

**City of Apalachicola Tree Committee  
Meeting Summary  
October 17, 2023, at 3 p.m.  
Battery Park Community Center**

1. Attendees.

Sam Berkheiser, Committee member,  
Linda Buchanan  
Scott Davis, Committee member,  
Despina George, City Commissioner  
Anita Grove, City Commissioner,  
Donna Ingle, Parks and Recreation Committee member,  
Rebecca Stafford, Committee member,  
Travis Wade, City Commissioner, and  
Dennis Winterringer, Committee chairperson and preparer of summary for this meeting.

2. Summary of Committee's September 19, 2023, meeting (Winterringer) – Approved without revisions.

3. Clearing of unprotected trees on lot at corner of 9<sup>th</sup> Street and Avenue F; disturbance of wetland.

Meeting attendees discussed the October 16, 2023, e-mail message from general contractor Glen Coxwell to the Tree Committee members, Commissioner Grove, City Manager Wade, and Code Enforcement Officer Erwin. The subject of the message was Tree Committee members Winterringer's and Stafford's interaction with Mr. Coxwell on Sunday, September 24 as Mr. Coxwell was clearing vegetation with a tractor on the vacant lot at the corner of 9<sup>th</sup> Street and Avenue F.

According to Mr. Coxwell, he was removing unprotected trees (unprotected species or protected species less than 4 inches in diameter at breast height), which he can do without a tree removal permit, but in so doing he was disturbing a wetland that Tree Committee member Davis had previously identified and documented as a part of his job for a potential buyer of the lot. Mr. Coxwell said he did not know who had removed the wetland markers and that he was unaware the property had been identified as a wetland.

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection, which has regulatory jurisdiction over wetlands, is conducting an investigation and will produce a report.

In his e-mail message, Mr. Coxwell asserts that Mr. Winterringer's and Ms. Stafford's impromptu encounter with Mr. Coxwell was a "special meeting" under the Florida Sunshine Law (open meetings law), which requires that the public be notified so that they may attend and that meeting minutes be recorded. In the message, he formally requested a copy of the minutes and said, if they are not forwarded to him, he will file a formal records request through City Hall to obtain them.

4. Landscaping plan for Lafayette Park.

- Perennial plantings in beds around the gazebo and at Avenue B walkway entrance to gazebo (Stafford). Agreed with by City Manager.
- Native plant restoration area on southeast slope (Davis). Agreed with by City Manager.
- West end parking lot (all).
  - Preferred plants for south end of lot that neighbors Roy and Becky Morton would pay for (plantings on driveway entrance to back yard). Discussion not held, and species not identified.
  - Rock surfacing of lot – best way to prevent damage to roots of live oak trees in park on east side of lot. Don't scrape soil in this area, spread layer of rock on top of the ground.
- Water sprinkler heads (Wade).
  - What city employee should the Committee contact to locate sprinkler heads? Greg Harris or Robert Osburn.
  - Mapping of head locations. Meeting with city employee to be scheduled.
  - Any temporary or permanent irrigation needed for planting beds around gazebo? Not discussed.
- Preparation for announcement of opportunity to buy trees and shrubs under the city's memorial program (Gibson, if she attends). Not discussed because Ms. Gibson did not attend meeting.
- Park maintenance by mowing crews – ways to ensure that crew leaders and prisoners don't damage tree trunks of planted trees (34 trees of 12 species) with string trimmers.
  - Direction to crew leaders. No commitment by City Manager to do so.
  - 4-inch layer of mulch around tree bases the best option. Plastic tree trunk protectors not a good option because of insect infestations.

5. Hurricane Michael revitalization grant for the Hill – sidewalk construction and light installations along 7<sup>th</sup> Street (Dr. Frederick S. Humphries Street), Martin Luther King, Jr., Avenue, and 8<sup>th</sup> Street.

- Newly-proposed sidewalk routes as result of October 5, 2023, scoping meeting. According to City Manager Wade:
  - Sidewalks along 7<sup>th</sup> Street (Dr. Frederick S. Humphries Street) to no longer be proposed.
  - Sidewalks along Martin Luther King, Jr., Avenue to be expanded to run from 12<sup>th</sup> Street to Market Street.
  - Sidewalks along 8<sup>th</sup> Street not discussed.
- Impacts to protected trees that would be adversely affected by sidewalk and light excavations and tree trimmings for 16-foot tall light poles. Impacts to specific trees not discussed because new sidewalk routes were not known before meeting.

6. Plant nursery at corner of Market Street and Avenue G selling palms amongst native palms apparently infected with lethal bronzing disease – The City Manager did not agree to direct the Code Enforcement Officer to contact the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (DACs) about stopping the sale of potentially-infected palms. But he stated that any concerned citizen could do so. Mr. Winterringer plans to contact DACs.

7. Grant opportunities (Winterringer).

- Duke Energy Foundation – for native plant restoration area at Lafayette Park.
  - Up to \$20,000.

- Climate resiliency grant category – “environmental projects supporting land conservation; clean water; and biodiversity of plant and animal species.”
- City Manager – Permission to apply for the grant needs to be obtained from the City Commission. The City Manager agreed that the city’s Grant Coordinator will help prepare the application.
- Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.
  - Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) – application period currently open.
  - Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) - application period will open about the time the application period for BIL closes, and
  - Urban and Community Forestry Grant Program – application period will open about end of application period for IRA, around November or December.

8. Next Tree Committee meeting.

November 21, 2023, 3 p.m., at the Battery Park Community Center.