

MINUTES

BEAUTIFICATION AND TREE COMMITTEE MEETING

March 3, 2025

VIA ZOOM/IN PERSON

PRESIDING: John Nelson

MEMBERS PRESENT: Debi Ferrer, John Nelson, Chuck Gomez, Jann Oldenburg

ABSENT: Cindy Keever, ex officio

Staff Liaison: Abby Jara, Staff Liaison

Also in attendance:

CALL TO ORDER

Nelson called the meeting to order at 4:02 pm.

ROLL CALL

Executive Assistant Abigail Jara conducted roll call; Ferrer, Nelson, Gomez, Oldenburg present

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Nelson said he would like to add to 'Elect for Chair and Vice Chair for the Beautification & Tree Committee' after approval of the agenda; adding item under #6B, Appointing a Member for the Beautification & Tree Subcommittee Garden Award.

It was moved by Ferrer and seconded by Gomez to approve the agenda as amended. The motion carried 4 to 0; Ferrer, Gomez, Oldenburg, Nelson voting in favor; none opposed; none absent

Ferrer nominated Nelson for Chair; motion carried 4 to 0; Ferrer, Gomez, Oldenburg, and Nelson voted in favor; none opposed; none absent

Gomez nominated Ferrer for Vice Chair; Ferrer clarified she is away for 2 months in the winter and cannot commit to committee meetings. Motion carried 4 to 0; Gomez, Nelson, Oldenburg, and Ferrer voted in favor; none opposed; none absent

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APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Nelson would like under item #4A corrected; there was a conversation regarding the planter not having native roses but there are native roses like Rosa Nut Kana and Rosa Woodsii.

It was moved by Ferrer and seconded by Gomez to approve the December 2, 2024 minutes as amended. The motion carried 4 to 0; Ferrer, Gomez, Oldenburg, Nelson voting in favor; none opposed; none absent

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

Connie Krumrick and Karen Murry wanted to discuss litter issues. She said due to new committee members she wanted to share her thoughts on this topic. She briefly shared her time on the Beautification & Tree Committee, where she served from 2019 to 2023, with the primary motivation for joining the committee was addressing litter issues.

She said the committee took various efforts to engage city government, encourage city involvement, and organize cleanups and advertising. However, there was resistance to leading cleanups due to liability concerns. In 2020, Columbia Gorge Toyota stepped up, and since the fall of that year, Second Saturday cleanups have taken place between March and November to address litter issues in the community. Murry and Krumrick have participated in almost all of these cleanups.

She then mentioned Columbia Gorge Toyota and Honda have historically carried much of the Beautification Committee's workload. While the committee, with city funding, purchased some grabbers, Toyota has primarily handled advertising, provided setup, gloves, vests, and small awards for participating groups. They have a crew who picks up garbage bags and transports to The Dalles Disposal.

Upon leaving the committee in 2023, Krumrick gave a strong pitch to the committee to have an Adopt-a-Street program, which is typically city-run based on her research. Though not extensive, her research found that most are city-run programs, promoted and organized by local governments rather than volunteers. She then brought this pitch to City Council and plans to do so again.

Krumrick said her concern about litter remains, especially with increasing tourism, including the upcoming bike route that will bring visitors from around the world. Many will enter through the Fish Bridge area and travel along West Sixth Street, one of the most littered parts of town. She hopes visitors leave with a positive impression of a clean, welcoming community rather than seeing it as a trashy town.

Krumrick is asking the City do more cleanups, that Columbia Gorge Toyota has sponsored all these years, since they'll be reducing its cleanup efforts, scaling back from nine annual cleanups to seven, running from April through October. Participation has not significantly increased. Although there has been good effort in getting organizations involved, Krumrick urges the city to provide greater support. Also noting the city funded some radio ads for a couple of months.

Ferrer stated the radio ads the City funded was the year she joined the committee.

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Murry asked if those were the decorated trash cans.

Oldenburg confirmed and suggested considering adding more along Sixth Street. However, they acknowledged that much of the litter seems to come from items discarded from cars or blown around. They also mentioned that some nonprofit clubs had been asked to participate but noted that, as a member of the Lions Club, they had never heard of this effort.

Krumrick stated the Lions Club has participated numerous times.

Murry noted the Lions Club joins the Second Saturday cleanups, usually around two or three.

Oldenburg stated she's been a member for about six months but had never heard of this.

Ferrer explained cleanups were not held over the winter. Typically, groups are scheduled in the spring for the rest of the year, so the Lions Club may have participated earlier in the season.

Oldenburg suggested restarting the effort and having someone from BTC ensure all clubs are contacted and scheduled for participation.

Ferrer confirmed this has always been part of the process and noted Rachel has primarily been responsible for contacting the groups.

Oldenburg asked who Rachel is.

Ferrer responded Rachel is one of the owners of Columbia Gorge Toyota.

Nelson clarified the effort was not organized by the Beautification Committee but was Rachel's effort.

