



CITY OF COCONUT CREEK CITY COMMISSION WORKSHOP MINUTES

**Government Center
4800 W. Copans Road
Coconut Creek, Florida**

**Date: May 1, 2024
Time: 6:00 p.m.
Meeting No. 2024-0501WS**

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Welch called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m.

PRESENT UPON ROLL CALL:

Mayor Sandra L. Welch
Vice Mayor Jacqueline Railey
Commissioner Joshua Rydell
Commissioner John A. Brodie
Commissioner Jeffrey R. Wasserman
City Manager Sheila N. Rose
City Attorney Terrill C. Pyburn
City Clerk Joseph J. Kavanagh

Mayor Welch asked all to rise for the Pledge of Allegiance. Following the Pledge, Mayor Welch noted that the meeting was being conducted live with a quorum physically present and being broadcast live on the City's website.

City Attorney Pyburn summarized the procedures for Commission Workshops and advised that there would be an opportunity for public input at the Regular Meeting when the related items were brought forward for a vote. She noted a document labeled "The Benefits of the Urban Forest" shared by resident Ramona Johnston was being distributed on the dais.

DISCUSSION – TREE CANOPY PROGRAM

Assistant City Manager and Sustainable Development Director Scott Stoudenmire introduced the tree canopy discussion, including the proposed tree canopy grant program presented to the City Commission in March. He introduced Sustainability Manager Linda Whitman, noting she was also a Registered Landscape Architect, and Scott Peavler, the City's Consulting Landscape Architect and Development Review Committee (DRC) member, to make the presentation.

Ms. Whitman provided a brief overview of the proposed tree canopy program, including background on the concerns brought forward by several Homeowners Association (HOA) board members regarding the cost of the City's tree canopy requirements. She reviewed the City tree preservation ordinance, explaining that it mirrored the requirements in the Broward County Land Development Code. She provided a brief recap of the proposed grant program developed by staff to address community concerns. She noted the proposed grant program was modeled after the Neighborhood Enhancement Grant program and was originally presented to the Commission at their March 14, 2024, Commission meeting for consideration.

Mayor Welch inquired about the balance of the Tree Preservation Trust Fund and the Neighborhood Enhancement Grant account. Mr. Stoudenmire advised the trust balance was approximately \$500,000, and the grant account balance was approximately \$160,000. Discussion continued.

Commissioner Rydell inquired as to whether general revenue funds could be shifted to the Tree Preservation Trust Fund. He expressed concern the trust would be expended quickly if it was not supplemented. City Manager Rose advised that the process would be a line item in the budget rather than adding to the Trust, but the City could self-fund a continuation of the program. Commissioner Rydell stated he would like to see the program as comparable to the Neighborhood Enhancement Grant with perpetual funding and noted the maximum grant should be increased. He commented that a tree replacement did not qualify for the Neighborhood Enhancement Grant program. He asked about possible treatment for Ganoderma. Mr. Peavler and Ms. Whitman discussed concerns with Ganoderma briefly, and discussion ensued. Commissioner Rydell asked whether there were different tree preservation standards in coastal cities. Mr. Peavler explained the variation from city to city, noting the County standard was the minimum. Commissioner Rydell inquired as to whether an HOA could apply for a Neighborhood Enhancement Grant and a Tree Preservation Grant in the same year, and whether the grant would be retroactive. Mr. Stoudenmire advised that, as drafted, there would be no prohibition against doing both in the same year, and the grant would not be retroactive.

Commissioner Wasserman asked staff to walk him through the process an HOA needed to follow in order to remove a tree. Ms. Whitman provided an explanation. Commissioner Wasserman inquired as to the timeline of compliance for removing a tree and for grant approval. Ms. Whitman and Mr. Stoudenmire responded. Discussion continued regarding the timeline and whether grant approval by the Commission would and should be required. Commissioner Wasserman asked for clarification on the logistics of out-of-pocket costs and reimbursements, as well as funding priorities. Ms. Whitman outlined the intent, and noted the details should be clarified prior to approval. Mr. Stoudenmire advised the funding priorities for the Neighborhood Enhancement Grant had not been tested due to availability of funding.

Commissioner Brodie stated he agreed with Commissioner Rydell that the grant program should be a perpetual line item in the budget, and asserted the money needed to be put aside starting now. City Manager Rose clarified the process briefly. Commissioner Brodie asked about soil remediation in the case of sick palm trees to avoid impact on other trees. Ms. Whitman stated that instead of remediating the soil, the City had been trying to plant trees with leaves, because they were not affected by Ganoderma. Discussion continued regarding Ganoderma. Ms. Whitman agreed to investigate soil remediation options and report back.

Vice Mayor Railey pointed out Condo Associations (COA) were not included in the grant description. Ms. Whitman agreed language should be added because it was the intent that COAs be included. Vice Mayor Railey commented that there were issues with associations being required to replace trees with the same category of tree and finding it was unrealistic at times. She asked if this was addressed in the proposed program. Ms. Whitman explained the options available in that situation. Vice Mayor Railey inquired as to whether excess Neighborhood Enhancement Grant funds could be transferred to the Tree Preservation Trust Fund. City Manager Rose advised the funds should be kept separate, as there were guidelines for the Tree Preservation Trust Fund, as well as limitations on how the dollars could be used. Vice Mayor Railey asked if there was a provision for HOAs that do not have matching funds. Ms. Whitman stated staff would review the process to determine if there were modifications that could be made to address that concern.

Mayor Welch commented on the waiver process, and asked if it could be expanded to address situations with multiple trees as a way to address special circumstances. She asked for clarification on how funds dedicated to this program would be budgeted. City Manager Rose clarified. Mayor Welch agreed with previous comments that the maximum grant amount should be increased, and the fund should be supplemented. She stated this was an opportunity to align with the changing needs of the community.

Discussion ensued as to whether the categories were intended to be aggregated. Mr. Stoudenmire advised it was not staff's intent that an HOA could apply for all four (4) categories. The Commission agreed and provided consensus.

Commissioner Railey asked if there was any way that the City could give HOAs some relief on the tree replacement requirements. Ms. Whitman advised there was not, as the requirements were set by Broward County, and the City was required to meet them. Commissioner Rydell stated he believed options could be explored with staff.

Consensus was to set the threshold for Commission approval of grant applications at \$5,000, to direct staff to explore increasing the limits on the grant, and a waiver for multiple trees, as well as to increase the total grant fund by adding a line item for the grant to the General Fund budget.

City Manager Rose provided additional clarification on the waiver process. Mr. Stoudenmire advised the waiver process was in the Landscape Code, and stated staff would explore how changes to the waiver would be implemented. Discussion continued regarding tree replacement waivers and tree preservation.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:24 p.m.

Joseph J. Kavanagh, MMC
City Clerk

Date