

Parks and Parkways Commission
November 4, 2019

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Scott Discon and the secretary called roll.

Present: Scott Discon, Karin Crosby, Anne Marie Fargason, Will Afton and Eric McQuiston

Absent: Marilyn Osborne and Lee Frederick

Also Present: Louise Scott, Planning Director and Catherine Casanova, Landscape Inspector

Mr. McQuiston moved to approve the minutes of May 5 and June 3, 2019, seconded by Ms. Crosby and was unanimously approved.

New Business:

1. Scope of fall tree planting

Mr. Discon requested the replanting of the dead live oak trees on Florida Street. Ms. Scott said she, Mr. Discon and Ms. Casanova would ride the street to evaluate the trees. Ms. Crosby said there was a dead tree and a leaning pine tree in the Wildflower Garden. It was agreed that tall trees should be removed because they will grow everywhere. It was decided to email the commissioners to set a ride around date.

It was further discussed that there were other trees to be replaced and they were located at:

- West Causeway Bridge - willow and cypress trees.
- Two American Hollies - in the median.
- Service Road by Times Grill - 3-4 dead pine trees between the sidewalk and North Causeway Boulevard

2. Discussion of Marigny Avenue planting

Mr. Discon said the maintenance concerns had been previously discussed of how to maintain the extensive planting on Marigny Avenue. The City had said Round Up would be used to clear the ground of grass and weeds. The commission then had lengthy discussions led by several commissioners that the use of Round Up was not acceptable and there would be an increased cost not using pesticides.

Ms. Crosby had not been present at the discussion and stated she was not a proponent of spraying pesticides and wanted a more naturalistic environment that the plants could survive on their own. The idea was to broaden the perspective with color, shape and texture. With the decision to downscale the project to three specific blocks there would be a decrease in the amount of plants, scope, and cost. Her intention had been to plant native fruit species for animal and human consumption that would be helpful to the community with the Samaritan Center being located in close proximity. A decision had been made at the June meeting to proceed with the project and she was caught off guard that it was discussed again at last month's meeting.

Mr. McQuiston said the discussion had been to step back on the amount of plantings having less maintenance. At this meeting, it was determined that peaches and apples were high maintenance plantings, and mayhaws were too tall for Cleco so they would be excluded from the plan. Ms. Scott said when meeting with Cleco last month, they stated their concern to have no planting in close proximity to the power lines to prevent ladders being too close to the power lines and causing accidents. Ms. Crosby suggested changing the species to Pineapple Guava which was drought tolerant and the flowers were also edible.

The commission discussed planting blueberries, pears, blackberries, Meyer lemon, persimmon, kumquat, satsuma, and navel oranges. It was discussed that pomegranate was hardy and should be paired with the pineapple guava since they were both drought hardy. The plants should be available to purchase and the plan could be adapted if there was a sourcing problem.

The commission agreed the planting species would be: blueberries, pear, blackberries, fig, navel oranges, fuyu persimmon, pineapple guava, Meyer lemon, kumquat, and wonderful pomegranate. It was suggested planting vitex for the other blocks.

There was a lengthy discussion on the ground preparation for the planting since the initial installation use of Round Up had been of a concern to the commissioners. Mr. McQuiston and Afton said initial installation and bed preparation often had Round Up used as a burn down of the grass and weeds. Ongoing maintenance had been a concern for the residents. It was stated that the project would be listed under the City's maintenance contract and the specifications could state that no pesticide was to be used at this location since they spray other City locations. The specifications could also include the placement of a heavy ground cover of 3-5" of mulch and the areas must be hand weeded. It was agreed that this would require a higher degree of labor and have a higher cost. Cutting around the perimeter of the mulch would mitigate some of the growth. Once the tree was established, it would take care of itself.

It was anticipated that the neighborhood, community and people at the Samaritan Center would pick the fruit which was a concern of some of the residents. The birds would also eat it of which some of the residents had stated they did not want the animals.

The commission agreed to plant different vitex colors on all 8 blocks for some unity and the 100, 700 and 800 blocks would also have fruit planting. If the fruit trees worked well then there would be future planting on other blocks. The neighbors had requested live oak trees on the corners which had been planted.

Mr. Discon summarized that the commission had agreed on the fruit trees and bushes as well as planting red bud and vitex with the plan being revised. There were water sources, but no irrigation system. It was agreed that water bags must be included in the specifications to keep the new planting watered using the contractor's water truck or a hose at the available water source.

