

MURRAY CITY POWER
Shade Tree & Beautification Commission
Murray City, Utah
February 6, 2023

Minutes of the Murray City Power Shade Tree & Beautification Commission meeting held on February 6, 2023, at Murray City Power located at 153 West 4800 South, Murray, Utah.

Shade Tree & Beautification Commission

Darin Bird
Jan Evans
Geneal Nelson
Judith Payne

Department Staff

Matt Erkelens, Forestry Supervisor
Bruce Holyoak, Park Superintendent
Bruce Turner, Operations Manager
Barbara Ishino

Murray City Guests in Attendance

Mayor Brett Hales
Doug Hill, Chief Administrative Officer
Tammy Kikuchi, Chief Communications Officer

Jan Evans called the meeting to order at 8:00 am. She turned the time over to Darin to present grant ideas.

Grant:

Darin started by saying that he has spent 33 years working for elected officials, 6 governors, and members of Congress. Anytime he talks with them about a project, program, or campaign he automatically thinks about the chief executive and what they want to be involved with. He feels that they will want to attach their name/office to the project. He told the Commission that the State through the Department of Natural Resources/Division of Forestry has a grant program in their urban forestry program. The grants are small from \$1,000 to \$5,000 that cities can apply for to do small projects with forestry/tree related things within communities. A few years ago, the Commission applied for a grant helping homeowners to be more educated about which trees would be good to grow and which trees shouldn't be planted. A brochure was published (Matt Erkelens then passed it around to the group) and distributed via the utility bill and is available when people sign up for power. Darin felt that when people move into a community this flyer would be good information for them to have.

He also said that over the last few years, a lot of people, in the name of conservation, are getting rid of their parking strips and putting concrete and rock in. When they do, they also take out the trees and other plants/shrubs. In talking, the Commission felt it might be nice to make another

brochure about flipping the strip (or another name). The Commission has been brainstorming ideas such as "Flip Your Strip but Don't Kill it". Darin proposed that the mayor and or the mayor's office be involved in that. He added, to clarify, the involvement would be maybe having a quote from the mayor in the brochure, perhaps having a media event, or putting something in one of the newsletters. The Murray Journal may also be an avenue to explore. The message would be that we don't want to be a city without trees. We don't want to kill plants in the community. He continued that the grant is a simple opportunity. The application is not due until summer, so the brochure/campaign wouldn't realistically be until the later this year or even next calendar year.

The Commission wanted to initially talk to the mayor and get his thoughts on this and to see if he wanted to be involved in areas mentioned above.

Mayor Hales said, "Right off the bat. Yeah, we'd like to be involved."

Darin indicated that it hasn't been thought through and that the brainstorming has just begun so if the mayor or any of his staff wanted to weigh in, they could. Also, the Commission would update the mayor as to the name of the campaign or other pertinent information as it continues to evolve. The Commission just wanted to get the mayor's blessing.

The mayor asked what ordinances are currently in place for flipping someone's park strip.

Doug Hill added that he could speak to that and said that a few years ago an ordinance was redone to encourage more waterwise plants and less turf in their park strips and yards. The ordinance still requires a minimum percentage of live plant materials so that people don't do exactly what Darin was talking about and tear everything out and put in concrete, rocks, or bark without keeping plants. Then about 2 years ago, the city Water Department implemented a "Flip Your Strip" program. Citizens can apply through the Water Department and if they meet the requirements and follow city ordinances, they can receive financial incentives to convert their turf into something other than just grass.

Darin concurred that one department can't do something that is opposed to other departments. As the Commission talked about this issue, he felt that there may be able to be some good examples of "Flip Your Strip" using waterwise materials on city owned property someplace, maybe the new city hall, the park or at the Power Department.

Bruce Turner asked if the Water Department didn't do some over the summer.

Doug said that they did. He also said that originally 4 years ago when they designed City Hall there was a lot of turf planned in the park strips as well as around city hall. However, last fall, it was decided to change that. A change order was made, and all the park strips are being converted to xeriscape with plant materials. He also informed the Commission that maybe 10 years ago or so the Water Department purchased land on 5300 South and the Jordan River on the north side near Germania Park with the intent that they would, in the future, construct a demonstration garden like what Jordan Valley Water Conservancy District has done. He felt that the city is moving in the direction that the Commission would like it to do.

Darin commented that the nice thing, having come from DNR and having visited with Jeran Farley, who is now the Urban Community Forester for the state, Jeran was "jumping all over this" and

felt it was a great idea because this is something that every community in the state is facing. Murray is considered a real leader in the forestry program as the longest Tree City, USA community in the state. With that encouragement, Darin feels like the grant would be a "slam dunk". He also added that the Commission would need to match the grant with "in-kind" donations. He explained that if putting in a garden, any work that the city would do would be considered "in-kind" and would probably match the grant. Potentially, the grant money would be used to pay for design and printing of a brochure and those types of things.

Tammy mentioned that there are some parks that Murray City may inherit from the county and those may also be some good candidates for this project.

Mayor Hales thought that would be a good opportunity if the council says yes to that. He asked when that would be coming up for a vote. Doug said it would be coming up on February 21st.

Currently, the county has already stopped watering the grass at the parks, so it needs work done there.

