



MINUTES–Beautification Advisory Board

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The Beautification Advisory Board of the City of Fort Myers, Florida, met in regular session at Oscar M. Corbin, Jr. City Hall 2200 Second Street, on Tuesday, April 27, 2021 at 4:00 p.m. Present were Margie Willis, Chair, presiding, Board Members, Elaine Gulati, Debbie Hughes, Piper Smith, and Pattie Robinson. Also present were Jose Parrilla, Parks & Beautification Interim Manager, Michele Jones, Administrative Assistant. Absent: Committee Members Mitzi Marckesano, Mary Vogt, and Wilmer Carter.

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Willis called the meeting to order at 4:07 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO FLAG AND ROLL CALL

Chair Willis led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag and a roll call was taken by Ms. Jones

PUBLIC COMMENT

REGULAR ITEMS

1. Minutes of the March 23, 2021 Beautification Advisory Board meeting

MOTION: Board Member Hughes moved to approve the minutes of the March 23, 2021 Beautification Advisory Board meeting; seconded by Board Member Smith; motion carried unanimously.

2. Code Enforcement, Jeff Gonzales

Jeff Gonzales, Code Enforcement Manager introduced himself and Tom Smith, Code Enforcement Officer. Mr. Gonzales showed a slide show presentation and discussed the City of Fort Myers “Safe & Clean Task Force” that was collectively formed in 2017 by Code Enforcement, Public Works, Fire and the Fort Myers Police Department to jointly perform special cleanup projects, chronic nuisance sweeps, and to engage joint efforts with the public and engage the community on a quarterly basis throughout the city in particular areas that have blight in each Council Ward. Mr. Gonzalez gave the history of the task force, where they were at after Hurricane Irma, and where they are today with abandoned structures and inaccessible lots. In 2019, the task force expanded to include all city departments as there was a growing need to address expanded areas due to being one of the fastest growing cities in the United States with a population increase of 21% from 2017 to 2019. Mr. Gonzales explained how they handle code enforcement issues, the process they go through, where they are at today compared to 2017, and the progress they have made. Mr. Gonzales discussed the quick build program for city owned lots for owner-builders and buyers and how they made 156 lots buildable out of 222. He discussed the chronic nuisance sweeps and



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ward cleanup projects they do and the importance of partnerships, getting the word out, and getting the community involved. Mr. Gonzales showed board members the upcoming suggested cleanup projects through March 2022 for each Ward and said they welcome any suggestions from the Beautification Advisory Board. Ms. Hughes asked what they do about easements with invasive trees that is in no one's jurisdiction. Tom Smith said that easements, right-a-ways, and alley ways is the homeowner's responsibility to maintain. Ms. Hughes asked what they do if the homeowner does not maintain it. Mr. Smith said they could bring it to the Code Board and put a lien on property for the cost involved in taking care of problem. Mr. Gonzales said that if there is a vacant lot or easement that has become a nuisance or health hazard, they will send their Rapid Response unit out to take care of it unless it is overgrown, then they will have a contractor take care of it. Ms. Robinson discussed an overgrowth problem in an easement area by Blake Street, Market Street, and Cranford that runs all the way to Palm Avenue that is a hazard. Mr. Gonzales said he will have someone on it tomorrow. Ms. Hughes discussed the problem on McGregor with the sidewalks and obstruction of view that is a hazard, especially for anyone on a bicycle with the hedges and trees. Mr. Smith said they do address once a year where they go on a golf cart to check the area. Ms. Hughes stated that the Beautification Advisory Board could be the eyes for the city and would like to be part of some cleanup of the city. Mr. Gonzales said he will mention the Beautification Advisory Board at his next internal meeting and come back with something at the next meeting. Ms. Robinson mentioned about the problem of residents leaving their trash cans out and Mr. Gonzales said that if they notice cans left out 24 hours before or after they should give them a call and they will take care of it. He discussed about educational brochures they hand out to make the homeowners more aware. Mr. Gonzales thanked the Beautification Advisory Board for their help and said if they need anything to give them a call.

