

TREE BOARD

May 4, 2020

The Tree Board of the City of Norman, Cleveland County, State of Oklahoma, met for a virtual meeting appearing via video conference on the 4th day of March 2020, at 4:00 P.M.

ITEM 1, being:

ROLL CALL

Present: Chairman Menzie and Members Fagin, Huffman, Lavastida, and Winegardner

Absent: Commissioners Spain and Tedder-Loffand (one vacant position)

Tardy: Commissioner Janaway

City Officials: Tim Vermillion, City Forester
Karla Sitton, Administrative Technician IV

ITEM 2, being:

APPROVAL OF THE MARCH 2, 2020 MEETING MINUTES

Member Fagin made the motion and Member Winegardner seconded to approve the minutes. The vote was taken with the following results:

YEAH: Chairman Menzie and Members Fagin, Huffman, Lavastida, and Winegardner

NAY: None

ITEM 3, being:

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Member Lavastida made the motion and Chair Menzie seconded to approve the agenda. The vote was taken with the following results:

YEAH: Chairman Menzie and Members Fagin, Huffman, Lavastida, and Winegardner

NAY: None

ITEM 4, being:

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

Member Fagin said the 2nd Friday Art Walk events have been cancelled until further notice due to the COVID-19 pandemic. There were not any other subcommittee reports at this time.

ITEM 5, being:

DISCUSSION REGARDING TREE PLOTTER SOFTWARE

Mr. Tim Vermillion, City Forester, said he has been researching software to inventory trees quickly by way of querying data and his exploration steered him to Tree Plotter Software. He said the cost for the software is

\$6,500 and he does not have enough in the budget to purchase; however, the Norman Park Foundation has indicated they would like to pay for the software and he is very appreciative.

Mr. Vermillion said the software will allow Staff to stand in front of each tree and enter information on an attribute table to include: the species, average health of the tree, and create a story map. He said many reports can be done that can assist with outlining the direction and create a program going forward. Mr. Vermillion said the software also includes I Tree software and ACOG's inventory which will assist Staff when requesting grants to help fund programs.

Chair Menzie asked if the Tree Plotter Software was a one-time fee and Mr. Vermillion said the cost is \$3,000 annually and add-ons can be added for an additional \$500-\$1000. Mr. Vermillion said the initial fee will include data transfer. Chair Menzie asked if the software will include GPS coordinates for the trees and Staff said yes.

Member Fagin asked who manufactures the software and Mr. Vermillion said it is manufactured by Plan It GEO. Mr. Vermillion said he would be happy to send out information on the software to the Board and Member Fagin said he would appreciate that very much.

Mr. Vermillion said the software is all cloud-based and can be utilized on any device such as an iPhone and/or tablet. He felt it will take some time and be an on-going effort but worth it. The initial focus will be on Wards 2 & 4 since they have the largest canopy area and oldest trees in Norman.

Member Huffman said he is on the Norman Park Foundation and asked Staff if they thought about seeking volunteers to assist with initial inventory of trees. Member Fagin said BioBlitz! is a citizen group who has showed a great deal of citizen interest to help Staff and suggested Staff contact Priscilla Crawford at BioBlitz! to obtain a list of qualified people that can identify trees. Mr. Vermillion said yes, and he knew the Norman Park Foundation wanted to get volunteers and he will set up training on weekends. He said some of the data he will need to enter himself (health of trees, etc.); however, there will be a lot of information that can be done by the volunteers.

ITEM 6, being:

DISCUSSION REGARDING THE TREE PHOTO CONTEST

Members Fagin and Lavastida said they are on the Tree Photo Contest Sub-committee, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic they have not been able to meet. Member Lavastida said the Tree Photo Contest may need to be continued to 2021, depending on how long the pandemic continues to close businesses (the Norman Library and/or The Depot where photos could possibly be displayed) as well as the number of people restricted in those areas.

ITEM 7, being:

TREE ORDINANCE DISCUSSION

Mr. Tim Vermillion, Forester, said he has researched several tree ordinances to include those from Denton, TX; Ft. Worth, TX; and Austin, TX. He said he will make a presentation to the City Council Oversight Committee on May 15, 2020 as well as putting something to show to the Tree Board. He said Ft Worth and Austin have very stringent ordinances and also have a large staff to regulate the ordinance. Chair Menzie felt the Tree Ordinance is a "living" ordinance and occasionally making changes/additions is necessary and a good thing.

Mr. Vermillion felt including a step in the planning process that will either allow or deny construction may be an option and the goal is encouraging contractors to work around trees rather than removing trees. He said

another option may be to have contractors submit a Tree Protection Plan and Chair Menzie felt that would be a good idea.

Chair Menzie said he is concerned about the manpower that would be needed if additional options and/or requirements are added to the current ordinance. He felt the work load would be too much for one person, which is all the City has currently in the Forestry Division. Mr. Vermillion said he understood; however, the additional requirements added to the Tree Ordinance this time last year were approved although the City did not currently have a Forester.

Member Janaway joined the meeting at 4:45 p.m.

ITEM 8, being:

MISCELLANEOUS COMMENTS

Mr. Tim Vermillion, City Forester, said the Tree Board still has one vacant position and asked whether any of the members knew of anyone who might be interested in serving on the Board. Member Fagin said he thought Amy Buthod, Botanical Specialist with Oklahoma Natural Heritage Inventory, who has shown interest, has completed an online application. Mr. Vermillion said he can check with the City Clerk's Office to see whether an appointment will be made soon.

Mr. Vermillion said a lot of trees were ordered before the COVID-19 pandemic and he is slowly giving them away to Norman citizens. He said he has made a lot of "house calls" assisting citizens with issues. Mr. Vermillion said some dead/diseased trees are being removed and replaced on Robinson Street.

Chair Menzie asked whether the June Tree Board meeting will be in person or will another Zoom meeting need to be scheduled. Staff said we will have to wait and see what the COVID-19 pandemic is like in a few weeks and will let the Board know. If an "in person" meeting is scheduled, those present will most likely be asked to wear masks.

ITEM 9, being:

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Menzie made the motion and Member Fagin seconded to adjourn. The vote was taken with the following results:

YEAH: Chairman Menzie and Members Fagin, Huffman, Janaway, Lavastida, and Winegardner

NAY: None

Passed and approved this _____ of _____ 2020

Don Menzie, Chairperson