

**NORTH PORT CITY COMMISSION
MINUTES OF JOINT MEETING WITH THE
NORTH PORT BEAUTIFICATION & TREE/SCENIC HIGHWAY COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 15, 2011**

Present: Commissioner Blucher, Chair; Commissioner Jones, Vice-Chair; Commissioners Garofalo, Treubert, and Yates; City Manager Lewis; Acting City Attorney Blackwell; Deputy City Clerk Adkins; Recording Secretary Hale; and Police Chief Vespia.

Members: Vicki Bailey, Chair; Jackie Robertson, Vice-Chair; Jean Shar; and Margaret Bruner.

Absent: Clayton Meiron.

The North Port City Commission Joint Meeting with the North Port Beautification & Tree/Scenic Highway Committee was called to order at 1:07 p.m. in City Chambers by Commissioner Blucher, Chair.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by the Commission.

1. ACHIEVEMENTS REVIEW:

The North Port Beautification & Tree/Scenic Highway Committee (BTSHC) members were introduced. Thereafter, Committee members provided an overview of the Committee's achievements for the past year, which included: (1) the establishment of an Anti-litter Committee; (2) Arbor Day Celebration 2010 in North Port schools and City Hall; (3) the removal of white rocks from medians along U.S. 41 to the Paw Park on Appomattox Drive; (4) the Canopy Tree Ordinance component to the North Port/Sarasota County Interlocal Tree Agreement.

There was a *consensus for an on-going support of the Canopy Tree Program once the Canopy Road Ordinance is adopted in Chapter 45 of the Unified Land Development Code (ULDC).*

Following a Committee request for continued Commission support of the Arbor Day Program, Assistant City Manager Schult articulated that funding for the program is from the City's Tree Fund, and that a prerequisite to maintain the designation "Tree City USA" is North Port's participation in an Arbor Day Observance. Additionally, City Manager Lewis clarified that the program will be incorporated into the City's budget presentation this year for Commission approval.

There was a *consensus to continue with the Arbor Day Program in North Port. The program will be incorporated into the Budget and discussed during the Budget meetings.*

A. Establishment of an Anti-Litter Committee - 2009

Jean Shar provided an overview of the City's Anti-Litter Committee Program from its inception on February 27, 2009. With organizational support provided by Public Works Projects Administrator Bellia, the City holds clean-up weekends, three major clean-up days during the year, two coastal clean-ups held in April and September, and smaller "Neighborhood Sweeps" which focuses on specific streets. The BTSHC members recommended: (1) implementation of brochures highlighting the programs; (2) expanding the neighborhood sweeps; (3) solicit new members; (4) enhance communication with City residents during Government week; (5) as Commissioners attend community events, to remind residents concerning the seriousness of correct recycling disposal practices; (6) to be vigilant and supportive of any beautification or anti-litter legislation that may come before the Commission.

There was a *consensus to remind North Port residents to continue their anti-litter efforts and keep North Port beautiful.*

B. Establishment of a Citizen's Appreciation Award - 2009

Jean Shar provided an overview of the Citizen's Appreciation Award to acknowledge the work of individual and groups in beautification efforts, established by the Commission on February 27, 2009. The Committee discussed extending beautification efforts to the surrounding community and chose Commercial Businesses as the first award venture. If successful, the idea will be expanded to homeowners. All residents can vote by way of newspaper ads and on the City's website. Contestants will submit a photograph and description of all plants used in their landscaping. A Commission-designated action group may be chosen to implement the project and the award will be given by the Commission at a time of their choice or at the same time the Greenest Citizen Award is given. The Committee asked for Commission consensus to move forward with the criteria. Staff Liaison Pieper clarified that the Greenest Citizen Award focuses on efforts on recycling, water conservation, etc., whereas the Business Landscaping Award focuses on beautification of property through landscaping.

There was a *consensus for the staff to move forward with the criteria to begin an Annual Commercial Landscaping Appreciation Award to the business that presents the most eco-friendly, and eye-pleasing landscaping around their business and direct staff to add the Annual Commercial Landscaping/Beautification Award to the City's budget process for discussion during budget workshops.*

Clarification was provided that the City will fund the award and all other criteria and processing of votes, etc., will be handled the same way the Greenest Citizen award is done on the City's website.

Commissioner Treubert requested that staff add a link in the City's website that will direct inquiries to information regarding Florida-friendly landscaping.

2. COMMITTEE PRIORITIES/RECOMMENDATIONS:

A. North Port Parks: Adopt-A-Park Program - Tree/Bench Memorial - Canoe/Kayak Launches.

Jackie Robertson reported that the Committee's youth member, Clayton Meiron, was unable to attend today's meeting and in his place, she presented the report on the Blue Ridge Waterway, and the Myakkahatchee Creek Canoe/Kayak Launches. The programs have Commission approval and are in varying stages of development. It was stated that once they are completed, people may participate and enjoy hiking, boating, canoeing, fishing, picnic, horseback riding, without expending funds or needing a lot of equipment. The Committee requests that the Commission continues to support these projects.

There was a *consensus to accept the Committee's recommendation to continue to support the development of the Blue Ridge Waterway Project and the Myakkahatchee Creek Greenway Project.*

Thereafter, Public Works Operations Manager Vest provided explanation concerning the City's invasive species eradication programs and the on-going maintenance needed to keep these plants under control. Additionally, Commissioner Jones reported that the Friends of Sarasota Parks has a volunteer program to remove invasive species, and the Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program also awards grant funding for that purpose.

Following a concern, Mr. Vest explained that Brazilian Pepper Trees are extremely resilient and must be removed from the roots.

