

CITY OF ST. AUGUSTINE, FLORIDA

Street Tree Advisory Committee Meeting  
May 4, 2005

The Street Tree Advisory Committee (STAC) met in formal session at 2:00 P.M., Wednesday, May 4, 2005, in the Alcazar Conference Room at City Hall. The meeting was called to order by Chairman Frederick Halback, and the following were present:

**1. ROLL CALL**

Frederick Halback, Chairman  
Jerry Griffin (absent)  
Greg Dunn, County Forester (absent)  
Gordon Wilson, National Parks Service  
Robin Nadeau  
Pat Gray, Garden Club Representative (absent)  
Gina Burrell  
Sally Ann Freeman  
Chuck Lippi

Ex-Officio: Pat Henderson, City Parks Supervisor

Mark Knight, Director, Planning & Building Department  
David Birchim, Planning Manager  
Nancy Brilliant, Recording Secretary

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**2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**  
**(November 10, 2004)**

**MOTION**

**Ms. Burrell moved to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by Mr. Lippi and approved by a unanimous voice vote.**

Mr. Halback stated the following:

- Thanked Mr. Lippi for presenting an educational training program to the Street Tree Advisory Committee. He suggested that an educational training program would be beneficial to the City staff and the members of the Code Enforcement, Adjustments and Appeal Board and the Planning and Zoning Board.

- The tree and landscaping code should be rewritten utilizing industry-wide terms and vocabulary.
- The tree and landscaping code should be restricted to regulations the City was willing and able to enforce.
- Complimented Mr. Lippi for his tree preservation efforts which were documented in the following articles:
  - ◆ Saving the tree in Palatka.
  - ◆ Moving the large oak tree in Palm Coast.

**3. SUGGESTIONS REGARDING**  
**THE IMPLEMENTATION OF**  
**AN EDUCATIONAL TRAINING**  
**PROGRAM FOR THE CODE**  
**ENFORCEMENT, ADJUSTMENTS**  
**AND APPEALS BOARD.**  
**SUGGESTIONS REGARDING**

**AMENDMENTS AND ADDITIONS  
TO THE CITY OF ST. AUGUSTINE  
TREE AND LANDSCAPING  
ORDINANCE.**

Mr. Lippi stated the following:

- Referenced his list of suggested educational training programs and ordinance changes and asked the members of the Street Tree Advisory Committee to rate the suggestions in order of importance. Suggested that the changes that would be met with the least resistance could be implemented first.
- Science had greatly improved during the previous 10 years and the new developments should be incorporated in the ordinance.
- The health of a tree should be heavily weighed when deciding to save or remove a tree.
- Trees often trigger an emotional response in people.
- During a hurricane, a properly pruned tree would perform better than an improperly pruned tree. He suggested incorporating professional standards in the tree ordinance to ensure the proper pruning of trees.
- Water and laurel oaks had a tendency to loose limbs at the end of their life span.

Mr. Halback noted that 60 years was the average life span of a water and laurel oak tree.

Mr. Lippi commented that water and laurel oak trees were usually in fast decline when they reached 50 years old. He noted that the presence of decay on an old tree did not necessarily mean that the tree had to be removed. He explained that, as a Certified Arborist, he often drilled trees when he suspected the presence of internal rot.

Ms. Nadeau asked how to identify the difference between a live oak and a laurel oak.

Mr. Halback noted the following:

- A live oak typically had more spread than height.
- The live oak had a ridge around the leaf which formed a cup.
- The leaves of a live oak were dark green on the outside and golden on the inside.
- Three shades of leaves could be present on the same branch of a laurel oak.

