

Parks and Parkways Commission
December 7, 2020

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Scott Discon and the secretary called roll. The meeting was held on the Zoom platform as allowed by Executive Proclamations 2020-174 by Governor John Bel Edwards.

Present: Scott Discon, Lee Frederick, Will Afton, Eric McQuiston, and Leslie Marcello

Absent: Karin Crosby and Anne Marie Fargason

Also Present: Catherine Casanova, City Arborist, Council Member Jill McGuire, and Louissette Scott, Planning Director

Mr. McQuiston moved to adopt the minutes of the November 2, 2020 meeting, seconded by Ms. Marcello and was unanimously approved.

Discussion:

Mr. Buck Abbey presented information on the Louisiana Certified Habitat Program Application (Louisiana Native Plant Society) for *Little Bayou Castine Swamp Native Plant Area*

He said the commission was central to keeping the idea of landscaping in front of the citizens and the elected officials. He had spoken with Mr. Discon about a program sponsored by the Louisiana Native Plant Society that was an educational program. CLURO Section 2.4 spoke about education. The program was put together to show the citizens a true native habitat. A broad definition of a habitat was either not impacted by human activity or long ago healed naturally. With the City there were chunks of native habitat. Most people would not know that. Some people in the community may want to fill in wetlands and need to be educated. Mr. Abbey had done research, acquired the application form, visited the site for a site survey, filled out the application. The application was forwarded to Mr. Discon that included a map of the site that was a wetland between Florida and Montgomery Streets on Little Bayou Castine owned by the City. He had also found a benefactor to pay for the application fee. If this was acceptable to the City citizens, it would be good to pursue more than this one plot of land. The Louisiana Native Plant Society would provide a temporary roadside signage, and the City could make a permanent sign. Mr. Discon informed Mr. Abbey that the commission would review the application and then vote to pursue it or the commission could recommend it. Mr. McQuiston moved to recommend the application as presented by Mr. Abby. Ms. Frederick said the program would be to identify the native habitat for educational purposes and recognizing that was also protection and was valuable for the area. She then seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

Opening of the Agenda:

Mr. Discon moved to open the agenda for Mission & Process of Implementation of New Projects 2021, Preferred Plant Lists, and the Catalogue of Seeds for the Wildflower Garden, seconded by Ms. Frederick and was unanimously approved.

1. Mission & Process of Implementation of New Projects 2021

Mr. McQuiston said he had been frustrated with the project completions. In discussions with Mr. Abby, they discussed introducing and ratifying a set of commission bylaws which would set forth the mission; create a template for introducing projects, developing projects, and implementing projects. This would provide greater success and work more efficiently. Mr. Abbey said the process would be to develop a project and do a site analysis that could take 2 weeks to 6 months. The design work would begin which would take at 2-6 months or longer, then there would be funding from an estimated bid or negotiated, and the resolution stage could be 2 months to 1 year. Mr. McQuiston said it was accomplished by a set of bylaws to provide a step by step blueprint to expedite projects, be transparent, lend credibility to the commission, and help the commission accomplish more work, and save money. He proposed to set aside money to hire someone to develop the bylaws and implement them as soon as possible. Mr. Abbey indicated he wrote the bylaws when he worked in Baton Rouge. Mr. Abbey also mentioned the need to identify, design, and implement. Mr. Discon asked Mr. Abbey to send an email to him and the Commission could discuss it in more detail at the next meeting.

2. Preferred Plant List

Mr. Discon suggested having an online discussion creating a preferred plant list. The compiled list can be discussed at the next meeting. Mr. Frederick mentioned that the list should include hardy and disease resistant plants. The commission recommended not to include Indian Hawthorn since they were not attractive and were high maintenance.

3. Catalog of Seeds for Wildflower Garden

Strictly Medicinal was the name of Ms. Frederick's catalog. She would meet with Mr. Abbey and decide on what to plant in the wildflower garden.

New Business:

1. Adoption of the 2021 meeting dates

Mr. Discon motioned to accept the dates, seconded by Ms. Frederick and was unanimously approved.

2. Tree City USA Growth Award discussion

Ms. Casanova had submitted the plan for the 2020 Growth Award. She suggested the Commission think about the plans for the 2021 submittal.

3. Dates for Arbor Day Giveaway

The Commission agreed to hold the tree giveaway on February 6th.

4. Proposed projects for 2021/2022 budget year

- Sunset Point Pollinator Upgrades. Ms. Fuselier said the plan was included in the present budget and to be implemented under the 2021 budget.
- Cemeteries – this should be a priority plan
- Benches
- Hwy 22 - this would move forward after the road construction.
- Hwy 190 by Perlis – Mr. Discon said the plan was to plant trees and had consistent landscaping along the service road.

There had been discussions to remove the chain link fence and install a new fence.

- Wildflower Garden Update
- Tree City USA Sign post (2)
- Community Wide Tree Planting
- Highway 190 Business Corridor Tree Planting Continuation
- Marigny Avenue planting – Phase 2
- Old Mandeville Sign Entrance on Marigny Avenue

Mr. Discon asked to keep this item on the agenda for the next 3 months to finalize the list.

Ms. Marcello asked to do planting on The Trace next to the previous Acadian Millwork building. It was discussed that pollinator plants would be a good choice. Mr. McQuiston said this went back to the discussion of the mission and with Ms. Marcello pitching her idea and she should move forward with vetting it to have it happen.

Staff Update:

1. Marigny Avenue Edible Forest Planting
 - a. The 100 block would be planted after Christmas.
2. Causeway Underpass Design
 - a. The plans were almost finished and would be sent to the City Council. Ms. Scott said the design would be placed on the December 17th agenda.

Parks and Parkways Commission

December 7, 2020

Page 4

3. Florida Street Landscape Plan, Phase 1
 - a. The City was waiting on DOTD approval which should be received in about a week. After that, the RFP would be mailed.
 - b. Ms. Casanova said it would be put on the Councils agenda for the 17th for approval.
4. Tyler Thomas Park
 - a. The planting was complete. Ms. Frederick suggested more planting next year.

Public Comment(s):

Mr. Abbey was at the Wildflower Garden and he noticed a dead live oak tree which did not die a natural death. The pines were also struggling. Ms. Fuselier said the City needed to treat the invasive grass and the tree was a casualty.

Mr. Discon requested to create a list of the projects and distribute it to the commission.

Patty Zebrick, a resident, asked to preserve the long leaf pine trees which needed to be reforested in the Wildflower Garden with mulch.

Mr. McQuiston motioned to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Ms. Frederick and was unanimously approved.



Lori Spranley, Secretary



Scott Discon, Chairman
Parks and Parkways Commission