

Greenscape Commission Meeting
Monday, May 19, 6:00pm
Hornet Park Community Center, Room B

Newly appointed members Mike Masterson, Tim Latimer and Beth Berg along with re-appointed member Dave Miller were sworn in by Mayor Joe Wright prior to the meeting.

The meeting was called to order by Dave Miller at 6:00pm.

Members present were Dave Miller, Mike Masterson, Tim Latimer, Beth Berg and Brian Clayton. Mayor Wright was also in attendance.

The first item discussed was the upcoming tree inventory. Mayor Wright will be meeting with Pam Louks, Community & Urban Forestry Coordinator for the Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Division of Forestry, on Wednesday, May 21. All commission members were invited to attend if available. The tree inventory involves identifying all city trees in the public right-of-ways and parks. Individual trees will be entered into a database noting their location by address or GPS coordinates, species, size, and condition (poor, fair or good). Assistance will be needed to complete the project in a timely manner. Brian Clayton mentioned Boy Scouts as a possible source as they have a merit badge related to use of GPS. Dave Miller suggested graduates of the Indiana DNR's Tree Steward program as another source for educated volunteers. This inventory is separate from the inventory being done by the state, which will look at tree density rather than individual trees.

Mayor Wright discussed the role of the Greenscape Commission, which in broad strokes is governance over the tree ordinance and city policy on trees, landscaping and related beautification projects. He also requested the commission review the "Tree Ordinance" and advise the city on what needs to be done to implement the requirements of the ordinance. The commission will work on that during the month before the next meeting. Mike Masterson suggested shooting e-mails back and forth with ideas, comments, etc. Miller reminded members to also look for changes that may be needed or desired with the ordinance.

A question was raised as to whether the commission has a budget and at this time it does not. Costs related to the planting and care of trees and landscaping come from city department budgets. Miller noted that many cities receive donations from local businesses and asked if we would need to become a non-profit entity to accept donated monies. The mayor informed the commission that would not be necessary and that a Donation Fund could be created. Like Funds already exist within the city budget for other departments. He also said the 2009 budget process will be underway soon and so this would be an opportune time for the commission to make a request for funding as a budget line item.

There was much discussion as to goals and priorities for the year and these were decided on as the Top Five:

1. Tree Inventory
2. Public Education/Web Page
3. Review of Greenway Plans

4. Compliance/Implementing the Requirements of the Ordinance
5. Signage, specifically for city entrances/gateways

With respect to signage, which Clayton brought forward as a needed improvement to make entrances to the city more appealing, the mayor shared that there is a design for new signs which he would like for the commission to view.

There was discussion about looking for areas of the city in need of not only trees, but any type of landscaping or a makeover. Masterson suggested dividing the city into assigned areas for each member and the mayor suggested using the Clean City Zones as a guide. Identifying areas in need of a face-lift will help with being prepared for grant opportunities and having a list of possible projects as funds become available. Masterson mentioned Detroit Street, north of the softball diamonds, as a good location for tree plantings to provide shade in future years. The area around the Geshwiler Fountain in Sarah T. Bolton Park was also brought up as an area to consider.

Miller suggested everyone visit the Indiana Urban Forestry Council (IUFC) website and do some research on what is being done in other Tree Cities, grants available, and benefits of membership in the council.

Miller also asked for input on whether the commission should consider soliciting bids from tree service companies for pruning and maintenance of the trees and other plants along and in the medians of Emerson Avenue. The first concern is that the next couple years are particularly important for pruning and controlling the growth of the maple trees under utility lines as well as trees in the medians. The second concern is that city employees who would normally be responsible for this work are very busy with grass-cutting, etc. during the same time period Emerson Avenue flora needs attention. Consensus was bids should be taken and then a recommendation can be presented to the city.

In other business, Dave Miller was unanimously elected to continue as chairman for the commission and Beth Berg will serve as secretary. Terms will be for one year. Mike Masterson offered to give the report to the city council at their June 2nd meeting in Miller's absence.

The commission decided to set regular meetings for the third Monday of each month.

In addition to reviewing the tree ordinance, members will develop ideas for a mission statement to discuss at the next meeting, and Masterson will take a look at the existing resident permit application for planting trees/flora within a right-of way planting strip.

The next meeting will be Monday, June 16, 6:00pm, at the Hornet Park Community Center.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:30pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Beth Berg
Greenscape Commission Secretary