since we had a full committee now, we should take another vote on these positions. I felt since Wendy had been unhappy with the past vote because she had not attended that meeting, so I spoke to Peter Abide, City Attorney, about this matter after our last (March) meeting. He advised that we should not take a vote until all tree committee members are present at the meeting. This matter will be carried forward for the next tree committee meeting when we have a full quorum.

VII. Meeting adjourned at 4:27 p.m.

Submitted by:

Susan Peterson

Tree Committee Chairperson/Secretary