

## **MINUTES**

CITY OF BEAUFORT

### **TREE BOARD**

Monday, September 26, 2011 3:00 pm

**Planning Conference Room, City Hall – 1911 Boundary Street**

Beaufort, South Carolina

In accordance with South Carolina Code of laws, 1976, Section 30-480(d), as amended, local media were duly notified of the time, date, place and agenda of this meeting.

#### **Members present**

Barb Farris, Chairman

Derrick Wells, Vice-Chairman

Jim Arnett

William Waskiewicz

#### **Staff present**

Eliza Hill, Planning Department

#### **Guests**

Paul Michau

DeWitt Helm

Dale Friedman

Chairman Farris called the meeting to order at 3:05 p.m.

#### **OLD BUSINESS: REVIEW SCOUTING INFORMATION, MAPS, AND DRAFT OF LETTER TO CITY COUNCIL REGARDING PILOT PROJECTS FOR UNDERGROUNDING UTILITIES**

There was general agreement that the format and details of the letter were good. Ms. Hill explained that some costs were either estimated or left off of the letter. She asked for suggestions as to additions and deletions to the letter. **Paul Michau** clarified that it's estimated to be \$300 for undergrounding from the street to the home for cable and \$1000 for SCE&G, and the utility companies will not pay for it. Ms. Hill said yes, these are the prices she was given. There was some discussion about amounts – including telephone services – and who would pay for it. Mr. Michau said they need to consider what happens if a homeowner changes service providers, as well.

Ms. Hill told **Dale Friedman** that the Tree Board was asked to find ten potential undergrounding projects throughout the city, assess each tree in those areas, and prioritize them. The Tree Board decided to submit the letter to city council without prioritizing the neighborhoods, though. Mr. Michau said The Point was supposed to be the pilot project. He asked if they would need to get each homeowner to go along with that. Chairman Farris said the city isn't completely committed to this because of "the cost factor."

Ms. Hill said she has been asked to look for grants and base calculations on franchise fees in a small area of The Point. There was discussion of the prioritization of The Point over Mossy Oaks and why that decision was made. Mr. Arnett said no one should feel excluded in Beaufort or feel that The Point was chosen because of favoritism when it was chosen because there will be “more bang for the buck.”

Ms. Friedman asked if the city would consider asking for a vote on a special assessment to pay for the project. Ms. Hill said there’s been discussion of that. Ms. Friedman said The Point could be a small pilot project to help get such a referendum passed. Chairman Farris said it was considered that some homeowners on The Point would help contribute to this project. Ms. Hill said they could insert a sentence in the letter to city council explaining that the quantity of live oaks found in The Point led to the Tree Board’s recommendation of The Point for a pilot project.

Mr. Michau asked if there was an expectation that the utilities would contribute anything and Ms. Hill said no. She went on to say that the city has a contract with SCE&G, which is paid out of the franchise fee, not through “a bill.” On the streetscape projects, there’s a cost sharing that she said “sounds like it’s a 65-35” split, and they may be able to expect the same thing on this project.

There was a suggestion to leave out the total cost for all 10 areas, because there are ways to fund the project, and they don’t want anyone to be overwhelmed by the cost of its full scope. There was general agreement that the grand total should be left out because it looks as if the proposal is for all 10 areas. **DeWitt Helm** said the pilot project costs should be included. Ms. Hill agreed this was a good idea for inclusion in the letter.

There was discussion about the possibility of finding grants to supplement other monies for the projects. Ms. Friedman suggested that the South Carolina Department of Archives and History could be a possible source for funding. There was then discussion about looking to other communities that have undergrounding and how those projects were funded, including consulting with the arborist for the city of Charleston.

Ms. Friedman said the prime tourist street (Craven) “looks awful” with the “butchered trees,” and there’s a risk of turning away tourists because of the way it looks, so there might be money available for undergrounding that is to be used to encourage tourism. Mr. Arnett said if city council gets a positive response to this project, it “might keep the ball rolling.” Ms. Friedman said if two blocks in The Point are done, and they can develop a package, areas can be mobilized through the neighbors and signed up. Mr. Wells explained the technicalities of the work as explained to the Tree Board by Will Saleeby. Ms. Hill said undergrounding three-phase lines is more than triple the cost of single-phase. Mr. Michau thought there might be a way to eliminate three-phase in The Point. Ms. Hill said most of The Point is single-phase with one house that is three-phase.

Ms. Friedman described a previous experience she'd had with undergrounding and explained why it cost what it did. Ms. Hill said lighting fixtures are around \$2200 each, though SCE&G carries a fixture which can be leased monthly in perpetuity. For streetscapes, it's better for the city to pay for them outright, but this might be a detail to be dealt with later on in the undergrounding process.

Ms. Friedman said the city would surely not bury power lines but leave the other utility lines up. Ms. Hill said Hargray, Charter, and Century Link didn't participate in the undergrounding thus far – there's no benefit to them to do so – so there are now huge poles from SCE&G's undergrounding plus the old poles for other utilities which haven't been undergrounded. Mr. Arnett suggested this might be handled with a PR effort.

Mr. Michau said the letter to city council only addresses burying power lines. He thinks it should be clear that it's ALL utilities. A review by others said it says "utility lines," in the letter, not just power lines.

**DISCUSSION: REQUEST TO RENAME PARK SPACE KNOWN AS COMMONS PARK TO "NIELS CHRISTENSEN PARK" AND RENAME PIGEON POINT BOAT LANDING "KATHERINE WALES STRATTON CHRISTENSEN" LANDING**

Chairman Farris said Ann Pollitzer had told her that Ms. Pollitzer's grandparents donated the land for the parks, and she had wanted the little park at the end of the road named after her grandmother, but instead it was named after Roger Pinckney. Ms. Hill said she had told Ms. Pollitzer that other areas in Pigeon Point and throughout the city have not been named. The Pinckney family had come to the Tree Board, and the naming was approved. Other parks in Beaufort have been named the same way: through the Tree Board. Naming and renaming parks has always been the responsibility of the Tree Board, Ms. Hill said. Chairman Farris said Ms. Pollitzer is now interested in buying benches and placing them at the landing with nameplates on them. Ms. Hill said this can't happen, either, until Ms. Pollitzer has brought it before the Tree Board in writing. It will then go to city council. Chairman Farris said she would call Ms. Pollitzer and inform her of this. Ms. Hill added that commemorative signs are not paid for by the city. There was some discussion of the styles of benches that are acceptable. This would need to be coordinated with Ms. Hill.

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:58 pm.