



## CITY OF FLORENCE

### PARKS AND BEAUTIFICATION COMMISSION MEETING

April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021

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**PRESENT:** Roger Malfatti, Barry Wingard, Donnie Carter, Anna Belk-Wentzel, Nikki Player, Bruce Mallick, Scott Murphy, Walter Sallenger, Carlos Washington, James McLaughlin, and Michael Montrose.

**OTHERS:** Chuck Pope, Jerry Dudley, Victoria Nash, and Tim Wilson.

**ABSENT:** Alexis Fleming, George Scipio, Simon Lee, Jerry Keith, Jr., Bubby Floyd, Thomasina Foster, and Sanovia Arcenaux.

#### **CALL MEETING TO ORDER:**

Roger Malfatti called the meeting to order at 8:32AM.

#### **APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES:**

The minutes of the March 2021 meeting were approved.

#### **APPEARANCES/REQUESTS BEFORE COMMISSION:**

#### **MEMBERSHIP STATUS**

No vacancies. There are ordinances and codes that enforce the fact that members can only miss three meetings in a twelve-month period. Zoom and in person meetings will continue, and members are asked to attend.

#### **STAFF REPORTS:**

##### **Jerry:**

The Recreation Services Division hosted a city-wide Easter Egg Hunt, Hoppin' Around Flo-town, March 26<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup>. The event was a success with over 800 entries. Eggs were hidden in ten different locations. The eggs had codes on them to be scanned by phones that then entered participants into the contest. There were several great prizes given out that were donated by local businesses. Press coverage came with that, and Victoria was able to promote both Spring and Summer Camps that are coming up. The Recreation Services staff has had to think outside of the box and find ways to continue to engage with the communities.

Spring Break Camp is being held April 5<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> at all the community centers. Participants are limited to 15 at each site due to COVID restrictions. Maple Park Community Center is currently full and the others have participants signed up.

There are several job openings within Recreation Services including both parttime and fulltime Activity Instructors. The City asks that if you know of anyone that you think would be suitable for these positions please reach out and let them know there are openings. All of the information for these job positions can be found at [www.CityofFlorence.com](http://www.CityofFlorence.com). There will be one new Program Specialist starting on April 19<sup>th</sup> at the Northwest Community Center.

Donnie Carter asked about signage to be added by the entrance of the Soccer Complex off West Palmetto Street. Jerry explained that there is a City ordinance that does not allow off premise signage. With what property is owned and is considered to be a part of the Soccer Complex adding signage along West Palmetto would be considered off premise. The hope is for that ordinance to be carefully re-written to allow things of this nature. This same issue has been brought up about the Florence Tennis Center and the need for signage along Cashua.

**Victoria:**

Registration for Summer Camp will begin April 9<sup>th</sup> for current participants and neighborhood residents. It will open to all the public on April 26<sup>th</sup>. The cost of summer camp this year, due to COVID, has been adjusted to \$50 for the six-week program. There will be no trips taken due to COVID. This camp will begin on June 14<sup>th</sup>.

Spring Break Camp is being held April 5<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup>. Maple Park Community Center is currently full with fifteen participants. The current numbers for the other centers follow: Northwest Community Center (8), Levy Park Youth Center (8), Dr. Iola Jones Park Community Center (8), and the Barnes Street Activity Center (8 teens).

The scope of work for Levy Senior renovations has been written. The bid will be put out in April for that project.

**Chuck:**

The \$15M that council approved four years ago continues to be spent. This money has allowed great projects to be done throughout the City including the much-needed building of two new community centers, Maple Park Community Center and Dr. Iola Jones Park Community Center, and renovations to the existing buildings. Upgrades to Freedom Florence have also been taking place. There is still more money to spend. The next project to come will be upgrades to playgrounds throughout the City. The range of expenditure for the playground projects is between \$75,000-\$110,000 at each site this will include playground equipment and new surfacing material.

Chuck's most sincere apologies go out to the Parks and Beautification Commission members. There was no email sent out with an invitation to the groundbreaking of the new Sports Complex, and he apologizes for that. It has been an interesting process to set up press conferences during this time. With the involvement of the Red Wolves it was even more difficult to get everyone in one place at one time.

Scott Murphy asked about the Farm to School project that has been announced. The City has donated 14 acres to this project. Jeff Murray and Florence School District 1 will oversee the grounds and the programs. The goal will be to get the participants that are involved at the community centers involved with this program in some way.

