

**Town of James Island**  
**Minutes of Tree Advisory Council**

**April 9, 2024**

**Attending Members:** David Tomblin, Robin Hardin, Natalie Rumph, Jenny Welch, Garrett Milliken & Paul Cantrell **Absent Member:** Julie Hallman **Staff:** Kristin Cane

**Approval of Minutes:** Minutes of the November 13, 2024, TOJI TAC meeting were approved. NOTE: Meetings will now begin at 5pm

TOJI's new Town Administrator, Michael Hemmer, dropped in to introduce himself to members and distribute his business cards.

**Nominations for Tree Award:** Kathy Woolsey had recommended a Sassafras tree on Regatta Drive. Robin Hardin volunteered to contact her for the address. It was agreed that the City of Charleston should receive the next Stewardship Award for maintenance of the Ellis Oak trees along Folly Road. We're concerned about the trees' elimination for I-526 completion.

**Review of Calendar for the Year:** The meeting schedule will be established with the understanding that, if there is no business, a meeting will not be held. Meetings will be held the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday, 5pm, in June, August, September (plan Arbor Day), & November. December 6 will be TOJI's Arbor Day Celebration. The 2025 meeting schedule will be reconsidered given Mayor Brook Lyon's report.

**Mayor Brook Lyon's Report:** Mayor Lyon announced that TAC, and all other committee appointments, will now be made in April each year per original charters. At the April Town Council meeting, all current members of TAC were reappointed. David Tomblin was elected by Town Council to serve as Chairman and TAC now needs to appoint a Vice Chairman and Secretary. Paul Cantrell was nominated to serve as Vice Chairman and will give this consideration for our May meeting.

Mayor Lyon reported that a live oak had collapsed into the sink hole on Ft. Johnson Road. CWS would like to plant another tree there and Garrett Milliken suggested that it be replaced with more trees.

Mayor Lyon noted what is possibly the largest Eastern Red Cedar in Lighthouse Point. For the maintenance of this special tree, she nominated the Lighthouse Point Neighborhood Association to receive June's Tree Steward Award.

David told the Mayor that we would like to review the current Tree Ordinance and hoped to change protected trees back to 18" DBH from the current 24" DBH. Jenny Welch suggested

that we review the Ordinance at our May meeting but Mayor Lyon, given significant pending and future land development, hopes to, and has a plan for, changing the size requirement even sooner to protect as many trees as possible. She dubiously hopes that, if changed soon, when the Dills Bluff Property comes before Planning Commission the stricter requirement could be made retroactive.

Mayor Lyon asked if species would be noted in the Ordinance revision. David said other municipalities have developed excellent Tree Ordinances, including the City of Charleston. Summerville currently has the strictest Ordinance and Mt. Pleasant is working on revising their Tree Ordinance. She asked David if he had copies. David recommends hiring a professional to rewrite the Town's Tree Ordinance.

A Tree Giveaway was discussed as Charlotte and other municipalities offer this to their citizens. The possibilities for this program, budget and plan, will be discussed at the May meeting. TAC has a reasonable amount of money to offer a Tree Giveaway. Paul Cantrell suggested that certificates to purchase trees from local garden shops be given out to citizens, rather than gathering and distributing trees. The Mayor prefers handing out the trees to citizens for more of an event/ceremony.

**Interns:** This agenda item was tabled for our next meeting as the new Public Works Director, Keith Ladieu, needs to come on board to hire and manage the Interns.

**Support of Tony Bell's book, Work-A-Tree Story – Gullah Geechie Roots & Resilience:** Dr. Tamara Butler is currently offering this book in her course at the College of Charleston. It's about the special trees on James and Johns Island and may be something we would want to offer a program on in the future.

**For the Good of the Order:** Jenny Welch noted that she feels that we have done a lot of talking but taken little action. She asked when the addition of new trees would begin. Garrett Milliken noted that this is to be done by the Interns. Natalie Rumph suggested that the Ft. Johnson sink hole location would be a good place to start. Jenny wondered what qualifications there will be for locating the new trees. Garrett Milliken supports new trees being placed in the right of ways as this practice should be protected for the beauty of the Island. There was concern raised over the Town's liability, if there was to be an accident. David Tomblin suggested putting new trees dead on the Town's/personal property line.

***The meeting was adjourned at 5:33pm***