

MINUTES

BEAUTIFICATION AND TREE COMMITTEE MEETING

April 7, 2025

VIA ZOOM/IN PERSON

PRESIDING: John Nelson

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

ABSENT:

Staff Liaison: Abby Jara, Staff Liaison

Also in attendance: Cynthia Keever, Ex Officio Member

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

Oldenburg noted that "Hillside" had been added under the discussion items on the agenda.

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

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APPROVAL OF MINUTES

It was moved by Nelson and seconded by Gomez to approve the April 7, 2025 minutes as presented. The motion carried 4 to 0; Nelson, Gomez, Oldenburg, Ferrer voting in favor; none opposed; none absent

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COMMITTEE REPORTS

Staff Liaison

Jara gave the committee updates regarding:

- Trevitt Triangle: No longer with Patricia Gates, who was going to do the plantings, but met with another contractor Marcos Landscaping who will be installing the sprinkler irrigation system.
- Beautification Grant: Application grant had been sent to the City Attorney for approval.

Residential Tree Update

Ferrer shared the updated application for the tree grant program was expected to be ready by June 1st and will send it to Jara, so it could be reviewed and approved at the next meeting. The goal was to align the application timeline with the Beautification Committee's planned June coffee hour, where the tree project would be promoted. Ferrer noted waiting until June would also allow confirmation of the program's budget. She proposed releasing applications in June, with a due date in mid-August to give the committee more time to review sites. This adjusted timeline would help avoid the supply issues experienced in the program's first year.

Ferrer also expressed interest in more strongly implementing the program's priorities, specifically by focusing on planting trees in areas with greater need. As the program grows, Ferrer anticipated more applicants than available funding and emphasized the importance of identifying priority areas. She planned to research data sources, such as tree or shade canopy data from the Oregon Department of Forestry or the U.S. Forest Service, to support this effort.

Ferrer noted while it's generally known the west side has fewer trees than the east side, it would be helpful to support that observation with formal data rather than relying solely on visual assessments. She recalled some prioritization had already taken place in past years. She shared an example of a home that initially wasn't selected to receive a tree due to already having about 30 mature trees. The committee prioritized other applicants with fewer trees due to limited funding.

Gomez asked how tree substitutions were handled when a requested species was unavailable. He inquired whether the grant application included a note informing applicants that substitutions might occur if specific trees were not in stock.

Nelson said applicants were asked to list first and second tree choices, though some did not specify which was which, which had caused minor confusion.

Ferrer said it occurred during the first year of the program but had been cleaned up by the second year. In response to Chuck's question, she explained they contacted most applicants to confirm

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the tree location, and initially planned to place trees in back or side yards, which was not acceptable. In those cases, some applicants declined to participate when told the tree needed to be placed in the front yard.

Nelson reported for the applications he handled, he contacted each applicant, which was time-consuming. Nelson emphasized while in-person visits helped, there was still a significant amount of follow-up required, and he expressed appreciation for more time in the process.

DISCUSSION

Selection of Location for Next Wind Sculpture

The committee discussed several possible locations for new sculpture placements around the city:

- Oldenburg suggested near the cruise ship docking area as a welcoming feature. Nelson noted three tall, spinning sculptures were already installed in the nearby planter box.
- Oldenburg also suggested the embankment. Keever noted past wildflowers became a fire hazard, grass isn't viable, and maintenance is a concern.

Oldenburg asked if it was possible to create barriers, such as rock barriers, and level the area with terracing. Keever responded they likely don't have the funds, suggesting it would be a discussion for City Manager.

- Nelson mentioned Howe Park. Ferrer mentioned interest though she recalled past resistance from Parks and Rec due to irrigation and security concerns. She noted the area had public exposure but might not be ideal for safety reasons.
- Keever brought up "Heck Park" at the convergence of 9th and 10th Streets. Though not officially named, it was referenced historically by that name.
- A small triangular island at the intersection of 2nd and Taylor, near the roundabout and the "Welcome to The Dalles" sign, was also considered.
- The area over the pool on park property with the understanding that further discussion with Parks and Rec would be needed for any potential placement there.
- Ferrer raised the idea of incorporating public art into future downtown bump-outs. She requested a check on any upcoming downtown construction that might allow for such art integration. Keever agreed to look into future downtown projects that may involve ADA upgrades or public infrastructure changes.
- Finally, the planned Federal Street Plaza was brought up. While a design exists, it was unclear whether public art was currently included.

The committee concluded with agreement to follow up on potential sculpture opportunities in future developments and city improvements.

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Cruise Ship Hillside

Oldenburg stated the area needed cleanup but said improvements would depend on available funding and city approval. She supported incorporating rocks and agreed with Keever that native plants were not ideal due to their weedy appearance. She suggested selecting strong, low-water plants and noted pampas grass had worked well in the area.

The committee discussed cost-effective planting options for the embankment area. A member suggested using the Northern Wasco County Soil and Water Conservation District's annual plant sale, which offers erosion-controlling, water-wise plants suitable for the region. Oregon grape was recommended as a durable, attractive, and low-maintenance plant that thrives locally. The committee also discussed using large boulders and smaller rocks to create interest and structure in the space. Public Works has access to rocks and equipment, and could assist with installation if approved by the City Manager. Members agreed Oregon grape pairs well with rock features and enhances natural aesthetics.

Nelson asked who owned the property and whether it belonged to ODOT. Keever said she believed it was city property, but would confirm.

The committee noted that the two areas at the intersection are likely city property and could serve as highlight spots, while the surrounding land is under ODOT's jurisdiction. Members acknowledged limited control over the freeway-adjacent areas. It was agreed to revisit the topic at the next meeting and encouraged members to visit the site beforehand for further discussion.

Beautification Grant Application

Oldenburg asked why the downtown planter grant application did not include specifications for the type or size of planters, noting that there were no guidelines provided when he checked with John.

Gomez explained he chose not to specify planter sizes or styles, preferring an eclectic look with variety, similar to his approach with sponsorship signage at the Granada Theater.

The committee discussed the planter grant:

Nelson explained including planters would significantly reduce the budget for flowers. The plan was a reimbursable grant, allowing businesses to purchase flowers multiple times a year with up to \$300 in receipts. This would not regulate planters but would focus on maintaining flowers. He also noted in the future, standardized planters could be considered in the downtown area. Gomez noted that planters require significant upkeep and hoped only a few businesses would apply this year. He anticipated more interest next year, with clearer criteria, and hoped businesses would inspire others to beautify their storefronts.

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Oldenburg asked if the grants were limited to Second Street, noting that there were only 10 grants available and inquiring whether Third Street was excluded. It was clarified that the downtown area for the grant was defined using a downtown map, which included parts of Second, Third, and possibly Fourth Street.

Next Meeting: April 21, 2025

Items for Next Meeting:

ADJOURNMENT

Being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:59 pm.

Submitted by/

Abigail Jara, Executive Assistant

SIGNED:


John Nelson, Chair

ATTEST:


Abigail Jara, Executive Assistant

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