

City of Hot Springs
Urban Forestry Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, October 26, 2021
Parks Conference Room, City Hall

Members Attending:

Ed French, Regine Skelton, James Moore, Allen Bates, and Candace Shepherd

The meeting was called to order by Ed French at 5:30 p.m.

Committee Business Section:

1. *Roll call*
2. *Approval of Agenda:* James motioned, Regine seconded, and committee voted and approved
3. *Approval of Minutes:* James motioned, Regine seconded, and committee voted and approved
4. *Recognition of Guests:* Brian Fisher, Parks & Trails; Freddy Padilla, Urban Forestry Crew

New Business:

5. *Overview of 2021:*

Allen gave a brief review David Watkins Park, dedication, and planting of 22 trees. He reported no new parks on the agenda. There are currently over 20 parks. He mentioned the Bicycle park that Parks and Trails is placing on Valley Street.

He reported that he will have some new trees going into some additions to the City. The new parking lot at 348 Malvern will have a green space next to it. He is going to put seven Okame Cherry trees there. These are the same trees that bloom early every year at the parking deck. He reported that one Okame Cherry tree was lost in front of the parking deck this year, but he has one on order to replace it later this fall. He also reported that he will spade in a couple of large 5"-7" Cherrybark Oak trees, as well as some Tonto Crape Myrtles near the mural on the far end of the new parking lot. He is also planning to put a border with some Fire Power Nandina which is a low grower without any berries.

Another planting project will be at Kimery Park. There are tennis courts on the far end that had netting to help stop wind and provide shade. He is planning to put 27 Green Giant Arborvitae trees down the west side to provide screening instead. They will be on 8' centers.

The last planting project Allen spoke about was at the Malvern Gateway. He will put 19 Taylor Juniper Cedars throughout the three new medians. There will also be nine Allee Elm (Lacebark) trees along the side of the street like Central Avenue. All these projects are budgeted in for this year, although some will probably carryover into next year.

Freddy followed with a question regarding the Yaupon Hollies on Malvern Avenue. He inquired if they were staying and was informed by Brian that they were being removed, but it was uncertain if they would be going back.

6. *Outlook of 2022:*

Allen was open for suggestions for projects for 2022. He reported that he and Brian drove down Grand Avenue from east to west, and there are some holes where trees have been lost. They staked some trees out, but One-Call found some utilities in that area. He has tabled that for now. Another area he is looking at is the Royal White Redbuds on Park Avenue. Several have died, and he is looking at replacing those. He requested that the committee keep their eyes open around town, and let him know if they see a spot that may need some trees.

7. *Arkansas Tree Climbing Championship:*

Allen reported the event was a success. Regine attended Friday night and stated that there was a good crowd for the ascending competition that enjoyed the laser lights and music. Allen said that there were competitors from six different states that competed in the six different events and around 300 people attended.

Sub-Committee Reports Section:

8. *Marketing and Education:*

Brian reported that he is hopeful about Arbor Day 2022. Since Covid-19 prevented Arbor Day the last couple of years, Brian gave an overview of what normally happens. Arbor Day typically takes place at Entergy Park normally on a Friday. They reach out to the different school systems and recruit the fifth graders. There are pop-up lessons involving Stormwater, Smokey the Bear, Game and Fish, tree climbing, sawmills, and many others. The kids really enjoy it. They will begin to reach out in January if all goes well.

9. *Tree City USA:*

Allen reported that the City of Hot Springs has been a Tree City for 20 years. He is in the process for applying for the 21st year. Even though part of being a Tree City involves having an Arbor Day, the City has been exempt from that requirement the last two years due to Covid-19. The City did an activity in place of Arbor Day. There were two tree giveaways. Regine stated that around 600 trees were given away at the first event and around 400 trees were given away at the second event totaling about 1000 altogether. Allen shared that he coordinates with the public regarding tree issues as part of his job and has often heard people state that they received a tree at a giveaway.

Allen reminded the committee of the following four criteria to be a Tree City: (1) Arbor Day, (2) Tree Board, (3) City Ordinance for Trees, and (4) Spend at least \$2.00 per capita in some type of Urban Forestry situation. Allen looked at our report from a couple years ago, and we spent right at \$10.00 per capita, so we meet that requirement. Everything is in line for us to be Tree City again.

Other Business:

10. *Consider Urban Forestry Working Crew Report:*

Freddy reported UF crew is transitioning from bush hogging to pruning. They will start pruning the 600 block of Central in about 3 weeks in the mornings. In the afternoons, they will start pruning Grand Avenue around the 800 or 1100 block. Freddy stated they had a good bush hogging year. They had a new

crew member on Urban Forestry, and with Parks help they got some inmates to help do some work at the City Cemetery.

Allen and Freddy informed the committee that a tree had to be removed earlier this year from Grand near Woodbine. It was a Hackberry that was rotting out. There is another tree in front of Hardee's on West Grand that is looking bad. UF will prune that one. Finally, there is another tree in front of Bumper to Bumper that is totally browned-out. They will wait until spring to see if it will green-out and come back.

11. *Consider Advisory Committee Members' Items for Discussion:*

Ed asked if Entergy communicates with the City when they plan to go around and trim trees back. Allen stated that in some instances they do. For example, he just met with some representatives from Entergy in regards to the Magnolia trees on Fountain Street. The top of the trees will have to be lowered due to the power lines.

Ed asked if the City approaches people and/or businesses that plant things that block your view when pulling out onto a street. He brought up how dangerous Cornerstone is. Freddy said Cornerstone is private, and they cannot do anything there. There is not much they can do on Central and Malvern either. They have been working to clear around stop signs and road signs. They can work on the City streets because there is a right of way, but that usually ends once it's behind the curb or the sidewalk. Ed feels there is a silent majority that agrees that something needs to be done about Cornerstone.

Regine reported that the Arkansas Department of Agriculture Forestry Division has chosen this year's STOP awardee school as the Hot Springs Child Care Center. They will put four trees around their playground. This is part of the "STOP" program that will provide shade trees over playgrounds.

Allen spoke briefly about Tree Campus, which is a program similar to Tree City but for schools and colleges. He reached out to NPC but could never get in touch with the correct person.

Regine stated that she is hopeful there will be another seedling giveaway in the spring. She will share more information when she know it.

Adjournment:

Ed adjourned meeting at 6:15 p.m.

The next meeting is Tuesday, January 25th, 2022 at 5:30 pm in the Parks Conference room.