Mr. Lippi stated the following:

- Water and laurel oaks were capable of cross breeding. Both species were quite similar in appearance; however, in comparison the water oak would be larger. Both species had a short life span.
- Live oak had a long life span of 150 to 200+ years. The live oak was hardy and much more tolerant of root trimming and improper pruning.
- Suggested that water and laurel oak trees be eliminated from the list of acceptable tree replacements.
- If you multiply the trunk diameter by 3 you can calculate a safe distance to trim the root system. If the roots were incorrectly trimmed the following could occur:
  - ◆ Instability of the root system could cause the tree to fall.
  - ◆ The decline of the tree would be apparent many years later.
- Root systems were close to the surface and could be affected by the placement of fill.
- Tree roots often extend under a sidewalk and cause the sidewalk to heave. He suggested that the insertion of liquid concrete under the sidewalk would raise the elevation; therefore, protecting the

root system and eliminating a tripping hazard.

- A tree planted in close proximity to a street could have a compromised root system. He explained that roots seldom extend in areas where air and water were lacking; therefore, the root system would be stunted on one side and the tree would be unstable.
- Suggested that the planting standards established by the National Arborist Association (NAA) be incorporated into the ordinance.

Mr. Halback asked Mr. Lippi to describe the difference between an arborist and a certified arborist.

Mr. Lippi explained that, to become a certified arborist, a person must pass a test administered by a prestigious national arborist association that covers 14 subjects such as cabling a tree, safety, first aid, biology, pruning, fertilizing, and disease. He noted that approximately 1,500 certified arborists were located in the State of Florida. He stated that St. Johns County had two certified arborists which included himself and Eddie Conlon of Tree Medic.

Mr. Halback noted that the industry was not regulated and that anyone could call themselves an arborist or a certified arborist.

Mr. Lippi stated the following:

- Suggested that the standards established by the University of Florida be incorporated into the ordinance.
- Suggested that Florida #1 trees be specified for replacement trees.
- Often noticed that construction sites did not have protective fencing installed around trees.

- Noticed that a number of trees were horribly pruned when the Mary Peck House was moved to another location.
- Had equipment capable of drilling a tree to determine the amount of decay present inside the tree.
- Considered the following criteria when making a determination whether a tree presented a hazard:
  - ◆ Amount and location of the decay.
  - ◆ Presence of narrow crotches and big branches located low on the tree.
  - ◆ Whether a falling tree would impact a person or cause property damage.
- Suggested an educational training program for City staff concerning hazardous tree recognition.
- Suggested the implementation of a tree bank. A property owner would be allowed to contribute to a tree fund when insufficient space existed on the property to plant replacement trees or the property owner did not wish to plant another tree.
- Suggested the implementation of an educational training program for the public, the City staff (Code Enforcement Inspectors and staff in the Public Works Department), and the Code Enforcement, Adjustments and Appeals Board members.

Mr. Halback noted the following:

- The City Commission had been very complementary of the work performed by the Street Tree Advisory Committee.
- Stressed that the Street Tree Advisory Committee was a “committee” responsible for making recommendations and they did not have the power of a board.
- The tree and landscaping code had been updated in the recent past. He was not aware of a mandate from the City Commission requesting that the Street

Tree Advisory Committee rewrite the tree and landscaping code.

- Eventually he would like to see the tree and landscaping code rewritten to a user friendly format. However, he believed that the educational training program should be implemented first.
- Suggested that the committee seek approval from the City Commission to implement the following:
  - ◆ Accept Mr. Lippi's offer and implement an educational training program for the City staff.
  - ◆ Add an additional City staff member to be trained as a Certified Arborist.

Mr. Knight supported the implementation of an educational training program. He suggested that the training would be beneficial to the members of the Planning and Zoning Board as well as the Code Enforcement, Adjustments and Appeals Board.

Mr. Halback suggested that the plans examiners could benefit from an educational training session and that tree protection should be considered during the review process. He stated that the following questions should be considered:

- What type of barricade system would be utilized?
- Would the barricade system be adequate?
- Would fill be utilized during construction?

A brief discussion ensued regarding the following:

- Additional City staff man hours would be necessary to enforce any changes made to the tree and landscaping code.
- An educational training program should be implemented for the members of the

Code Enforcement, Adjustments and Appeals Board, the Planning and Zoning Board, and the Historic Architectural Review Board.

- In-depth educational training program should be implemented for key members of the City staff.
- Benefits of having a Certified Arborist on the City staff.