Krumrick explained when they were on the committee, they worked with Rachel to coordinate efforts. They described the process of contacting organizations, maintaining a list, and creating a monthly calendar from March through November. Each January or February, they would review the schedule, reach out to groups again, and confirm their participation.

Oldenburg shared she participated in a freeway cleanup where volunteers bagged litter, tied them up, and either the city or a refuse service picked up the bags at a designated time.

Ferrer asked if the cleanup happened here.

Oldenburg responded it was in Hood River.

Ferrer stated The Dalles does the same process.

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Krumrick clarified in The Dalles, the city does not handle pickup; Columbia Gorge Toyota Honda does.

Oldenburg asked why the city does not handle the pickup.

Krumrick explained the city chose not to take the lead on cleanups due to liability concerns, staffing issues due to it being on Saturdays, and the cost of paying employees for the work. As a result, Columbia Gorge Toyota took on those responsibilities. While city involvement in pickups may still be an issue, she emphasized there are other ways the city could contribute, such as installing signage, banners, or promotional materials to encourage cleanliness. She then asked if the committee would like to hear a rap song she made in the past but first checked if there were any more questions.

Oldenburg suggested revisiting the city's role to explore ways for their participation, possibly by adjusting the pickup or cleanup schedule.

Murry stated Toyota would likely continue with the second Saturday cleanup as it is a key part of their promotion.

Ferrer noted it's difficult to get community members to participate on days other than Saturday.

Oldenburg acknowledged Toyota might be using this as a PR opportunity.

Gomez noted most trash is found in gutters rather than on sidewalks and suggested the Beautification Committee contact city street maintenance to review or adjust the street cleaning schedule. He highlighted that much of the litter comes from fast food establishments and suggested encouraging managers to have staff tidy up outside their businesses. He also expressed concern about trash related to homelessness, stating even with cleanup efforts, some individuals continue to leave litter behind. Lastly, she acknowledged the issue but emphasized that, compared to other communities, The Dalles remains a beautiful town and is not overwhelmed by trash.

Krumrick expressed love for the town and a desire to maintain its beauty. She agreed with Gomez about the town's appeal but voiced concern about the future if the private business leading cleanup efforts were to stop. She questioned what would happen without their involvement. West Sixth Street, she stated, in her opinion, the litter there is not primarily from homelessness but rather debris blown from trucks and the freeway.

Ferrer agreed, noting the extent of the litter isn't fully noticeable until actively picking it up. She emphasized how overwhelming the amount of trash can feel, describing it as never-ending. She supported the need for more volunteers, stating even with the current efforts, they can easily fill 50 bags in a day and still have litter remaining. She stressed the importance of finding ways to recruit more volunteers.

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Nelson asked if there was a specific request or action the committee was being asked to take.

Krumrick said anything the City is willing to do.

Ferrer asked what the city's response regarding the Adopt-a-Street program, recalling that Krumrick had expressed strong interest in it even after stepping down and attend a City Council to discuss it.

Krumrick stated there was no response from City Council regarding the Adopt-a-Street program.

Gomez asked if it was mentioned during public comments.

Krumrick said yes.

Gomez remarked City Council wouldn't say anything in response.

Nelson stated the Adopt-a-Street program remains part of BTC strategic plan and will be addressed moving forward. He suggested in the future, as a community member, Krumrick might want to participate in related discussions and extended an invitation for her to return and be involved.

Ferrer read goal number two from the committee's strategic plan. (Please see attached).

Gomez suggested making more public comments to the City Council, emphasizing the need to keep raising the issue until it is acknowledged. He noted while the Beautification Committee is committed, the City Council has more influence to take action.

Krumrick acknowledged she understands the dynamics at play.

Ferrer stated one of their action items would be ensuring that a committee member attends a city council meeting at least once a month to share updates on their activities and advocate for their needs.

Krumrick rapped to a song created for the Stop the Drop.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Strategic Plan FY 25-26 Update

The committee discussed the strategic plan, attached, provided any final updates, and proceeded with approval to obtain the City Manager's feedback. The committee will then discuss the budget in more detail under discussion items.

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ACTION ITEMS

Approval of Strategic Plan FY 25-26

It was moved by Ferrer and seconded by Gomez to approve the Updated Strategic Plan FY 25-26. The motion carried 4 to 0; Ferrer, Gomez, Oldenburg, Nelson voting in favor; none opposed; none absent

DISCUSSION

Budget Detail for Beautification & Tree Committee

Nelson stated the committee currently has \$10,000 allocated for this year, consistent with previous years, plus an additional \$10,000 provided by the City for the Residential Tree Grant program, which is made available to the community who applied for them, bringing the total budget to \$20,000. As part of the new strategic plan, the committee needs to discuss whether to request additional funding beyond this amount and determine the necessary amount.

Oldenburg stated the committee needs to review last year's expenditures on various projects and assess whether those projects have been completed or if they are ongoing.

