

TOWN COUNCIL

STAFF REPORT

Engineering Department



MEETING DATE: June 8, 2021

PROJECT: Discussion Relating to the Adaptive Reuse of Reclaimed Palmetto Trees Removed from Calhoun Street - Bryan McIlwee, Director of Engineering

PROJECT MANAGER: Bryan McIlwee, Director of Engineering

REQUEST:

Staff requests Town Council input regarding the reuse of reclaimed palmetto trees removed from Calhoun Street as a result of Dominion Energy's vegetation management program.

BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION:

As part of Dominion Energy's (Dominion) routine five-year cycle to ensure safety and reliability, Dominion began a comprehensive and proactive vegetation management program in November, 2020. Per Dominion, trees that have grown too close to overhead lines are both a fire hazard and an issue of employee and public safety. Trees and tree limbs continue to represent the No. 1 reason for power outages, and the routine safeguarding overhead facilities remains critical to helping ensure a safe, resilient, and reliable electric system across our communities.

As part of this vegetation management program, Dominion removed 29 palmetto trees on Calhoun Street in April, 2021. As stated above, these palm trees were touching electrical wires and posed a threat to safety and uninterrupted power.

Though Staff has not been able to find specific proof, oral history suggests the trees were planted as a memorial to fallen World War I servicemen in the 1930's as part of a WPA project implemented by President Franklin Roosevelt.

CURRENT STATUS:

23 sections of palm tree trunks were salvaged following the Calhoun Street tree removal. The pieces average 6' to 8' in length and 12" diameter and are stored at the Town's property at 115 Bluffton Road.

NEXT STEPS:

Upon Town Council input, Staff will research options to reuse the palm trunks.

The Calhoun Street Streetscape project, which will include the burial of overhead power lines, will include landscaping features and new palm trees which will pay homage to the symbolism of the trees that are being removed. This project will be designed in fiscal year 2022 with construction to follow in 2023 or 2024.