Mr. Knight noted that Eddie Conlon presented an educational training program at the January meeting of the Code Enforcement, Adjustments and Appeals Board.

Mr. Lippi stated that he was willing to offer educational training programs to the public.

Mr. Halback stated that the City periodically distributed a newsletter to the residents and he suggested that Mr. Lippi write a newsletter to educate the public.

Mr. Knight commented that, since the Planning and Zoning Board (PZB) meetings were televised, the PZB meeting would be a perfect time to hold an educational training program. He noted that the members of the Code Enforcement, Adjustments and Appeals Board and the Historic Architectural Review Board could be invited to the meeting.

Mr. Halback stated that, since the Planning and Zoning Board meeting was televised, it would be a great opportunity to educate the board member's as well as the public.

## MOTION

**Mr. Halback stated that he would be willing to present the recommendations to the City Commission. He moved to**

**request the City Commission's support of the following:**

- **A 30 to 40 minute educational training program to be held at the Planning and Zoning Board meeting. The members of the Code Enforcement, Adjustments and Appeals Board and the Historic Architectural Review Board would be invited to the meeting.**
- **Hold an in-depth educational training program for key members of the City staff.**
- **Allocate appropriate funds to encourage a City staff member to become a Certified Arborist.**
- **Incorporate an educational newsletter, written by Mr. Lippi, to be distributed to the City residents.**

**The motion was seconded by Ms. Nadeau and approved by a unanimous voice vote.**

#### **4. OTHER BUSINESS.**

##### **SAN MARCO AVENUE MERCHANTS ASSOCIATION**

Mr. Halback referenced a letter that the Street Tree Advisory Committee members received from the San Marco Avenue Merchants Association regarding a "street tree planting program."

Ms. Burrell noted that, at the Street Tree Advisory Committee meeting held on November 10, 2004, she offered to speak to the business owners on San Marco Avenue to determine their willingness to water and maintain plants/trees if the City of St. Augustine planted them.

Mr. Halback asked what portion of San Marco Avenue would be included.

Ms. Burrell responded that she was not certain which portion of San Marco Avenue would be included. She noted that she contacted the Department of Transportation and they sent her a landscape application form.

Mr. Halback stated that Ms. Burrell would have more problems with the Department of Transportation than she realized.

A brief discussion ensued in which the following questions and concerns were mentioned:

- What portion of San Marco Avenue would be included?
- What type of commitment would the association be willing to accept both financially and operationally?
- Would the business owner, property owner, or association take responsibility for the care and maintenance?
- What type of support were they seeking from the Street Tree Advisory Committee?

Mr. Halback stated that, if he received an invitation to the next meeting of the San Marco Avenue Merchants Association, he would be willing to discuss the before mentioned questions.

Ms. Burrell commented that she would contact the San Marco Avenue Merchants Association and extend Mr. Halback's offer.

Mr. Halback noted that the Department of Transportation offered grants to be utilized for beautification. He stated that one of the major criteria the Department of Transportation utilized for rating the applications was public participation and adoption of the issue.

LIST OF ACCEPTABLE AND INVASIVE TREES

A brief discussion ensued regarding the list of acceptable and invasive trees.

Ms. Freeman stated that she had an up-to-date copy of the list of acceptable and invasive trees. She noted that she would send the list to the City and asked that a copy be forwarded to the members of the Street Tree Advisory Committee.

URBAN FORESTRY COUNCIL

Mr. Lippi commented that the members of the Street Tree Advisory Committee may wish to join the Urban Forestry Council. He noted that the annual membership was \$20 and the members received a quarterly newsletter.

CERTIFIED ARBORIST

A brief discussion ensued regarding the experience and educational requirements necessary to become a Certified Arborist. The committee and staff members were directed to the website for the International Society of Arboriculture.

**5. ADJOURNMENT.**

**MOTION**

**Mr. Halback moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Lippi.**

Meeting was adjourned at 3:35 P.M.

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Frederick Halback, Chairman

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Nancy E. Brilliant, Recording Secretary