



Louisville Metro Tree Advisory Commission
Tuesday, April 23, 2013
5:00 PM
Whitehall House and Gardens
Meeting Minutes

I. Welcome and Announcements

Merrill Simmons, Executive Director of Whitehall House and Gardens, welcomed the Louisville Metro Tree Advisory Commission (hereinafter, “Commission” or “LMTAC”) members and guests to the meeting. Commission Co-chair Henry Heuser, Jr. also welcomed Commission members and guests. The following Commissioners were present: Henry Heuser, Jr. (Co-Chair), Katy Schneider (Co-Chair), Allen Steinbock (Secretary/Treasurer), Cheri Bryant-Hamilton, Todd Eberle, Robert Eberenz, Ted Smith, Maria Koetter, Monica Orr, Paul Capiello, Shane Corbin, Scott Hannah, as well as ex-officio members Mesude Duyar, Michelle King, Sherie Long, and Mark White.

II. Approval of Minutes

Henry called for acceptance of the minutes. Commissioner Paul Capiello moved for approval of the minutes and Commissioner Cheri Bryant-Hamilton seconded the motion. Minutes of the March 26, 2013 were approved unanimously.

III. Old Business

a. Annual Report Discussion – Maria Koetter and Ted Smith

Ted Smith, Director of Economic Growth and Innovation, began by distributing the Mayor’s official response (Attachment A) to the Annual Report from the Commission Co-Chairs that Katy Schneider wrote, in which she cited the Commission’s many accomplishments in its first year, but also questioned the Commission’s role moving forward in light of a lack of direction and responsiveness from the Mayor’s office. Ted began by thanking the Commission on behalf of the Mayor for all their hard work and dedication. He went on to say that the Mayor understands that communication between the Commission and his office has not been robust, but that he will make an effort to see that this improves in the future. In addition, Ted articulated that the Mayor recognizes that Louisville has an urban tree canopy problem and the city is lacking in green infrastructure solutions.

Speaking to the Commission's future, Ted said that he should know by the end of May how much money the city can devote to the Commission's recommendations, including a tree canopy analysis and an Urban Forester position in Metro Government. He added that Brightside, which has been rebranded as a "Clean and Green" agency, will act as the Commission's fiduciary agent and fundraising partner. Gina O'Brien, the new director of Brightside, will report to Mary Ellen Wiederwohl (in the Mayor's office), as will Maria Koetter, the Director of Sustainability. As far as the Commission's recommended "No net loss" policy, the Mayor feels that it would be premature to adopt such a policy before an urban tree canopy analysis is performed. Ted said the analysis will need to be primarily financed through private donations with some help from the city. Ted also said that a tree ordinance would also have to wait until the city's canopy can be properly analyzed.

A lengthy discussion on the future of the Commission ensued. On the subject of communication going forward, Ted assured the Commission that communication between it and the Mayor's office would improve, citing Maria Koetter's move to the Mayor's office. Ted also said that "sidecar" conversations and letter writing should be things of the past and that communication will be more fluid going forward. Katy and Henry acknowledged and appreciated the Mayor's quick response to the concerns laid out in their annual report. Commissioner Todd Eberle asked Ted how the Commission fits into the new Sustainability Plan. Ted discussed the new plan and stated that the Commission's work falls under the umbrella "Clean and Green" initiatives, but also pointed out that the Commission is unique in its role as an appointed advisory body over that aspect of the plan. Commissioner Rob Ebernez asked if the Mayor could help with fundraising and establishing a 501(c)(3). Ted replied that the Commission should talk to Gina O'Brien about Brightside's role.

b. Department of Public Works and Assets resources for tree planting and maintenance – Vanessa Burns, Director

Commissioner and Councilwoman Cheri Bryant-Hamilton introduced Vanessa Burns, the Director of Public Works and Assets. Vanessa began by saying that she looks forward to working with the Parks Department, Economic Growth and Innovation, and the Office of Sustainability to make the city look good. When asked about tree maintenance Vanessa said her department will continue to water downtown trees. She voiced concern over not having adequate equipment and technology to deal with maintenance. Katy asked Vanessa how trees were dealt with in the other cities where she has worked. She responded that two of those cities cared and two did not, but did not explain further how they differed. When asked why trees were never mentioned in the most recent audit of her department she said that trees are not her highest priority and that the care for trees in the city will depend on forming a good maintenance plan. She went on to say that although she has not lived in Louisville very long, she can tell that we have lots of trees in old neighborhoods and that Louisville is a pretty city. Henry pointed out that some places in the city seem to have enough trees, but other areas are severely lacking in tree canopy, adding that "people are frying in the West End." Margaret Carreiro, Co-Chair of the Scientific and Inventory Committee, added that trees serve a much greater role than just beautification, citing the variety of services they provide. Katy also pointed out that we are in desperate need of a master plan for our trees, especially in light of threats to our canopy like the Emerald Ash Borer (E.A.B.). Vanessa replied that she is unsure how her department will deal with threats like the E.A.B.

