

City of Apalachicola Tree Committee
Meeting Summary
October 30, 2018, 3:00 pm
Apalachicola Margaret Key Library

1. Attendees:

Holly Brown, Committee member,
Anita Grove, City Commissioner,
Ryan Hensel, Florida Forestry Service, Senior Forester,
Robert Seaborn, Committee member, and
Dennis Winterringer, Committee chair person and note taker for this meeting.

2. Draft summary of the Committee's September 18, 2018, meeting (prepared by Mr. Winterringer).

The Committee adopted the draft summary without revision.

3. Discussion with Ryan Hensel, Florida Forestry Service.

Mr. Hensel introduced himself and discussed the services his agency provides.

Last year the Service provided free trees for Arbor Day celebrations in other communities. Mr. Hensel is pursuing Service funding to buy a few trees for Apalachicola's Arbor Day 2019 celebration (perhaps a small trailer load). The State of Florida's Arbor Day is the third Friday of January. The Committee scheduled the City's 2019 Arbor Day celebration for Saturday, January 25 at the Farmer's Market. Mr. Hensel said he would participate.

Hurricane Michael, which struck Apalachicola on October 10, 2018, destroyed or damaged many trees. Mr. Winterringer found a Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (DACS) grant application notice. Under its Florida Urban and Community Forestry Grant Program, DACS will be granting money to communities to replace urban canopies damaged by storms (tree planting), to develop or enhance inventories or assessments of urban trees, or to develop community storm preparedness plans. The grants range from \$2,000 to \$20,000 and must be matched by the community.

Because the City's budget is tight and because the grant deadline is fast-approaching on November 13, the Committee decided not to approach the City Commission about pursuing a grant at this time. However, the meeting attendees agreed that this is probably something that the Committee wants to consider doing during next year's grant application period. If the City Commission adopts the revised Tree Ordinance that the Committee has proposed, the Reforestation Fund will probably have accumulated several thousand dollars by the time of the grant application period next year. This money could be used as the City's match for the grant.

4. Joint workshop with the City Commission to discuss the proposed, revised Tree Ordinance.

A joint workshop with the City Commission will occur at 5 p.m. on November 6.

An agenda for the workshop was set.

Mr. Winterringer proposed two changes to the draft Tree Ordinance.

- Reduce the number of tree species that are protected – eliminate less common loblolly pine, pignut hickory, red maple, southern red oak, sugarberry, and white oak.
- Correct the proposed site plan regulations showing the language being deleted in section VII.E (required commencement of building within 1 year of permit issuance).

Meeting attendees agreed with these changes and additionally decided to eliminate as a protected tree species the water oak because it is prone to storm damage.

Further changes to the proposed Ordinances may be needed as the result of the discussion about procedures for tree removal in City-declared emergencies.

- As far as the Tree Committee knows, the City Commission or City Manager did not, as envisioned by the draft Tree Ordinance, formally declare an emergency for Hurricane Michael. As proposed, the draft Tree Ordinance:
 - Waives the need to obtain a tree permit to remove or substantially alter any significantly-damaged, protected, non-patriarch tree during or following a natural or man-made disaster (e.g., hurricane, tornado, high wind, flood, or forest fire) when the City Commission or Manager declares a state of emergency and determines that permitting requirements will hamper private or public work to restore safety and order to the City.
 - Requires the permission of the Code Enforcement Officer, City Manager, or a designee to remove or substantially alter a patriarch tree in an emergency.

These proposed requirements will be discussed with the City Commission at the workshop.

Prior to the workshop Ms. Brown and Mr. Winterringer will try to meet respectively with Mayor Johnson and Commissioner Ash to explain the Tree Ordinance revisions.

5. Duke Energy notification of residents and the City about management of vegetation along power lines in the City.

In two instances, Duke Energy fell short in notifying residents and the Code Enforcement Officer about vegetation management it was going to do along power lines.

As part of its cyclic schedule to control vegetation along certain power lines in the City, Duke's contractor was preparing to commence work on September 10 but was diverted to North Carolina to clear trees damaged by a tropical storm. As a result, another contractor later started the work. Contrary to Duke's promise, the contractor did not knock on doors and/or leave

notices on door handles to alert property owners about vegetation maintenance that would occur on adjacent City rights of way.

In conjunction with pole replacements in Mr. Winterringer's neighborhood, contract linemen considerably trimmed branches on a live oak without first notifying the Code Enforcement Officer.

In response to an e-mail message from Mr. Winterringer, Danny Collins (Duke's Government and Community Relations Manager) by October 4, 2018, e-mail message stated:

"Thank you for making me aware of these issues Dennis. Both issues you referenced are related to line work currently being conducted by a contract line construction crew who was unaware of our commitment to notifying residents and the city before conducting vegetation work in Apalachicola. This line work is unrelated to the vegetation management project we discussed previously and currently underway (albeit in a different area of town at the moment). Going forward, they have been directed to notify Jeff Varn of any and all tree trimming needs associated with this or any other line project in advance. Jeff will ensure the notification process we discussed with you, Wilbur, and the Tree Commission for our vegetation management project is also followed for any tree trimming associated with this or any other line project in the city. In short, the city and all affected property owners will be notified prior to any tree trimming associated with this or any other line project we conduct and we will work with both the city and property owners to address any concerns or issues they may have. I apologize for the confusion on our end and appreciate you giving us the opportunity to correct this as quickly as possible."

6. April 2019 tree-related events.

Ms. Brown, separate from Tree Committee activities, is planning several tree-related events in April 2019. She discussed some preliminary plans for different sessions.

7. Next meetings.

- a. November 6, 5 p.m., joint workshop with the City Commission to discuss the Committee's draft Tree Ordinance.
- b. November 20, 3 p.m., regular monthly meeting of the Tree Committee.