



## **Columbia Tree and Appearance Commission**

Municipal Association Meeting Space

April 21, 2022

Commissioners in attendance - Jim Irvin, Russ Jeter, Presley Hogue, Ian Hamilton, Kristin Dow, Steven Flores, Vi Hendley, Jack McKinzie, commissioner emeritus.

City representatives in attendance --Caleb King, Forestry & Scott Holder, Planning

A quorum is present. April 17, 2022, minutes were approved

### **ADVISE AND OVERSIGHT**

**Undergrounding Efforts** – The draft undergrounding ordinance is complete Drew and Jack have agreed to review the document and provide feedback. All commissioners are encouraged to provide feedback as well. The three goals of the ordinance are to provide a secure steady source of funding, prevent removal of underground lines and the prioritization of districts to benefit from the undergrounding effort. The heat mapping may become a large part of setting priorities. The Columbia Compass established entry corridors into the city that include Gervais Street, Taylor Street, Bull Street, and Elmwood Street could be established as underground districts. Determining the rough cost to underground each corridor would be helpful. CTAC will ask commissioner Randy Roberts if he'd be willing to provide estimates. A review of the Columbia Compass Comprehensive Plan will be helpful as we move forward. Cable and fiber companies are utilities are also responsible for placing lines on poles, though it is unclear if there are contracts addressing the responsibility of undergrounding lines. Dominion is responsible for undergrounding through contractual agreement. Scott will begin conversation with Dana Higgins, Assistant City Manager of Utilities and Engineering, to consider putting the monitoring & enforcement of the Dominion contract into the department manual.

**Forestry and Landscaping** – City salaries have increased and as a result it should be easier to fill positions with qualified individuals. The Bull Street medians have grown in quite nicely.

Undergrounding made it possible to plant large oaks. Forestry would like to continue the design down to 277. The Elmwood Street corridor rights-of-way are being updated. A landscape plan is in place and is process of being contracted out. A wildflower garden has been planted with sunflowers and zinnias in an empty lot on Main and Elmwood Streets. The department is in conversations with South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) to maintain city sidewalks and medians.

**Planning** – The Bull and Elmwood Street intersection is slated for improvements. A federal grant proposal has been filed to extend Williams Street to Gervais Street and under Blossom Street. Landscaping along the penny tax Gervais Street. project is in place. Huger Street tree plantings will be completed by the State Employees Credit Union. The street is currently lined with Bald Cypress.

### **FOCUS PROJECTS**

**Heat Mapping Grant Application** – We have been awarded the grant. An announcement will be made by the Chief Administrator of National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) on April 26th. Kristin will share approved talking points addressing the awarding of the grant with both City and Richland County councils. NOAA requested the contact information of Columbia Tree and Appearance Commission's (CTAC) social media chair. Our social media is currently inactive as the City of Columbia requires all posts be screened and approved thirty days in advance. The University of South Carolina (UofSC) will post the announcement through their social media. Caleb will submit a press release through Forestry. A webpage has been established under the city's Climate Protection Action Committee (CPAC). Information may include mapping, local articles, education on the benefits of trees, canopy statistics, current city efforts to maintain old growth and plant canopy trees. CTAC's points of contact will be Kristin and Scott. Jack and Russ will follow up with the mayor and council members.

**Capitol Mall Undergrounding** – The governor has been apprised of the project and will be in touch with Jack. Value engineering has been completed for South Main to Blossom Streets and is moving forward. There is talk of extending the UofSC Assembly Street median project to Lady Street.

**Supreme Court Parking Lot** – The pavers and tree beds are in. The project is well underway.

**Park Planting** – Thirty trees were planted in city owned vacant lots on Stark, Green, and Pine Streets, as well as one at Benedict College.

**Crayton Tree Planting**- The memorandum of agreement has been signed. Cost Estimates have increased during negotiations & COVID. Funds are in the process of being raised.

### **REVIEW & RECOMMEND**

**Street Lighting** – There has been no feedback on our email to city council. Robert Anderson, Director of Public Works is still discussing lighting options. It was suggested we ask to be included in those discussions. Additionally, it was recommended that when the opportunity presents itself, commissioners take the opportunity to discuss our support of the Dark Sky Association recommendations.

### **CTAC ADMINISTRATION**

**Bylaws, Procedures, and Webpage** – CTAC bylaws are under development. The CTAC Facebook page will remain dormant until further direction is provided by the city. Current city policy requires all social media and news releases be submitted for review thirty days. Our city webpage is in disarray. Minutes have been submitted for publication but are not yet on the page.

**New Business** – The following topics were introduced for future discussion. 1) Adding tree protections on private property in line with neighboring Forest Acres. 2) Requiring utilities bore under tree roots to maintain older canopy.