

Minutes

Southport Forestry Committee

January 14, 2025; Indian Trail Meeting Hall

The meeting was convened at 5:04 p.m. by the Chair.

Members in Attendance: Scott Len (Chair); Bif Bream; Fred Fiss; Mark Gooding; Marianne Huntley; Heather Kos; Roxie Smith

Administration Representatives & Guests: Carl Couter (Bartlett Company); Michael McGhee (consulting member); Maureen (Mo) Mehan (Development Services); Karen Mostellar (Alderpersion liaison)

Old/Recurring Business

Minutes: It was moved, seconded and passed that the minutes of December 10, 2024, be approved with any corrections of typos to be made before submission to the City archives.

Ordinance/Permits/City Topics: Mo reported that the Tree City application had received State approval and that they were waiting on national approval.

She announced that the new right-of-way ordinance had been approved. Existing vegetation can remain but hard structures, e.g. fences, flower boxes, etc., must be removed by June. Vegetation can be placed within a 10' radius of a tree in the right-of-way, and private owners can petition to remove and remediate trees in the right-of-way. They must secure an approved tree permit for the existing tree before moving forward.

Karen reported that the Parks and Recreation Committee, in its report to the Board of Alderpersons regarding the future of Franklin Square Park, had recommended that the Forestry Committee take the lead in determining where and when trees are planted in the Park. She indicated that no plan had as of yet been developed and suggested that it might be useful for the Parks and Recreation Committee, the Beautification Committee and the Forestry Committee to hold a joint meeting to develop a shared vegetation plan for the Park.

Member Comments/Questions; Open Forum Period:

Marianne asked if anyone had information regarding the City's policy on this year's Christmas tree removal.

Fred noted that it is once again time for the annual basketball tournament but that this year yellow caution tape had been placed around trees in the median on East West Street to protect them (thank you, Michael).

New Business

Tree Champion: Marianne invited suggestions for possible nominees for this year's Tree Champion. Examples of possibilities included the Mormon/Church of the Latter Day Saints behind Wendy's and the Friends of Franklin Square Park. Marianne will write the Forestry Committee's submission for the City's March newsletter inviting the community to submit nominations, with the honor being awarded at the April 25th Arbor Day celebration.

Call Before You Cut: Members were reminded that the maps and associated distribution assignments had been decided at the December meeting. Distribution of the door knob tags will occur during the month of February. Marianne is assembling lists for email distribution of the tags to realtors, arborists, HOAs, management associations, etc.

2025 Tree Planting: A trip to Penderlea to select trees will be scheduled for the end of January. Although the live oak specimens at Seven Meadows have grown too large for the Forestry Committee and Public Services to manage, it makes sense to continue using the grower as a source for other trees that can be used to expand diversity, e.g., bald cypress, as Southport's urban forest is at risk from over-reliance on a single species.

It was moved, seconded and approved that up to \$300 would be spent on stakes and tape for the new trees.

North Carolina Forest Service Project Grants: Mark reported on his investigation into the Service's grants program. He talked about several initiatives for which Southport was not necessarily a good fit. He concluded that a specific project grant would be the best fit for our needs and interests. Awards of up to \$100,000 are made under this program, with a required 50:50 match from the applicant. The deadline for the current cycle is the first of February, so it makes the most sense to target February 2026 for any application that might be made. Mark proposed that a small group meet with the City to assess its interest in pursuing this source of funding and its willingness to invest in such a project.

Arbor day: Fred provided an update on the status of planning for the April 25th Arbor Day celebration. He proposed that something be done to feature Franklin Square Park, assuming there is something concrete to report, e.g., what has been done to date and any approved plans for next steps. Karen has agreed to serve as MC and the event will include the Mayor's proclamation, Mo's announcement about Southport's Tree City certification, and possibly a speaker on some relevant topic. Music and refreshments will also be provided. Roxie will contact Side Street Bakery about cookies for the event. Fred asked if it might be possible to have the Police Department's portable arrow and sign placed on Howe or Moore Street to direct people to the event.

Regular Business

Tree Removals/Loss: Scott reported that trees had been removed at 413 E. Bay and 314 Willis and that a laurel oak had been pruned out of the middle of a live oak on E. Nash.

Tree Care: Scott reminded the group that soil remediation is continuing at Franklin Square Park, and that the final fertilizer application for the Garrison live oak will now take place in early spring.

Tree Pruning: Scott announced that pruning of trees in the City rights-of-way has begun.

Consultations: Scott was asked to consult on landscaping and pines at a residence on Fodale.

Tree Donations: The tree fund currently has a balance of \$6,033.84. The Foundation's donation for the 2025 live oak planting has been received.

Education/Publicity: Roxie will do the Forestry Committee's February newsletter submission on the topic of "Call Before You Cut."

Next Regular Meeting: Tuesday, February 11, 2025, at ITMH.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:30 p.m.