3. Public Art Committee, Tom Hall

Tom Hall, City of Fort Myers Public Art Consultant discussed with board members the history of the Public Art Committee, the background of the conservation of the art pieces and the costs involved in maintaining them. Mr. Hall discussed the Public Art Committees Annual Plan that will be going before City Council for approval on May 17th which details the creation of Art Hubs within each of the City's six wards utilizing the 23 sculptures in the Carmona collection. Ms. Hughes suggested the Butterfly Estates and the Caloosahatchee Nature Center as being a good location for placement of one of the artworks. Mr. Hall stated that the Butterfly Estates is in Ward 4 which is already covered but he will make note of these locations in case the arthub is later expanded. He also discussed the Sponsor-a-Sculpture Program that would ensure that all the artwork is properly maintained, and the sponsor would be identified as such on Otocast, the free phone app that informs the public about the artworks in the City's public art collection, and the artist who created them. Mr. Hall discussed that along with the sponsor getting advertising on Otocast they would be listed on a sponsor wall on the City's website. Ms. Willis asked if the Public Art Committee maintains the City of Palms signs coming into Fort Myers because they are really looking bad. Mr. Hall



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said he believes that Public Works would be the ones who would take care of the signs. Mr. Hall thanked the board members for the opportunity and asked them if they know of a corporation or individual that might be interested in sponsoring a sculpture to please refer them to us.

4. Beecher Village

Abraham Luna stated that the contractor, Tobler Construction will start pouring the concrete for the sidewalks and pad tomorrow. He said they will give it a week to cure and then they will be ready for the pavilion installation.

5. Centennial Park

Mr. Luna stated that next week they will begin redoing the roof on the large pavilion and the restrooms at Centennial Park.

6. MLK/Veronica Shoemaker Blvd.

Mr. Luna stated that all the plantings have been installed and now waiting on the floratum sod to be installed at the south corner of MLK and Veronica Shoemaker intersection.

7. Palm Beach Boulevard

Mr. Luna stated that it is an ongoing project with refurbishing the medians with plants that were removed from Colonial Boulevard. Ms. Hughes stated the Sun Bromeliads are becoming crowded that are on Palm Beach Boulevard by Seaboard and asked if Parks takes them out and replants. Mr. Luna agreed that is how they take care of them.

Ms. Robinson stated that there is a palm tree on the north side of the road close to Burger King that is about to fall over and is very dangerous. Mr. Luna said he would take care of it.

8. McGregor Boulevard

Mr. Luna stated that there is 23 Royals they will be replacing on McGregor Boulevard. He said they will start the project this week and it will take about a month and a half to complete. Ms. Hughes asked about fertilizing of the palms and Mr. Luna stated it has been done once and they have enough to do one more time.

9. Other Business

Mayor Kevin Anderson gave board members a thank you card with a lapel pin at the beginning of the meeting, thanking them for their service and commitment to the City of Fort Myers.

Councilman Liston Bochette discussed with board members that when he spoke to the Public Art Committee, he suggested for them to talk to the Beautification Advisory Board about putting any of their sponsors on the side wall to give them recognition.



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Councilman Bochette also discussed about the bike plan meeting he attended earlier where McGregor Boulevard is designed as a bicycle artery. Councilman Bochette discussed a memo that Mike Flanders sent to the city regarding improvements that need to be done on McGregor Boulevard closer to the Edison & Ford Winter Estates with crosswalks, speed control, and other items. Councilman Bochette suggested for the board members to come up with a recommendation of a preferred planting list for the corridors. Councilman Bochette discussed he needed instruction on how to bring a home to their attention for an award or citation. He said it's a double-sided sword because the homeowner keeps a wonderful yard at 2943 Valencia in Ward 4, and she would like to install Royals in the median beside the house which is a good thing but if you look at that and see if she merits that it would give her leverage on being able to come back to the City asking to get Royals put in. Councilman Bochette mentioned the four committees that he liaisons with: Beautification Advisory Board, Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Board, Historical Preservation Commission, and Public Art Committee and said he would like to have a group meeting with the Chairs sometime or once a month to share information that they can bring back to the committees.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, it was moved by Board Member Robinson, seconded by Board Member Smith; and unanimously carried to adjourn the meeting at 5:32 p.m.