



Columbia Tree and Appearance Commission

MINUTES

September 15, 2022

Municipal Association Meeting Space

In attendance

Jim Irvin, Russ Jeter, Vi Hendley, Ian Hamilton, Patrick McLean, Kirstin Dow, Steven Flores, Jack McKenzie - commissioner emeritus, City Staff - Scott Holder, Sarah Hollar, Brian Neiger

A quorum is present. August 18, 2022, minutes were approved.

Heat Mapping – The Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) will provide significant money to urban canopy and climate equity. With the heat mapping data coming in it is time to pursue how CTAC might help secure these funds for non-profits, community-based organizations and the city's Forestry and Beautification Department. Applying for and administering grants requires technical skill and is time consuming. Non-profits and many community-based organizations rely heavily on volunteers, whereas the city, being a governmental agency may be best suited to secure and administer grants from the federal government. The Urban Sustainability Network Handbook is a valuable resource, listing information about available grant monies. The urban canopy money is managed by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and will be available in 2023. The South Carolina Forestry Commission (SCFC) urban tree program is offering grants of \$150,000.00 or more for 2022. A training webinar is available should we be interested. It is likely the USDA will funnel the IRA funding through the SCDF. Dominion Energy offers grants as well. The city does not currently have a grant writer and is considering employing private grant writers to pursue available money. The city has a program to plant 500 trees per year on public right-of-way and city property. An update on the success of the program and a plan should money be available is suggested. An informal grant investigation committee is formed, including Kirstin, Patrick, and Steve.

Undergrounding Efforts – CTAC approved a motion to begin the process of sharing the draft ordinance with members of city council. The undergrounding committee, Jim, Russ, and Jack will meet individually with council members. The heat mapping information will be shared as well.

Political Action – Work sessions may be the best way to educate and present proposals/requests to city council. Work sessions are scheduled every other Tuesday at 1:00 or at times 2:00. Requests to present are submitted to a council member(s) &/or the City Manager. Written materials are highly recommended. It is suggested that council first be educated, allowed time to digest information, then be approached with a proposal/action.

Webpage, Bylaws/Procedures – Drafts of proposed Bylaws and a CTAC Commissioner handbook are in committee. Vi and Johnston invite others to be involved. Columbia Green has agreed to host a webpage. Vi and Ian will meet to discuss content.

Forestry and Beautification – Brian Neiger was introduced as our new Forestry and Beautification Superintendent. Planting shade trees are planted in areas where they can be accommodated.

Landscape Planning – Scott is setting up meetings for the heat mapping roll out through the Public Information Office (PIO). CTAC and CPAC will be responsible for roll out with Scott facilitating for the city. One large meeting and on-line option for those who can't attend. Preferably before elections. Kirstin and Scott will work out the date, time, and location once data is public.

Street Lighting – Vi will contact Jim regarding the March 2022 email to council

New Business

Medians – Patrick will champion this project. The city council, SCDOT, State Representatives have contacted the Richland County Transportation Commission (CTC) and are currently in discussion regarding maintenance of the medians. SCDOT has very specific safety guidelines regarding working on highways. Citizens are encouraged to engage SCDOT. Planting flowers in median cracks and accumulated dirt has been successfully implemented elsewhere.

Old Business

Undergrounding & Planting Crayton Middle School – A Columbia Green Grant has been submitted. The SCFC urban tree grant may be applicable.