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Urban Forestry Commission

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Agency: [City of Cleveland Urban Forestry Commission](#)

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Summary

- Eighty to ninety percent of the census tracts in Cleveland are considered disadvantaged, according to [this map](#) by the Council on Environmental Quality. This relates to the relationship between environmental and socioeconomic factors. “Disadvantaged” in this context means that it meets “the thresholds for at least one of the tool’s categories of burden,” defined [here](#).
- The Urban Forestry Commission (UFC) is still seeking a Youth Resident to serve on the commission. Cleveland residents aged 11 to 17 can apply [here](#) or contact Jennifer Kipp, who heads the city’s urban forestry unit, at jkipp@clevelandohio.gov or (216) 664-2388 (Parental permission is required.)
- The commission appears to be emphasizing community engagement. The Maintenance Committee is planning a “walkabout” in the service areas of the Burten, Bell, Carr and Slavic Village community development corporations to seek feedback from residents on what “maintenance” means to them in the context of urban forestry.

Follow-Up Questions

- The UFC has a blurb on its [website](#) announcing that it is still looking for a youth resident member, but is it doing anything else to publicize this opening? How would this youth commissioner engage with the UFC? What would the expectations be?
- What was the specific Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) grant that the city applied for?
- It seems that the main focus of the UFC at this point is working on a backlog of tree maintenance issues. Is there a long-term strategy for increasing tree cover in Cleveland? *[Editor’s note: [A city partner eyes a 30% tree canopy -- up from 18% -- by 2040.](#)]*
- Will there be adequate communication about where/when exactly the walkabouts will take place?

Notes

Urban Forestry Commission

Commission members:

- *Xavier Bay (City Planning, Cleveland)*
- *Jose Hernandez (Public Utilities, Cleveland)*
- *Bernie Jackson (Cleveland Public Power)*
- *Mikal Jeanbaptiste (Burten, Bell, Carr Development)*
- *Jennifer Kipp (Urban Forestry, Cleveland)*
- *Dan Leamon (resident, health specialist)*
- *Samira Malone (Cleveland Tree Coalition)*
- *Sarah O'Keeffe (Director of Sustainability and Climate Justice, Cleveland)*
- *Grai Oleksy (Cleveland Museum of Natural History)*
- *Tom Schreiber (Western Reserve Land Conservancy)*
- *Jenny Spencer (Ward 15 City Council member)*
- *Divya Sridhar (Cleveland Neighborhood Progress)*
- *Rick Switalski (Capital Projects, Cleveland)*
- *Roger Tokars (resident, NASA engineer)*
- *Youth resident (vacant)*

Call to order

- About 4:05 p.m. Kipp called the meeting to order

Roll call

- Jackson and Malone are absent.

Chair's welcome remarks

- Chair Malone is not present, recovering from an illness at home. Kipp chaired the meeting.

New business

Review of committee structures

- The commission has four committees: the Executive Committee, Policy Committee, Budget Committee, and Maintenance Committee

- All committee members must be commission members, and all committees are made up of one chair and fewer than eight commissioners
- Each committee is tasked with creating a charter with goals.
- O’Keeffe pointed out that non-voting members may be invited to supplement knowledge as subject matter experts
 - O’Keeffe clarified after questioning that non-voting members do not participate in deliberation.
 - These non-voting members should be invited for a predetermined length of time (i.e. one meeting or several meetings).

01 Policy: Schreiber (Chair); Bay, Hernandez, Kipp, Spencer, Sridhar, Swiatalski

02 Maintenance: Leamon (Chair); Jackson, Jean-Baptiste, Kipp, Olesky, Sridhar, Tokars

03 Budget: Spencer (Chair); Kipp, Hernandez, Malone, O’Keeffe, Sridhar

Report-Out by UFC Committees

1. Policy Committee

- Chair Tom Schreiber reported that, at the last meeting on Nov. 27, the committee mapped the [Tree Protection Ordinance](#) and created a flow chart to see where triggers for enforcement of the current ordinance are.
- There are a couple of points of inconsistency with some ordinances as they relate to development/building permits.
 - These will be discussed at the quarterly meeting this coming Friday, Jan. 12.