Margaret Bruner presented the idea of a new beautification program in North Port called the Memorial Tree/Bench Program. Giving citizens a way to memorialize their loved ones and enhance City parks and other areas, the program could be advertized on the City's website, where the Parks & Recreation Department lists available locations best suited for the tree or bench, along with the cost of each item.

After choosing a memorial, the City would install and maintain the chosen item along with a memorial plaque. The Committee requested a consensus from the Commission to move forward with this program.

There was a *consensus to support the implementation of a Memorial Tree/Bench Program.*

Ms. Bruner reported that the next discussion item, the Adopt-a-Park Program, is already in place, but the Committee recommended expanding the program to other civic-minded people who will commit to enhancing and maintaining the park through tree plantings, pruning, clearing, painting, flower bed preparation, and other approved projects for a one-year period. The adopting group would also monitor the park for litter, safety conditions, and report vandalism, as outlined on the City's website. It was also recommended that the program be promoted in local magazines such as "North Port Magazine," "North Port Currents," or "North Port Distinction." The Committee requested continued Commission support of the City's Adopt-a-Park Program and encouragement for more public participation to raise awareness of North Port's focus to beautify the community.

Following a concern, clarification was provided that the City is responsible for tree maintenance and all work projects are assigned by the Parks & Recreation Department.

There was a *consensus to promote the Adopt-a-Park Program as explained on the City's website and expand the program to civic-minded groups such as garden clubs, businesses, scout troops, student organizations, social clubs, neighborhood groups, or sports groups, that would adopt the park as a service project for a one-year period.*

B. Adopt-A-Street Program

Jean Shar reported that the Adopt-a-Street Program is currently in place and the Committee is requesting that it be added to the City's website. Thereafter, City Manager Lewis will insure its insertion.

C. Welcome Kiosks

Chair Bailey provided a review of the Committee's Mission Statement to enhance the travelers experience on U.S. 41, which is a National Heritage Trail. It was reported that the City lacks directional signs to attractions such as Warm Mineral Springs, parks, shopping districts, the library, etc., and requests to the Florida Department of Transportation are lengthy and expensive. The Committee discussed using the City's website as a virtual kiosk and recommended that the Commission consider this option. It was also proposed to change the website's category tab on the main page from "Playing" to "Visitor Attractions" in order to facilitate browsing.

Commissioner Jones reported that the North Port Area Chamber of Commerce is another excellent resource for area amenities and facilities.

There was a *consensus to direct staff to work with the Beautification & Tree/Scenic Highway Committee liaison, to find the best way to target visitor issues on the City's website, as explained by the Committee, and tailor it accordingly.*

D. Commercial Business Landscaping Awards

The issue was discussed during agenda item 1.B. Establishment of a Citizen's Appreciation Award.

E. Funding and Support for Arbor Day 2012

The issue was discussed during agenda item 1. Achievements.

F. Landscaping efforts for "Dancing Ladies" (Warm Mineral Springs)

Jackie Robertson provided a brief history of the "Dancing Ladies" sculpture located at the junction of U.S. 41 and Ortiz Boulevard. The artist is Sophie Johnston (1910-1973) from Nokomis who was an art instructor at the Ringling Museum in Sarasota. Currently, the fountain is in a state of disrepair and the Committee requested that it be restored, landscaped, and function properly in time for Florida's 500th Anniversary in 2013. The year's theme: "Viva Florida" will incorporate Ponce de Leon into its celebrations. With the restoration of the fountain/sculpture, the connection of Warm Mineral Springs to Ponce de Leon has the potential to garner tremendous tourism during the year's celebration. The Committee also requested that the sculpture remain in its present location to serve as a gateway landmark to Warm Mineral Springs.

Discussion ensued: (1) it was reported that the sculpture is on Sarasota County property and restoration of the feature is already being discussed in connection with the Interlocal Agreement with Sarasota County as it pertains to the co-ownership of Warm Mineral Springs; (2) Commissioner Garofalo suggested extending an invitation to the King and Queen of Spain to visit North Port in 2013. Pending on staff's ability to move the project forward, he will present the project to the Transportation Development Council for funding; (3) City Manager Lewis confirmed that efforts for Viva Florida have commenced on the staff level but ultimately it must be driven by the community to be successful; (4) the over-sized arrow used as a directional sign to Warm Mineral Springs is on private property and has a presumptive easement. Thereafter, public comment was held.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT:

Public comment was held from 2:26 p.m. – 2:37 p.m.

Commissioner Garofalo suggested presenting a Certificate of Appreciation for the individuals recognized by the Committee for their help during the year.

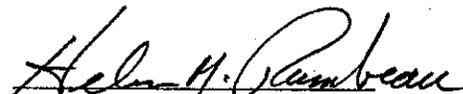
Building Chief Zoning Inspector Blackmer announced that City Arborist Pieper will be the new staff liaison to the Committee.

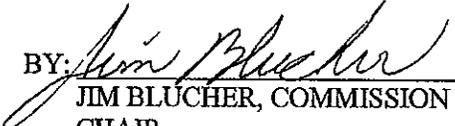
5. ADJOURNMENT:

Chair Blucher adjourned the North Port City Commission Joint Meeting with the North Port Beautification & Tree/Scenic Highway Committee at 2:39 p.m.

CITY OF NORTH PORT, FLORIDA

ATTEST:


HELEN M. RAIMBEAU, MMC
CITY CLERK

BY: 
JIM BLUCHER, COMMISSION
CHAIR

Minutes approved at the Commission Regular Meeting
this 11th Day of July 2011.