Ferrer noted Gomez had estimated approximately \$15,000 for Goal One, which includes all related action items. However, she suggested the committee could still request \$10,000 for this goal, the same amount allocated last year, as it covers key initiatives such as conducting a tree inventory and developing a community tree plan. Ferrer had intended to apply for a grant to support these efforts and recently received an email from the Community Green Infrastructure Grant Program with links to the 23 grants awarded last year, providing potential models to reference.

Ferrer plans to explore funding from the Oregon Department of Forestry but noted uncertainties due to federal cuts. Some grants provide technical assistance rather than direct funding, including training on free tree inventory mapping software, which may require volunteer support. She also noted last year, the committee spent less than \$10,000 on approximately 50 trees and the necessary materials for planting. Given this, Ferrer expressed confidence in being able to achieve similar results again this year.

Oldenburg proposed planting a native tree with a plaque at each historical site to highlight The Dalles' historic character and attract tourists.

Ferrer agreed the idea was valuable but pointed out that the committee had just approved the strategic plan, and this project was not included in it. Ferrer noted planting a native tree at all historical sites would be a new project. She clarified the residential tree grants are for homeowners who apply for a free tree and are not related to planting trees at historical sites.

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Gomez asked if this could be included in the development of a community tree plan.

Ferrer said it can but noted while the plan would be developed this year, implementation would likely begin next year.

Gomez noted the \$10,000 budget was stretched thin due to labor costs and tree distribution efforts. Citing rising expenses and warned of major federal forestry cuts, Gomez proposed increasing the budget to \$15,000, with unused funds returned if not needed, as the committee has historically managed its budget prudently.

Ferrer acknowledged Gomez's point, noting over two years, the committee has spent less than \$20,000 to plant nearly 100 trees, while the city spent \$280,000 to plant a similar number, with most of those trees not surviving. Ferrer agreed that, in comparison, the committee's budget is relatively small.

Gomez shared he had a conversation with the mayor a month or two ago, expressing the committee's dedication and called for tripling the \$10,000 budget. The Mayor expressed support, stating he would approve the request. He noted the committee has a friend in City Hall supporting their endeavors.

Oldenburg remarked the mayor supports the committee because he originally started the Beautification & Tree Committee.

Gomez noted the Mayor is eager to add members and emphasized pushing for a \$30,000–\$40,000 budget. The committee agreed.

The committee continued to discuss budget allocations for each goal and new projects for their updated strategic plan in more detail. Like wind sculptures, post cards for garden awards, beautification award for businesses, sidewalk stars, cruise ship hillside, and planters.

Nelson asked Oldenburg if she would like to join the Subcommittee for the Garden Awards. She agreed.

Next Meeting: March 17, 2025

Items for Next Meeting:

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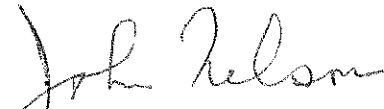
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ADJOURNMENT

Being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:32 pm.

Submitted by/
Abigail Jara, Executive Assistant

SIGNED:



John Nelson, Chair

ATTEST:



Abigail Jara, Executive Assistant

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The City of The Dalles Beautification and Tree Committee | Strategic Plan – 2024-2025 FY

Vision: A community that has involved citizens of all ages, strong local collaboration, green spaces, a revitalized downtown, efficient government, is a commercial hub, honors our cultural diversity, has a proactive education system, has compatible neighborhoods, a far-ranging transportation system, and a comprehensive medical system. (Compiled summary of VAP)

Mission: To promote and honor our rich cultural history, share and enhance the beauty of our community, and strengthen communal pride in our public spaces through citizen engagement, advocacy, recognition, and partnerships.

<p>Goal #1 Create a robust and extensive tree canopy and other green infrastructure to improve community health, wellbeing, and increase climate resiliency.</p>	<p>Residential tree grants Trees for schools Develop a community tree plan to include potential sources of additional funding Become a part of Tree City USA Conduct a tree inventory Advisory role to downtown streets trees</p>
<p>Goal #2 Preserve the beauty of our community through education and citizen engagement</p>	<p>Stop the Drop Community Cleanups Increase visibility, i.e. marketing, articles, social media, etc. to increase awareness in BTC activities Adopt-a-_____ (block, public space, street etc.) Wind sculptures, art</p>
<p>Goal #3 Enhance the beauty of our community and increased recognition of its cultural history</p>	<p>Beautification awards (residential & businesses) and postcards to recognize other nominations Little free libraries downtown Tree of the month Heritage tree inventory Cruise ship hillside Benches Trashcans, including cigarette butt containers Planters Research downtown bump outs, pedestrian spaces, and parklets Increase bike rack availability Fencing art projects to hide empty lots, treatment plant Public fountains and water features Attend City Council meetings regularly Invite City Council members and city staff attend a Beautification & Tree Committee meeting regularly</p>
<p>Goal #4 Enhance the usability, enjoyment, and human aspects of public spaces, making our city more pedestrian friendly</p>	
<p>Goal #5 Improving communication between City Council, City staff and other relevant city committees with ongoing projects</p>	