Meeting Minutes

I. 4:00pm: MEETING CALLED TO ORDER – SAMIRA MALONE

II. 4:01pm: ROLL CALL – JENNIFER KIPP
   a. The following appointees are pronounced absent: Director O’Keeffe and Bernie Jackson.
   b. Mikal Jeanbaptiste joined later in the meeting.
   c. All other appointees are in attendance.

III. CHAIR’S WELCOME REMARKS – SAMIRA MALONE
    a. Chairwoman, Samira Malone opens the meeting with a brief statement on the commission’s purpose and advisory status to the City of Cleveland.
    b. Director O’Keeffe is out of the country, Nature-Based Solutions Sustainability Manager Anna Zaremba is taking meeting minutes from the Office of Sustainability.

IV. 4:02pm: APPROVAL OF MINUTES – JENNIFER KIPP
    Minutes from the last meeting (April, 2023) were sent via email to commission appointees for review and posted online. Minutes are public record and accessible to the general public.
    a. Meeting minutes from April, 2023 were approved by the Commission.

V. 4:03pm: UNFINISHED BUSINESS – SAMIRA MALONE
   a. There was no unfinished official business to review.

VI. 4:04 pm: NEW BUSINESS
    a. CLEVELAND TREE COALITION OVERVIEW – SAMIRA MALONE
       i. Chairwoman, Samira Malone provides a presentation overview of the Cleveland Tree Coalition. The CTC is a collaborative of public, private, and community stakeholders that have partnered with the City of
Cleveland to rebuild our forest and increase our tree canopy from 10% to 30% by 2040.

ii. Role of the CTC: The Cleveland Tree Coalition has raised $100 million+ in funding over 10 years for operational support, acting as an organizer and convener of activity related to increasing tree canopy and educating the public on the importance of trees and the immense direct benefits they provide to Cleveland residents. The CTC has 52 public, private, and community stakeholders and increases support for new members, provides grant and funding opportunities to members, and builds capacity of members to carry out the commission’s work.

iii. Cleveland’s Tree Canopy. The City of Cleveland has a lower percentage of tree canopy than that of a healthy city (30+ %), despite Cuyahoga County having a 35% coverage. In our efforts to increase canopy in Cleveland’s 33 neighborhoods in Cleveland, it is important to center racial equity and be conscious about the systemically-created racial inequities (e.g. redlining leading to neighborhoods experiencing disinvestment) that directly correlate with the percentage of tree canopy different neighborhoods benefit from. Aggregated data in Cleveland Tree Plan in 2019 shows us a concentration of east side neighborhoods with racial and health impact indicators that correlate with low tree canopy. For example, Midtown’s tree canopy is 3.9%.

iv. How We Got Here: An increase in pests, environmental degradation, economic destabilization (e.g. a smaller tax base due to moving of large employers/companies out of Cleveland and decline in services to take care of green infrastructure), poor planning, lack of regulations and protective legislation, systemic disinvestment and structural racism.

v. Cleveland Tree Plan and Goals: The Cleveland Tree Plan was created from 2015-2019 to increase collaboration, prioritize trees in different sectors, implement best urban forestry practices, increase tree canopy and ensure benefits are equitably distributed, leveraging economic advantages. Tree Plan Goals: 1. Create a shift in thinking to acknowledge trees as critical community infrastructure. Some people view trees as a liability in their neighborhood, and the CTC could better align the benefits
of trees with the needs of Cleveland residents. 2. Reduce canopy loss. 3. Assume full stewardship for the tree infrastructure.

vi. Action Items from the CTP:
   1. Complete a comprehensive tree inventory.
   2. Develop and implement a management plan for city-owned trees.
   3. Undergo an operational review.
   4. Institute policy changes supportive of urban forestry.

vii. Currently the City of Cleveland is planting 5,255 trees a year, but the City needs to plant 28,000 trees per year to meet our goals, in addition to maintaining ones we currently have. 20,836+ trees were planted from 2015-2021.