Barry Wingard asked about the plan for Memorial Stadium as the schools head to having their own fields. Memorial Stadium is owned by the City and County. The City and County appoint the Stadium Commission that is headed by Gerald Holly. This Commission can negotiate Memorial and Legion Stadiums. The Stadium Commission did a long-term lease with the school district, and the school district paid a certain amount to the Stadium Commission each year. As part of the lease agreement if they School District put money into the stadium(s) it would go towards their lease. They have put such a great deal into Memorial Stadium in the past years that they are paid for many years to come. Chuck has not been told what their future plans are for the stadiums.

**Tim:**

The groundbreaking was held for the new Sports Complex. There is dirt being moved and work has begun. The hope is that slabs will be poured for the buildings that will be built there in the next two months. The construction company is on a tight timeline and they are doing their best to meet that timeline. The stadium and track are time sensitive projects.

All the basketball courts have been resurfaced including McLeod Park, Northwest Park, Levy Park, Dr. Iola Jones Park, and Lucas Park. A company has been working towards resurfacing tennis courts since November. The weather has not been cooperating. Timrod courts will also be resurfaced. The hope is that this project will be completed in the next two months.

The construction of the Skatepark is complete. There will be groundwork done. The park has been busy with locals and those traveling from out of town. People have been traveling from Charleston, Columbia, Georgia, and North Carolina to see and skate at the Skatepark. The FloSK8 group will be hosting a camp at the Skatepark in May. Registration is ongoing for that camp. There has been

discussion of adding a picnic shelter near the skate park that could allow skaters and other citizens to get out of the sun in the summer months.

Tim and Victoria have met with two groups about the playground project. Quotes have been received. Victoria is going to be meeting with members of the neighborhoods to see what their thoughts and opinions are. The hope will be to get this project done as soon as possible. The first priorities will be at Northwest Park, Dr. Lola Jones Park, and Levy Park because Summer Camp will be held at those locations.

Freedom Florence is slowly getting done. The lower complex is finished and the upper is almost complete. The bathrooms are complete. New canopies are being put everywhere there is an existing canopy. The fencing on the upper has not been completed yet, but the hope is for that to be done by the end of April. Youth softball league has started at the park.

The next project is going to be the repaving of the parking lots. The specs have been written for Northwest Park. The bid will be put out in the next two weeks. The old basketball goals that are there will be taken down and replaced.

Baseball at Maple Park has started. Games at McLeod and softball games at Freedom Florence will start the week after Spring Break. The numbers at Northside Park, PAL Little League, were too low to host a season. Those that were signed up were given the opportunity to transfer to Maple Park, the goal was for all that wanted to play be given the opportunity to play. The City is moving towards all being under Little League. This will give the City the opportunity to serve all citizens, Little League gives the City better boundaries to work with.

The Soccer Complex is going to be busy for the month of April. On the 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> the PMSL, high school state cup, is being held at the Complex. This will bring in 32 teams. The following weekend Conference Carolinas, a college tournament, will be hosted. This is the men and women's championship. Teams will come in Thursday for practice, Friday the semi-finals will be hosted, and the championship games will be held Saturday and Sunday. These events allow the Complex to gain publicity and hopefully more tournaments will come. These tournaments help bring in revenue to our businesses in town. Certain businesses have requested schedules being sent to them so that they can be prepared for the influx.

There has been a FitLot Outdoor Fitness Park added to Chase Street. The City partnered with AARP to install this. It is an outdoor workout area. Florence is the only one in South Carolina to have this park. Victoria and her team are going to

begin programming on the Fit Lot. The installation of this park was done through a grant, and the grant also gives money to host programs on the park. There will be a registration system for signing up for classes. These classes will be free, but there will be a limited number of spots available in the classes.

## **Old Business:**

## **Committee Reports:**

### **Tree Removal Requests**

#### **Chuck:**

The City has been doing some tree removal within their right-of-way. Many of these include the seventy to eighty-year-old Darlington Oaks, these trees may look healthy from the outside but there is a great deal of decay within. This work has primarily been done from Cherokee to Marion Street. The main tree cutter and crew leader is retiring after thirty years with the City. It has proven difficult to find someone with the level of experience that is required to fill this position.

