

City of Apalachicola Tree Committee
Meeting Summary
June 21, 2023, at 3 p.m.
Battery Park Community Center

1. Expected attendees.

Sam Berkheiser, Committee member,
P.J. Erwin, Code Enforcement Officer,
Anita Grove, City Commissioner,
Donna Ingle, Member, Parks and Recreation Committee,
Rebecca Stafford, Committee member, and
Dennis Winterringer, Committee chairperson and preparer of summary for this meeting.

2. Summary of Committee's May 16, 2023, meeting (Winterringer).

The Committee approved without revision the draft summary of the May 16, 2023, meeting.

3. Discussion with Code Enforcement Officer (everyone).

Ms. Erwin has been on the job about 2 months.

She hasn't been able to find all of the tree removal permits issued by her predecessors Glen Jenkins and Ken Turner. This is troubling, because this has also happened in the past when other Code Enforcement Officers have left city employment. Ms. Erwin is setting up procedures for filing electronic and paper copies of permits.

In the next few months, the city will begin to prepare a budget for fiscal year 2023/2024. In the past, there have been problems in the city budget not showing the correct amount of money in Reforestation Fund line of the General Fund. Mr. Winterringer will get together with Ms. Erwin to review tree permits issued this fiscal year (2022/2023) to record how much money was collected for the Fund.

a. Tree removal permits – anything Ms. Erwin wants to discuss.

b. Lethal bronzing disease (LBD).

(1) Tracking.--To keep track of the spread of LBD in town, Ms. Erwin agreed to enter locations of infected palms on the Google map that Mr. Davis created. Mr. Davis will contact Ms. Erwin to explain how to do this.

(2) Infected palms on private property.-- LBD is spreading, and infected trees are showing up on private property. Examples are the dead palm at the nursery plant business at Market Street and Avenue G and several infected palms at 113 8th Street (north of community garden).

There is no provision in the tree protection requirements of the Land Development Code to require a private property owner to remove a diseased tree to stop the spread of disease to other privately- and city-owned properties.

Ms. Erwin is using a draft letter Mr. Winterringer created to notify property owners and to ask them to remove infected trees.

(3) LBD education.—Lynn Wilder had planned to attend the meeting but didn't make it. She's concerned about the spread of LBD and encourages a public meeting to talk about the disease and treatment of healthy trees. The Committee will talk further about coordinating with Erik Lovestrand, University of Florida Extension Service Agent, to hold a public meeting.

4. Inoculation of double-headed palm at Lafayette Park (Davis).

Not far from the double-headed palm, the city removed an LBD-infected palm along the pier.

To protect this unusual tree from LBD, the city paid for the purchase of the antibiotic and injection equipment to treat this tree. On June 20, Messrs. Davis and Winterringer met Lynn Wilder at the park and observed her inoculating this tree and the one next to it. Mr. Davis agreed to do future treatments (quarterly for 2 years).

5. Landscaping plan for Lafayette Park (Berkheiser, Davis, and Stafford).

a. Assessment of existing trees.

At a May meeting at the park, Messrs. Berkheiser and Davis and Ms. Stafford assessed the health and structural stability of existing trees. Mr. Berkheiser prepared a layer for the park map that shows this information for each tree.

For the three live oak trees on the west side of gazebo, the map shows the recommended removal of the southern-most tree (No. 53) and retention and trimming of the middle and northern-most trees (Nos. 52 and 51).

During discussion, Ms. Stafford opined that all three trees should be removed because their roots are heaving the brick walkways and causing safety (trip) hazards. After much discussion about several options (remove all three, remove none but trim all three, and remove one and retain/trim two) it was decided that Mr. Winterringer would contact Mr. Davis to get his input.

If the decision is to remove one or all of the trees, this work needs to be done before the brickwork begins. Ms. Ingle is delaying getting together with potential contractors until the Committee decides and makes a recommendation to the City Manager.

b. Soil sample collection and interpretation of analyses.

At the aforementioned May meeting at the park, Messrs. Berkheiser and Davis and Ms. Stafford met at the park and collected five soil samples. The city paid for analyses of the samples by the University of Florida Extension Service.

The soil analyses indicate that the pH of the soils range from 7.3 to 7.8, which is on the alkaline side of the pH scale. In a conversation with Mr. Winterringer, Mr. Davis suggested that the water from the sprinkler system be tested because it too may be alkaline.

Both pH and water quality are factors to consider in selecting plants that are suited to these conditions.

d. Preparation of draft landscaping plan.

Before the next meeting, Ms. Stafford and Messrs. Berkheiser and Davis will collaborate on a couple of landscaping options. They'll present them at the next meeting.

9. Next meeting.

July 18, 2023, 3 p.m., at the Battery Park Community Center.