

Southport Forestry Committee

Meeting Minutes – 13 June 2023

Meeting was called to order at 5:00 pm. In attendance were members Scott A. Len, Gerald Donaldson, Roxie Smith, Bif Bream, Fred Fiss, Heather Kos, Marianne Huntley, Michael McGhee, Alderman Representative Lowe Davis, Alderman Karen Mosteller, and City Planner Maureen Meehan. Member Dina Rousset was out of town and not available.

May meeting minutes were reviewed and approved.

Scott introduced City Planner Maureen Meehan, who was sitting in for Travis Henley. Maureen mentioned ongoing work to update the UDO to address some unique situations which have surfaced recently.

“Around the room” – Fred brought up a question about the laurel oak tree being removed today on Dry St. – Scott indicated that would be a topic of discussion shortly.

Live Oak Society – Scott noted that people continue to request their large live oaks be measured in response to the Committee’s drive to register these large trees with the “Live Oak Society”. Roxie has written two articles which have appeared in the SPP, and the drive has been also highlighted in Southport’s monthly newsletter. Trees have been measured in the past week for Trudy Young, Beverly Oberjohann, and Lois Ellis – all of whom have indicated they will register their trees. The Committee will work to register trees in the public domain starting in the fall.

“Tree Champion” Program – Alie Scouler will be the first recipient of the “Tree Champion Award” – the nomination was reviewed and accepted last meeting and the plan is to present the award at the August Aldermen meeting. Scott will provide Alderman Davis with the information required to get it on the Agenda. In addition, Marianne and Scott had met during the month with Allayna Dail, who placed the award information and nomination process on the Forestry web page – Marianne will write a newsletter article outlining the award and nomination process to generate interest.

Scott again reminded everyone that we have been asked to organize a display at Ft. Johnston, which will be installed following July 4th. Bif and Heather indicated their willingness to assist with the installation in the display case.

“Live Oak at the Landings”. Scott advised that the live oak tree in The Landings which had caused so much controversy had been removed on June 1st. There was discussion about the misdirected outrage against the owners of the lot and general unawareness of those expressing outrage of the UDO and

property owners rights. Heather noted that none of those critics were in attendance at this or any of our meetings. All agreed we were just relieved that it was over.

Scott noted that he had purchased a new "Tree City USA" sign from the Arbor Day Foundation to replace the one on Howe that had been damaged during the road widening project. The old sign was repaired by Michael and was placed at the entrance to Taylor Field; the new sign has been placed at the "City Limits" sign at Howe and 12th St. There are now three signs in town indicating our "Tree City USA" status.

"Around Town" – Scott advised why the tree on Dry St (adjacent to Episcopal Church) was being removed today. The tree had been hit by a truck last month which tore off a large limb. A quick assessment by an Arborist recommended "cleaning up" the canopy by removing dead limbs and some canopy reduction to reduce weight. This work was to be done by Nelson's Tree Service but when the work was to commence, they discovered that the tree had been damaged more severely by the strike as there was a large crack in the trunk, only visible from above in the lift. Tom Stanley called Scott and after discussion the decision was made to remove the tree as a public safety issue.

In addition to this tree, Scott advised everyone that on Friday 9 June he and David Kelly had spent all morning with Sean Shaffer (ISA Arborist) assessing trees in Franklin Park and around the downtown area. There are a large number of dead limbs in the canopy of the large live oaks in Franklin Park which need to be removed for safety, given the activity at the park. In addition Sean assessed the Garrison live oak and recommended that for now we just continue what we are doing to bring back vigor (regular fertilization). Several other trees were assessed and Sean will prepare a quote/estimate to present to Public Works to address these long-standing issues in Franklin Park.

Scott also highlighted that in addition to the Dry St. tree, there were several other trees which either had been permitted for removal, or will be removed by the city (all laurel oaks). This started a discussion about the care of public trees by homeowners and enforcement or penalties for those that damage public trees. The "rock tree" at 312 W. West was shown as an example of where a homeowner's improper landscaping can have an adverse effect on a public asset.

Another one of the newly planted live oaks at Taylor Field went over during the Memorial Day storm. It was restored immediately but Scott and the Grounds Crew have decided to stake the remaining 4 trees prior to hurricane season. Parks and Rec have agreed to fund the supplies, and Michael indicated they augers and straps have been ordered and should arrive next week.

Closing: Lowe indicated that next month she will speak on the updates that have been made with regard to Committee Membership, terms, etc. Scott will add to the July agenda.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:10. Next meeting Tuesday, 11 July.

Submitted by: Scott A. Len, Committee Chairman