A concern from Donnie Carter has been brought up regarding the trees on Cherokee that have been trimmed on Cherokee by the power company. It is thought that more care and thought could have been put into the trimming of these trees. The City has received many complaints about this and has expressed their concern for many years. The thought from the power company is that citizens can either have trees or they can have power during bad weather. The concern for this will continue to be expressed. Scott Murphy was notified that one of the trees in his yard needed trimming. He called the company and spoke with them and expressed his concern and they were accommodating to him. Landowners need to call and request that not as much be taken off the trees located with their yards and on their property.

## **Program Development**

### **Annual Plan Committee**

#### **Roger:**

The updated Annual Plan was sent out to the Commission members after the March meeting. There were no additions or corrections proposed by members. A final copy will be created and will be sent out for a final time to the Commission members.

With all things considered the hope would be to get the Commission on the schedule for the June City Council meeting. Commission members

are invited to take part in the presentation. It was proposed that the Commission meet at Barnes Street and participate via Zoom. This would allow anyone that is interested to be involved. Any members that would like to take part in the presentation get with Roger in the next month.

### **Bylaws Committee**

No Report

### **Arbor Day**

No Report

### **Trails**

#### **Scott:**

There has been talk about a connector for the Rail Trail being added around the Soccer Complex. The City is waiting for the landowner to dedicate that to them to continue to move forward with that project.

### **Veterans Park**

#### **Barry:**

The grounds at the Veterans Park are looking great. A wedding will be held within the park on April 3<sup>rd</sup>. The American flag needs to be adjusted.

The Woody Williams foundation has been in touch. There are two WWII Metal of Honor recipients that are alive. Woody is one of those recipients. He does a great deal of work with the Gold Star families, and he is set to come see the Park on July 17<sup>th</sup>. It is asked that any member of the Veterans Park and Gold Star Monument committees that is able to attend to please do so.

Barry was given a deadline of today, April 1<sup>st</sup>, to pay for the WWII monument. The funds are not there. He has reached out to see if this can be extended. The logistics, and ordering of materials is taking about twice as long as is usually does due to COVID.

There has been interest and effort put in by another group to put up a tribute to the Army Air Corps of World War II. It would be a solo pilot in his leather jacket with his WWII gear. This was an idea brought up by Ed Young who donated the land for the park. Ed was a WWII pilot. This would be a cheaper option compared to the WWII monument.

Barry and Donnie met a group of ESL (English as a second language) students from Poynor Adult Education School at the park and gave

them a tour. Another tour is scheduled for April 25<sup>th</sup> with the youth group from St. Anthony Catholic Church. The students will be talking about the monuments to make it interactive.

The Florence National Cemetery is not allowed to have organized groups on their grounds. A Memorial Day service is wanted, but the cemetery may be unable to host it. The alternatives are to have a virtual ceremony held within the cemetery or for the service to be held within the Veterans Park.

A 9/11 ceremony is wanted, especially with it being the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Barry hopes to involve the City Manager, a former first responder.

The sidewalks and cement to be poured has not been completed yet. There is a company that has been awarded this work. This project includes the connection to the WWI monument, the sidewalk around the Gold Star Monument, and up to the flag exhibit by the Wall of Honor.

Holly from the Visitor's Bureau has created QR Codes for all the sculptures done by Alex Palkovich in South Carolina, the ones in the Veterans Park are included. With Alex's being done a significant portion of the park is finished. Barry would like to explore the option of doing something for the park itself.

The Wall of Honor application is on the list to be added to the website. The City does not have a website development designated person, but it is on the list to be added. The website continues to be updated.

Fifteen applications have been received for the Wall of Honor this year, 21 more are needed to get a full wall done.

The check that was received from Florence Toyota through the Three Degree Guarantee was \$1,400.

## **Park Oversight Committee**

Freedom Florence	Good	Bubby and Carlos
Dr. Iola Jones Park	Good	George
Jeffries Creek Park	Good	Barry
Levy Park	Good	James
Lucas Park	Good	Scott
Maple Park	Good	Thomasina
McLeod Park	Good	Bubby
Northside Park	Good	Thomasina
Northwest Park	Good	Anna
Rail Trail	Good	Walter
Soccer Complex	Good	Bruce and Donnie
South Park	Good	Roger
Timrod Park	Good	Nikki
Tennis Complex	Good	Alexis
Veterans Park	Good	Veterans Park Comm.

**New Business:**

**Meeting was called to adjournment.**