c. Briefing on the development of a Tree Canopy Assessment Request for Proposals – Margaret Carreiro

Margaret announced that she, along with the rest of the Scientific/Inventory Committee, has finished the Draft Tree Canopy Assessment Request for Proposals (RFP). Margaret informed the Commission that the document had incorporated feedback from Dudley Hartel with the USDA

Forest Service and that he was so impressed with the finished product that he would like to use it as a blueprint for other cities preparing similar RFPs.

Margaret then presented some of the most important aspects of the RFP. She outlined the document's four main objectives and stated the project will provide:

- 1) A current baseline estimate of canopy cover of a known and documented accuracy for Jefferson County (*the project area*) and estimates of recent rates of change in tree canopy over the last decade;
- 2) Tree planting timetables needed to achieve a range of canopy coverage goals;
- 3) Information to allow Louisville Metro Government to prioritize tree planting locations for mitigating the urban heat island effect; and
- 4) Information to allow Louisville Metro Government to prioritize tree planting for stormwater management.

Ted Smith said that this RFP should be a part of the ensuing Brightside conversation. Commissioner Shane Corbin, Co-Chair of the Scientific/Inventory Committee, pointed out that we need to get this document out soon to know how much this project is going to cost. The Commission and guests thanked Margaret for her hard work and applauded her efforts.

IV. New Business

a. Recognition of citizen tree stewards

i. Chris Catt, Re-tree Dundee

Chris was recognized for leading an effort that planted 100 trees in the area around Atherton High School. Chris said that he along with many volunteers are going to water the new trees. Chris said that he was frustrated, however, with the Mayor, having invited him to come to a planting ceremony on many occasions, but never received a reply.

ii. Mary Ellen Spencer, Drayton Small Tree Arboretum

Mary Ellen was recognized for planting 24 trees. She said that because all the trees were short she sees the project as a "small tree arboretum." The reason for the size selection is the proximity to the Bowman Field Airport, which has flight path restrictions that affect larger trees.

V. Committee Reports

a. Projects and Maintenance Committee – Mike Hayman

Committee co-chair Mike Hayman stated that we have received an offer from a donor to pay for new downtown trees (not in the right of way). Ex-officio Commissioner Mesude Duyar added that 30 trees have recently been planted along Cherokee Parkway.

b. Policy Committee – Cory Petry

Cory Petry, a member of the Policy Committee, reported on the latest round of revisions to the Land Development Code (LDC) Chapter 10 Part 1 (Attachment B). These latest revisions were made in response to discussion of the Commission's original recommended revisions and those from a group representing members of the development community during the LDC Improvement Committee process. Cory explained that the Policy Committee has found common ground and gained a broader understanding on some issues, but stands firm in its position of wanting to strengthen tree canopy requirements. Much of his presentation dealt with tree canopy requirement waivers and the different methods of compliance that can be utilized in order to avoid waivers.

Shane asked what our next step in this process should be. Katy replied that the Policy Committee will go back to the LDC Improvement Subcommittee on Chapter 10 with the new revisions. Commissioner Todd Eberle moved to adopt the changes and Commissioner Monica Orr seconded. The motion passed with none opposed.

VI. Adjourn

Henry asked if there were any questions. A guest asked for advice in dealing with LG&E – she said they had contacted her about wanting to remove some of her trees. Ex-officio Commissioner Sherie Long advised that she talk to a certified arborist and also explained to her that LG&E does not have the right to trim or remove any trees not located in their easement. Another guest had a question about “mulch volcanoes.” Many members of the Commission noted that they too have seen these “volcanoes” and they are indeed bad for tree health. Henry encouraged everyone to stay for a tour of the Whitehall grounds and then announced that the next Commission meeting would be on May 28, 2013 at the Louisville Metro Air Pollution Control District Boardroom at 5:00. He then adjourned the meeting.