



City of Rome Tree Board

Minutes

July 18, 2023, 2:00 p.m.

Floyd County Administration Building

Present: Hannah Bagley, KRFB Program Coordinator

John Hendrickson, Tree Board Chairman

Meredith Ulmer, City of Rome Assistant City Manager

Ernest Watson, City of Rome Arborist

Michael Skeen, Floyd County Public Works Director

Brian Roberts, Environmental Compliance Manager

Ben Winkelman, Rome-Floyd ECO Center Director

Seth Hawkins, Urban, and Community Forestry Program Coordinator

Pam Roberts, Tree Board Member

Georgia Burns, Tree Board Member

Call to Order:

This meeting was called to order by John Hendrickson. The minutes from the May 23rd meeting were corrected and approved by common consent.

Reports:

City of Rome

Mr. Watson reported that during the month of June they were without a fully staffed Urban Forestry Crew, since Howard Mullinax, Urban Forestry Foreman retired. Mr. Watson reported they have hired Dustin Fowler as the Urban Forestry Foreman, and hopes to have a fully staffed crew by the end of the month. Although there were no trees removed during this time, there was routine tree maintenance performed by other certified arborists on staff.

Mr. Roberts reported there has been one Commercial Development completed in the City Limits, there were 15 trees installed within this development. In Floyd County, there will be one Industrial Development completed in the coming weeks, they have been asked to halt any tree installations due to the heat and dry weather. Mr. Roberts is working with the developers

on the site plans to address erosion concerns among other issues; once completed they will install 224 large growth trees.

Floyd County

Mr. Skeen reported they have been extremely busy due to the number of strong storms Floyd County has endured in the past month. Floyd County has removed 49 trees that were partially down or had damage from storms and would pose a threat later. He expressed that the number of trees removed is high, as a rule of thumb, Floyd County does not remove healthy trees, or trees within the right-of-way unless it is a hazard, or causing sight distance issues.

Berry College

Mr. Hawkins reported he met with a forester at Berry College, they will be conducting a large number of prescribed burns, and plan to have a large portion covered in the next 2 years. They will keep both the City and County updated, as a large amount of smoke may be a concern for some residents.

Georgia Forestry Commission

Mr. Hawkins reported there were no active wildfires in Floyd County in the past 30 days, with the dry weather this was a concern. He also shared many educational opportunities for Board Members, along with scholarships and reduced tuition for members, August 10th in Douglasville, GA, Georgia Tree Council will hold a training about "Trees and the Law", this will be beneficial, especially to those who work as a Municipal Arborist. On October 24th -26th the Georgia Tree Council will hold its Annual Conference in Columbus Ga, the hosting city has first priority on scholarships or assistance with fees.

Mr. Hawkins reported he and Mary Hardin Thornton have begun discussions on applying for the ReLeaf Grant, this year there is an opportunity to receive \$15,000.00 in funds to install trees, the area identified for the grant is Parks Hokes Park. Parameters of the grant require the area to be underserved or taken damage from storms, Parks Hokes Park is in an underserved portion of town and possibly could be awarded the grant. Mr. Hawkins stated he will attempt to add to the funds' contracted tree watering, this will alleviate the City from maintaining these specific trees. Mr. Skeen informed Mr. Hawkins that he knows of a local Nursery where he has purchased trees in the past, and can facilitate the contracted watering if approved.

During the Summer of 2023, the Georgia Forestry Commission's (GFC) Urban and Community Forestry (U&CF) program will announce three programs to provide financial and/or technical assistance with tree plantings, tree giveaways, canopy mapping, and other community forestry projects which increase access to nature, improve tree equity, mitigate urban heat islands, and strengthen urban forest planning, particularly in underserved, disadvantaged communities. The funding for these programs is being

provided by the USDA Forest Service, which authorized by Subtitle D, Sec. 23003 (a) of the Inflation Reduction Act and the Community Forestry Assistance Act of the 1990 Farm Bill, has allocated funding to the Georgia Forestry Commission for statewide distribution.

Old Business:

The trees on Mitchell Plaza have been removed, and, Mr. Ernest Watson stated that the tree pits have been concreted over, and there will be no trees planted in the place of the Magnolias. This project has been completed and there are still the trees on the corners of Mitchell Plaza that were not causing structural issues to the sidewalks and will remain there.

New Business:

Ms. Ulmer was elated to report that the repurposing of the dying tree into an angel sculpture has been completed by local artist Jeremy Smith. She urged everyone to stop by Myrtle Hill and take a look at the beautiful piece of artwork.

Mrs. Burns expressed that she was pleased with all of the educational opportunities that we have as Tree Board members, and encourages everyone to partake in any webinar or seminar opportunities, as they have proven to be very effective in increasing the longevity of the trees in the community.

Mr. Skeen reported the pruning class taught by Seth Hawkins, with the Georgia Forestry Commission was a success, and UGA Extension Office, as well as Master Gardeners, played a key role in its success. In the free class, everyone learned how and when to properly prune trees and other plants. The investment in the education of employees and others who manage the grounds of multimillion-dollar facilities is key, according to Mr. Skeen. Without protecting, maintaining, and improving the longevity of the trees on these properties, we will not be able to landscape these facilities in the future.

Mr. Skeen has sent an article to the APWA (American Public Works Association) in regards to the success and need to host these classes often; he has opened it up to the chapters within Georgia's APWA chapter to participate in this class. Here in Rome and Floyd County, according to Mr. Skeen, we are extremely fortunate to have the opportunity to participate in many educational classes to increase our knowledge in the fields we currently work in. He will update the board and others interested once a date and time has been chosen for another class.

Adjourn:

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Hannah N. Bagley

Hannah N. Bagley, Program Coordinator