2. Maintenance Committee

- Chair Dan Leamon said that, next quarter, the committee is planning to hear the voices of the people through neighborhood walkabouts, modeled after Mayor Justin Bibb’s safety walks.
- Another committee member stated that the goal of the engagement was to try to understand what “maintenance” meant to residents as well as to get more broad feedback around what trees mean to/for them.
- They plan to visit the service areas of the Burten, Bell, Carr and Slavic Village community development corporations (CDCs), and they are working with the CDCs to help communicate with residents.

3. Budget

- Chair Jenny Spencer reported that in the committee's last meeting on Dec. 15, it discussed the City of Cleveland's large backlog of tree-related complaint-driven work orders, estimating a cost of about \$2.9 million in work orders that still need to be funded to just catch up:
 - \$2.4 million for right-of-way tree removal and critical pruning
 - \$400,000+ for right-of-way stump grinding
 - These work orders are distinct from ongoing maintenance cycle work.
- Spencer noted that the city administration, the commission, and City Council all recognize the need to address the backlog.
- There appear to be three options to address this backlog:
 - Grant-funded opportunities
 - The city has submitted an application to ODNR for funding.
 - Upcoming annual city budget process in February for [General Fund](#) allocation
 - The city's General Fund is typically not used for this work order activity, but the mayor's office understands the scope of this challenge and this work may be allowed in this situation.
 - City Council may choose to make an allocation from one-time unused unallocated funds from 2023 – still prioritizing
- Spencer concluded by saying that the purpose of the Budget Committee is to work towards recommending sustainable sources of funding “to maintain our urban forest on a regular, recurring, and anticipated cycle so it's not catch-up or emergency based.”

Ohio Department of Natural Resources – Urban Forestry Program (Inflation Reduction Act funding) - update

- Last year, the city applied for an ODNR grant (funds from the [IRA](#)) focused on “disadvantaged communities” as defined by the [Council on Environmental Quality's Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool](#).
- 80-90% of the census tracts in Cleveland are considered disadvantaged.

City of Cleveland Grant Request	Eligible Activity	Funding Request
Field Operations Forester Program Manager	Staffing - new position	\$165,048
Contractual Services	Tree Pruning, Tree Planting, Tree Stump Removal	\$810,000
	TOTAL REQUEST	\$975,048

- Three other regional agencies applied for this funding:
 - Cleveland Metroparks
 - About \$120,000 to plant 200 1- to 2-inch caliper native trees throughout Gordon Park South
 - Western Reserve Land Conservancy
 - About \$300,000 towards planting about 400 small caliper trees and the maintenance of 1,500 previously planted trees
 - Holden Forests and Gardens
 - About \$350,000 for the [Tree Corps CREW](#) arboriculture workforce development program
- The commission voted unanimously to support these four applications via letters of support and note to the ODNR, with Schreiber recusing himself from the WRLC case.

Form-based code – update from City Planning

See the city’s new code pilot website [here](#) for more information/background.

- Commissioner Kipp described the new form-based code pilot to the other commissioners as “embodying health, sustainability and equity,”
- The new code would prioritize integrated, mixed-use, walkable development over parcel-based development, where zones are separated by use (i.e. industrial, commercial, residential), which results in a lot of driving.
- The city plans to pilot this code in sections of Detroit-Shoreway, Cudell, Hough, and the Opportunity Corridor.
- The code is relevant to the forestry commission because there are sections of the code that pertain to things under UFC domain, such as right of way, treescape, streetscape, screening, amenity space, widths for pedestrians, furniture zones, and landscaping.
- The commission voted to invite Shannan Leonard from City Planning to present to

commission members for feedback before the end of January.

Public comment

- Residents may submit public comments online via [this form](#), and online public comment can be accessed [here](#).
- Michael Armstrong gave in-person comment, recommending commissioners really familiarize themselves with the new form-based code. He asked, "Why, 'Hey, let's change the minimum width required for street trees [on the furniture zone/tree lawn] from 4 feet to 6 feet," a 33% change?' He said he would like to know what impact that would have on his community.

Closing remarks

Spencer reminded the commission of its duties of compiling an annual report.

Adjourn

Adjourned 5:23 p.m.

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