

**City of Hot Springs**  
**Urban Forestry Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes**

**Tuesday, April 27, 2021**  
**Parks Conference Room, City Hall**

**Members Attending:** Ed French, Suzy Both, Regine Skelton, James Moore, Allen Bates, and Candace Shepherd

The meeting was called to order by Allen Bates at 5:30 p.m.

**Business Section**

- 1) Roll call
- 2) Approval of Agenda- Regine motioned and committee approved
- 3) Approval of Minutes- Suzy motioned and committee approved
- 4) Recognition of Guests: Denny McPhate, Public Works; Freddy Padilla, Urban Forestry Crew

**New Business:**

Allen introduced himself and had everyone introduce themselves. Allen congratulated Suzy, Regine, and Roxanne (not present) for renewing for another term on the committee.

Denny extended his appreciation to the members by briefly explaining how they were helping fulfill the requirements for Tree City USA. He explained it was necessary to have an Urban Forestry Division and an Urban Forestry Advisory Committee, and therefore the City has a vested interest in keeping this committee going. He also explained Freddy's job as Urban Forestry crew leader.

Allen gave an overview of 2020. He reported it was a challenging year due to COVID. His goal was to plant over 100 trees, however there were only 48 planted. He also reported that 182 trees were lost during the year. Freddy's records indicate that 1748 trees were pruned as well. The Arbor Day activity had to be cancelled at Family Park, but it was exempt from the Tree City USA requirement last year.

Allen gave his outlook of 2021. He explained that there would not be an Arbor Day activity again this year because there was not enough time to plan one when it became possible to hold an event. He described this year as the Year of the Zoom. He shared information on some of the zoom presentations he has given this year including a weekly month-long one for the International Society of Arboriculture, one for the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff during their virtual day for horticulture, and the yearly pruning class for the Garland County Master Gardeners. He also participated in 5 Stormwater inspector training classes where he presented a section focusing on preserving trees during construction. He reported that 30 Vitex were planted on the new rail fence at Family Park, 3 Water Oaks were spaded in at Linden Park as well as some different Vitex along the restrooms, and over 22 trees were put in the new David Watkins Park. Allen informed the committee that some Nellie R Stevens Hollies will be planted on the Greenway near Valley Street where there is a void.

Allen reported that Arkansas Urban Forestry Council will be hosting the Arkansas Tree Climbing Championship from April 30<sup>th</sup> – May 2<sup>nd</sup> at Entergy Park. It's a 3 day event with several different tree climbing competitions. Entrance into the competition sold out within 9 minutes when it was opened up to contestants outside of Arkansas.

Committee Chair and Vice Chair were elected. James nominated Ed French as Chair and the committee approved. Suzie nominated James Moore as Vice Chair and the committee approved. Allen handed the meeting over to Ed.

### **Marketing and Education:**

Allen reported that Arbor Day will be April 30, 2021. This year the normal Arbor Day activity was replaced with free tree giveaways. The first one, hosted by AUFC, was held on March 5<sup>th</sup> and close to 400 trees were given out. The second one, a co-op with Arkansas Forestry Division, was held on April 23<sup>rd</sup>. Regine reported that close to 600 trees were given out along with some tree information. Over 100 people signed-in at the event, and there was a 5 tree limit per person.

### **Legislative:**

None

### **Tree City USA:**

Allen discussed the 4 criteria to be a part of Tree City USA. They are (1) Have a Tree Board, (2) Have an Arbor Day, (3) Have a Tree Ordinance, and (4) Spend \$2 per capita. The City of Hot Springs has been awarded the 21<sup>st</sup> Tree City USA Recertification. The annual sticker will be added to the display in the Parks and Trails office, a proclamation has been made, and 21 Years will be added to all City entrance Tree City USA road signs.

### **Urban Forestry Working Crew Report:**

Freddy reported UF crew was focused on pruning about 60 trees from the 100 to 800 block downtown in the mornings. In the afternoons, they were focused on pruning the trees in the medians on Grand Avenue from the 600 block to the 1100 block. When that was completed they transitioned to bush hogging. Since April 1<sup>st</sup>, they have made it through 2.5 (out of 6) maintenance zones. Currently, they are bush hogging Zone 2.

Ed asked about approaching the State to see if the city could mow the bypass intersections. Freddy explained the issue would be time as it takes his crew nearly 2.5-3 months mowing to make one lap around the whole city. Denny explained that the city has 300 miles of city streets to maintain, and we do not have the staff. ARDOT has trimmed their budget so much that their independent contractor only cuts MLK bypass three times a year. Last year the City budgeted to cut MLK once due to the amount of complaints received.

### **Other Business:**

Suzy asked why the City allowed a development on Higdon Ferry to go in and cut down every tree onsite. Allen explained that the City does not have an Ordinance that requires tree preservation. The City has a Development Review Committee (DRC) that sits down with developers to discuss things like tree preservation. Allen helps them evaluate the trees and discusses the landscaping points required. The amount of points required is based on off-street parking. There are 100 points of landscaping required for every off-street parking spot. Allen also has full legal jurisdiction to write tickets to protect trees once the developer commits to preserving it. The City also combats the loss of trees by securing funding to buy and plant trees.

James asked about the choice of trees planted downtown. He has noticed that the Lacebark Elm trees make a mess when the leaves drop. Denny explained that a limited variety of trees can thrive in the space they have. The City needs the shade that the trees provide to help promote tourism based on studies done. For the last three years, the Public Works department has the leaves blown off the sidewalks and the streets swept from Whittington Avenue to Ouachita every Friday morning.

**Adjournment:**

Ed adjourned meeting at 6:20 p.m.

The next meeting is Tuesday, July 27, 2021 at 5:30pm in the Parks Conference room.