The individual blocks were discussed and the 100 block would include fig, blueberry, pears and satsumas which could be planted with no plan change. The live oak trees were located on the corners and not in the median. The vitex would have the most impact planted on the end caps and having the interior planted with fruit trees. The 800 block plan removed the peaches and apples. The block would be planted with blackberries, pineapple guava, figs, and persimmons. There was one spot on the end of Florida Street that could be planted with a vitex outside of the 30' site line. The 700 block could be the citrus block with pear, pomegranate and kumquats. This was a sunny area except for the middle which contained water oak and pine trees that were above the Cleco lines and had never been topped. The vitex trees would be planted to fill the voids and not be regimented using pink and blue as available.

Ms. Crosby moved to revise the list of plantings as per the to the discussion of this meeting to be installed, and moving forward with the planting for the fall, seconded by Mr. McQuiston. The plan would not be further presented to the public.

Jay Seastrunk, Lakeshore Drive resident, asked how to keep the mulch from floating away in the first block of Lakeshore Drive. Mr. McQuiston said with 12" of water anything would float away, but pine mulch was best to stay in place. It was also the best mulch to be used around blueberries since they like the acid. The commission requested a January planting or earlier if there was sooner availability. The motion was unanimously approved.

Tyler Thomas plantings

The Public Works Department had renovations planned for the park so the planting plan was on hold.

3. Status of new Under Maintenance contract

Ms. Casanova was working on updating the contracts. The commission agreed that tree straps were required to be removed at one year language become standard in all future specifications.

Ms. Crosby moved to open the agenda to discuss the adoption of the 2020 meeting schedule and to discuss Cleco tree cutting versus covered conductors, seconded by Mr. McQuiston and was unanimously approved.

Mr. McQuiston moved to approve the 2020 meeting schedule as presented, seconded by Ms. Crosby and was unanimously approved.

Mr. Discon there was a website on conductors. After Tropical Storm Olga, Cleco was working on Carroll by Monroe Street trying to cut the historic live tree. Cleco topped the cypress trees and removed the inside of the oak tree. When asked to stop and the tree cutter continued cutting, and he called Mayor Villere who was able to stop Cleco.

Ms. Scott said the recent experience with Cleco on the east side of the City was that they were moving forward on ground to sky line clearing. Mr. Discon said Cleco had stated they could cut 3' from each line. Ms. Scott said the administration met with Cleco regarding the CLURO regulations on public tree trimming and permitting. They were taking a hard line saying the recently planted live oak trees on Florida Street were under the power lines and should be removed. They stated there would be no future approvals of low level planting in the 50' Cleco servitude on Florida Extension. After Tropical Storm Olga, they came into the area on Sunday cutting where they wanted. She encouraged the commission to request the City Council have Cleco appear at their meeting for a discussion. Ms. Scott said with the recent sale of Cleco there seemed to be a different business philosophy. It was discussed that the installation of conductors would reduce the field of cut. There had been discussions about moving the lines underground, but it was priced at \$1 Million for one section. This should be a continuing conversation for more cooperation. The commission had looked at certain areas to criss cross the streets where there were significant trees. It would be a continued challenge especially since the franchise agreement gave them full reign. There should be continued discussion with the City Attorney because the Public Service Commission stated if the municipality had rules the utility must follow them, but that was policy. The Franchise Agreement was adopted by ordinance with the City which was updated a few years ago. The agreement stated Cleco had the right to maintain the lines, etc.

Mr. McQuiston asked in the event of a violation of the policy, what would happen. Ms. Scott said the policy gave them latitude so there was not a violation. Previously, Cleco cooperated for permits and walked the circuits with the arborist. Ms. Casanova said Cleco had met with the City on certain circuits, but they went to the east side and started a ground to sky clearing. Mr. McQuiston said if there was no penalty then there was no reason to comply.

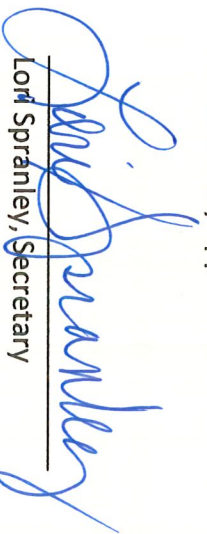
Ms. Crosby requested the commission be notified when Cleco was on the City Council agenda.

Staff Update

It was requested to have Lucious Brumfield replant the dead trees on West Causeway and remove any stakes. Ms. Casanova said he would be on site Monday.

Mr. McQuiston announced the Center of Planning Excellence conference was being held on November 12th and he recommended attending. Ms. Crosby also announced there was a class in January on urban planning and scholarships were offered to help offset the registration fee.

Ms. Crosby moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mr. McQuiston and was unanimously approved.



Lori Spranley, Secretary



Scott Discon, Chairman
Parks and Parkways Commission