viii. CTC grants provide direct resources to partners. The next grant cycle of the program is from August 1-25, 2023.

ix. The Neighborhood Tree Initiative Workshop is aimed to prepare community leaders to develop neighborhood-level tree projects and initiatives. CTC is working towards increasing public awareness about its work and changing the public sentiment towards trees as an asset.

b. PUBLICLY OWNED TREE FUNDING
   i. IRA submission – CTC – SAMIRA MALONE
      1. There has been a 1.5 billion investment in community and urban forestry by the IRA. CTC submitted a $48 million request to the U.S. Forest Service – Urban and Community Forestry grant program to address urban tree canopy loss in Justice40 neighborhoods throughout the City of Cleveland and Cuyahoga County. The funding is available for a 5-year grant period.

   ii. IRA submission portion – City – JENNIFER KIPP
      1. The City of Cleveland included an ask in the CTC IRA submission for $6.5 million in order to develop a GIS inventory of city trees and planting sites, develop urban forest management plan for the City of Cleveland, Hire a GIS Analyst, Hire a Fields Operations Forester, and for maintenance for mature trees on City property/public ROW. These actions are based off of recommended action items from the 2015 Cleveland Tree Plan
and would begin with an inventory that would then form the basis of a management plan.

2. Partner proposal: The Great Lakes St. Lawrence Governments & Premiers group submitted a proposal for $2.7 million that includes the Cleveland Tree Coalition and City of Cleveland.

iii. Urban Forestry Budget: 22 full-time employees.

1. Urban Forestry Budget - 22 full-time employees.
   a. The General Fund pays for salaries and benefits.
   b. Capital Funds go towards contractual work.
   c. There is a need to identify long-term sustainable funding source for urban forestry year after year.

c. TREE ACADEMY KEY TAKEAWAYS CHECK-IN – JENNIFER KIPP

i. Trees on private property: The City of Cleveland is responsible for Ohio revised code public right of ways to ensure they are clear and low risk. We have a duty of care to look for predictable failures whether or not they are brought to our attention. Tree failure undetected based on routine records and inspections is negligent failure.

ii. Based on a Miller & Sylvester study in 1981, an ideal situation, a 5-year pruning cycle is best.

iii. Re-establish the forest: The recommendation for species diversity is to replace 10-20% of trees in the treeline each year in order to guarantee population diversity. Avoiding planting tough trees in good sites can make room for growing trees that may be more sensitive in growth conditions.

iv. August Sophomore year – Euclid

1. Registration deadline for the sophomore class is July 28, with a start/end date of August 8-9.
2. The topics are: soil, planting design, destructive pests, and an inventory.

v. Feedback from Euclid freshman class and letter to ODNR

1. During the Social urban forestry section of the freshman class Euclid, participants expressed significant concern about inference between reviewing cited references in curriculum and ODNR’s slide that was destabilizing.
2. There was a consensus on the appropriateness of data presented, and a decision to write a letter to request the slide be removed and that the ODNR elevates important and relevant data that is not harmful for communities the UFC is working with by doing a thorough review of their resources.

vi. Comments and Takeaways from the IRA and Tree Academy: Jennifer Kipp and Samira Malone open the floor for questions and comments. Participants of the freshman and sophomore classes commented on their takeaways from the program.

1. Tom Schreiber suggests the possibility of having an Enforcement Arborist to enforce ordinances.

2. Samira Malone clarifies the distinction between the Kent State Collaborative and CTC IRA submission. CTC has a federal earmark of $100,000 from Senator Sherrod Brown for the urban forestry plan. Total cost of urban forestry plan is $300,000. The City of Cleveland is eligible to apply for grants from the CTC. All grants are 50k—increasing maximum this year.

3. Currently the CTC grant restricted to planting and establishment. Interested in partners putting forward request to go beyond 1 year—3 years of projected costs for the tree and CTC wants to expand. Tree redistribution is also going to be covered.

