



CITY OF BELLE ISLE, FL CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP

Tuesday, February 20, 2024 * 6:30 pm

MINUTES

Present was:

Nicholas Fouraker, Mayor
District 4 Commissioner – Jason Carson
District 5 Commissioner – Beth Lowell
District 6 Commissioner – Stan Smith
District 7 Commissioner – Jim Partin

Absent was:

District 1 OPEN
District 2 OPEN
District 3 OPEN

1. Call to Order

Mayor Fouraker called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm.

Also present were Public Works Director Phil Price, Planner Raquel Lozano, Chief Grimm, and City Clerk Yolanda Quiceno.

2. Discussion on Tree Removal, Replacement, and Permitting

Rick Rudometkin opened for discussion on the tree permitting process, replacement, and activating the Tree Board.

Mayor Fouraker spoke briefly on the code requirements and the preemptive law passed by the State regarding Tree removal, specifically on registered tree service companies and notification to the City on site plan approvals.

Raquel Lozano, City Planner, spoke briefly on the permit process and the requirement of an arborist report to remove a tree if it is affecting existing infrastructure or a dying or diseased tree. A permit is not required to trim a tree. The City website also provides links to Duke Energy for trimming trees around electrical poles. The City permit will be required to remove healthy trees if an arborist report is absent. She noted that the Code Enforcement Department has been designated as the staff reviewing and visiting the sites for compliance. If the City has a difference of opinion on an arborist report, the code allows for the City, at its expense, to validate the findings.

The staff has recently updated the application form and will revisit it for necessary changes and updates clarifying tree replacements. Ms. Lozano referenced Section 48—63(16)(e) addresses penalties for unpermitted tree removals and replacement. The staff is looking for guidance on addressing the concerns with the current issues with tree removal.

Mayor Fouraker asked where in the code it speaks to replacing a tree. Ms. Lozano said it can be found in Section 48-63(7) of the Code and #6 in the permit application. Ms. Lozano noted that most of the trees are valid, and the staff has their hands tied in requiring replacement. Mayor Fouraker shared his concerns about the tree work happening over the weekend. He further noted that he wants to see the fees and fines raised for non-compliance and a proactive approach before any work is started in the City with a 6-month follow-up audit.

Chief Grimm referred to State Law 163.045(2) and (3) and said it removed the home rule power on tree removals and that requiring a permit for all tree removals may not be allowed if an arborist report is submitted. Chief Grimm added that if a resident calls a code violation of unpermitted tree removal, they must leave their name and number to allow the Code Enforcement officers to open a file.

Phil Price, Public Works Director, addressed Canopy tree replacement on the city's right-of-way. The City is spending a lot of money to repair cracked sidewalks and drainage issues caused by large tree roots. The right-of-way is challenging for replacing the City's Tree canopy and should be addressed before replanting. Mr. Price clarified that the City Arborist is not an employee and is independent of the City.

Mayor Fouraker opened it for public comment.

Richard Weinsier, Chairman of the Tree Board, said he would like to address reinitiating the tree board. He requested changing the membership from seven to five members. Doug DeYoung, a Tree Board member, agreed with the request. The City Clerk added if the Council would like to move forward, it would have to be changed by Ordinance. Mr. Weinsier also noted that the Solid Waste Contract is up for renewal.

Discussion ensued on current tree removal issues and possible changes to the ordinance to help with the requirements of Tree City, tree replacement, and fines. Mayor Fouraker noted an email from former Comm Nielsen regarding her concerns with the tree removals in the City. After discussion, the Council requested copies of the arborist's report on the possible violation of Homewood and Nela and asked for the City Attorney's opinion on the validity of the arborist report and curb cut documentation provided by the Homewood/Nela homeowner.

Council consensus on the following items for staff research about the Tree Board and the Tree Ordinance that may require legal input:

- Review the Tree Permit form and applicable legal definitions (i.e., may, must).
- To determine if the Code can require residents to replant a healthy tree and if the City can require a 48-hour notice for tree removals or incur a fine.
- To determine if the City can require a Tree Permit submission, even if the applicant has an Arborist Report
- To research tree replacement policies by other cities to review this information for recommendations and code adoption.
- Determine if a "stop-gap" can be instituted on newly purchased properties to ensure that no trees are removed without city approval or city notice and no work is to be completed on the weekend.
- Create an ordinance to change the Tree Board membership from seven to five members.

3. Discussion on the Centennial Celebration

Rick Rudometkin presented examples of updating the city seal, logo, and slogan for the centennial celebration to use on the City's website, marketing materials, and Centennial marketing materials.

Holly Bobrowski presented the Centennial Artwork created by Vicky Littell titled Our Belle Isle Way of Life. Ms. Bobrowski gave an update on the Centennial celebration merchandise and other proposed items, including a hard/soft book and a Belle Isle-labeled bottle of alcohol. Ms. Bobrowski stated that Billy Morgan, Pine Castle Pioneer Days Historian, has offered to assist with the event and categorize the city's historical documents. Ms. Bobrowski offered a small stipend for consideration.

Some of the upcoming events and items shared were,

- March 30, 2024 – Easter Event
- Celebrate Belle Isle or Our Belle Isle Way of Life- slogan
- Centennial Book: 250 Hard Cover 70-sheet Book-\$8,500 and 250 Soft Cover– \$3,800 with sponsorship pages to offset the cost
- Planting of a Centennial Tree in the City
- Party on Nela Bridge – breakfast or Dinner
- October 19th, 2024 – Centennial Celebration Founders Parade, followed by Food trucks, Stage & Live Entertainment on Wallace Field

The Council discussed creating a simplified logo to print on most merchandise items.

City Manager Rudometkin noted that the staff and events committee will follow the procurement process of three quotes for large-priced items.

After discussion, the Council discussed,

- Incorporate an updated seal (City of Belle Isle – remove , Florida from name on seal) for the Centennial as presented
- Centennial Artwork/Mural for book cover and wine bottle
- Simplify the logo for merchandise (i.e., hat, t-shirt, koozie)
- Party on the Nela Bridge event is a great opportunity
- Great opportunity to have the Belle Isle history documents categorized. Offer Mr. Morgan a fee for the book's sale. Staff should consider that many books are going digital.
- Create a survey monkey for the residents for feedback on the logo, colors, and merchandise.

4. Adjournment

With no further business, Mayor Fouraker adjourned the meeting at 9:00 pm.