4. Participants interested in participating in the last sophomore class of the Tree Academy in August must register by July 28th.

5. The Great Lakes Partners and Premiers submitted a proposal as a separate organization and the funding listed is exclusive to the City of Cleveland. They are working across several Midwest cities on economic development initiatives with a consulting firm to develop their own funding model for urban forestry models.

6. Councilperson Jenny Spencer requests information on the budget Urban has received each year through Capital funds.

7. Divya Sridhar suggests using best practices in budgeting for projects. Samira suggests this including a design and permitting process can become a sub-committee.

d. SUB-COMMITTEES – SAMIRA MALONE
i. Samira Malone discusses the purpose of subcommittees. The committee may be either a "standing committee," appointed for a definite time, as a session or a year; or a "special [or select] committee," appointed for a special purpose. Each Commissioner serves on at least one committee, and each committee must have three members. Chairs for subcommittees can self-nominate and be approved by Executive Committee. Subcommittee meetings will occur at least once/quarter, at minimum, between Commission meetings. The number of committees is not to exceed 5 at any one time, or the capacity of current commission members to participate with minimum of 3 per committee (3 * 5 = 15 members).

ii. The proposed initial committees are as defined by Roberts Rules, which can be viewed for complete explanations:

http://www.rulesonline.com/rror-09.htm

iii. The formation of the Executive Committee – “organized as any other deliberative assembly with a chairman and a secretary, whom they elect if they are not appointed by the society” – was completed at initial meeting of the Commission. This Committee consists of Jennifer Kopp, Sarah O'Keeffe, and Samira Malone.

iv. Standing

   a. Councilperson Jenny Spencer suggests this committee has capacity to enforce ordinances. Divya Sridhar suggests the importance bringing in partners to de-silo work.
   b. Interested in participating: Jenny Spencer, Divya Sridhar, Tom Schreiber, Jennifer Kipp, Jose Hernandez.
   c. Interested in running for chair: TBD

2. Budget Committee – Standing – The Budget Committee would review capital and general fund budget requests and needs.
   a. Divya Sridhar suggests exploring opportunities for residents with limited budgets to care for trees.
b. Interested in participating: Divya Sridhar, Jose Hernandez, Jennifer Kipp, Samira Malone

c. Interested in running for chair: Jenny Spencer

3. Tree Maintenance Subcommittee – Standing – The Tree Maintenance Subcommittee would provide guidance for long-term tree establishment through contracts, maintenance, and care. The focus would be placed on younger trees aged 1-3 years to ensure they grow to their full potential.

a. Interested in participating: Divya Sridhar, Jennifer Kipp

b. Interested in running for chair: Dan Leamon

v. Special Purpose Committees

1. Ad Hoc CTC Funding Special Purpose Commission – Special Purpose, August 1-25-- is proposed to quantify needs of Urban Forestry and inform the grant application to CTC. The goal would be to match trees that have been requested by residents and fill as many as possible with the CTC grant. Would require working with the IT department to review form of requests and respond to them. The goal would be to target large planting sites first and vet the sites using Urban Forestry guidelines. We would be looking at planting 110 trees in the city rights of ways.

a. Interested in participating: TBD

b. Interested in running for chair: TBD

vi. Other suggestions for committees will be determined by vote of majority rules and kick off by August 1. Samira Malone clarified UFC is still seeking guidance to include non UFC members in subcommittees.

VII. 5:27pm: PUBLIC COMMENT – SAMIRA MALONE

a. Adjustment – hearing and acknowledging – in record

- Commission receives public comment from Greg Iclar about care and maintenance of young trees. Jennifer Kipp requests to follow-up separately about this particular comment.

VIII. ANNOUNCEMENTS

a. Next Meeting: 2nd Tuesday of the 3rd quarter – October 10th, 4:00pm – 5:30pm

IX. ADJOURN

Minutes taken by: Anna Zaremba
Meeting Documents & Recording:

sustainablecleveland.org/urban_forestry_commission