Darin said that the brochure could have the addresses to encourage people to drive by and see those examples.

Darin did say that there is time on this project and that the Commission wouldn't be apply for the grant until summer. The Commission just wanted to get the mayor on board and attach his name and office to this. He felt like this would be a nice two- or three-year project that would be great to have the mayor involved in.

The mayor said that he would be happy to be involved.

Tree Lighting:

Darin also said that there were a few other things he was hoping to discuss. The Commission is involved in the tree lighting and Santa visit, and they were wondering if there was a plan for a tree at the new city hall. He also wondered whether Santa would be in the lobby of city hall or somewhere else.

The mayor acknowledged the last tree lighting and Santa visit. He felt it went great. He has attended a few of them but this was the first one he really experienced firsthand and couldn't believe the long line. He appreciated the diversity that was there and thought the program was great.

Judith feels that the tree lighting and Santa visit fills a need for those who don't have another place to go.

Jan said something the Commission has been discussing is wanting to see Murray a destination at Christmas rather than a drive by. She explained that Darin has been involved with This is the Place Monument and their activities at Christmas. They are further away from Murray and likely costs more money. Perhaps Murray could do something just as exciting. People drive up to Ogden to see lights, why couldn't they drive to Murray? She also said that there are so many beautiful choirs that could perform. Maybe even have a festival of choirs.

Darin added it would be nice to have a Christmas marketplace with vendors. He said that he was in New York last Christmas and ran into one of their public libraries. They had businesses and food vendors there. They do the same type of things at This is the Place, but they have to turn a lot of vendors away. It has just grown so much. It is the largest event of the year and the local neighborhoods have complained about all the cars and traffic. In fact, because of its popularity they keep adding days to the event. There are 30-50 thousand people everyday Wednesday-Saturday.

The mayor indicated there may be complaints from the neighbors at the new city hall if things get busy there.

The mayor also turned the time over to Doug to talk about city hall's plans. Doug wanted to run the idea past the Commission because they weren't very far down the road on it, but a few years ago, Doug, his wife and two sons spent time in Seville, Spain at Christmas. There they had a central plaza with what he considered the most impressive Christmas tree lighting display he had ever seen in his life. He recognizes that Seville, Spain is probably 10 times the size, has a lot more money, more tourism, and a bigger area for the display. However, he wanted to show the Commission a video of what he saw. He had already showed it to Mayor Hales and Tammy. (Doug then showed the video of the tree and display.)

Those in attendance thought it was grand, enjoyed the music and the Christmas market around was wonderful. Darin said the tree Murray City Power has is impressive and that the one West Valley City has near the Valley Fair Mall is impressive as well.

Doug continued that for those who have seen the plans for the new city hall, there is a new plaza with built in seating to the south side of the building and there are a lot of sidewalks. Doug thinks it would be really nice to have something impressive there. He understands that his vision may be too expensive to purchase. He has, however, talked with Bruce Turner about 2 weeks ago and at that time they met with one of the suppliers that Bruce has worked with. They are in the process of getting a price on what it might cost.

While meeting with the vendor, they pitched the idea of coming up with a huge Christmas tree. There are advantages and disadvantages to that. The disadvantage? It is artificial. Murray has always had a tradition of a live tree for the Christmas tree lighting. Doug would love to hear the others thoughts on that. Currently, the idea is to do something similar to what the Power Department has done. Maybe a massive 70' tall tree to put right in the plaza area and then to surround it with some kind of animation, perhaps not those great big, huge angels but something kind of like that. Doug didn't know what the supplier would come up with, but it would be animated with lights that are choreographed to the music. He is hoping that it would draw people to city hall. The city hall has been designed to close the street and have food trucks, vendors and Christmas markets. A concern would be the cost, maybe several hundred thousand dollars. There are some areas that they are saving money on at the city hall and maybe that savings could go towards this display.

Darin said from his point of view as a citizen, he thinks it is amazing. It is exactly what he was hoping for...a new focal point with city hall at Christmas time. He was fine with an artificial, large tree because you can do so much more with it. That's not to say you can't plant a pine tree somewhere on the complex.

Many in the meeting agreed.

Judith indicated that a lot of people want to go to places during the holiday and that there is a yearning for people to gather and she feels like people will come.

Darin suggested using the area for events in addition to Christmas such as other holidays or like Swiss Days.

Doug said he will continue to work with Bruce and Matt and keep the Commission in the loop. He would also share plans and welcome comments.

Arbor Day Honoree:

Darin then asked if the mayor had any recommendations for the Arbor Day honoree for this year. The person will be chosen in a few months, and he would welcome ideas. No ideas were given.

Beautification Awards/Park strips:

Tammy asked if the Commission was also in charge of the beautification awards. Darin said that, yes, they were. He then said that they could do a flip your strip type of award as a part of the beautification awards. He said that it wouldn't really cost anything, it would just be getting people involved.

The mayor thought that would be a great idea. He asked Bruce Holyoak what percentage is needed of plants in the park strip. Bruce answered that it was 40%. Matt added that the 40% didn't even include trees. Darin added, "and yet we see a lot of concrete".

Doug said that the problem has been and continues to be the enforcement side of things. He remembers, but wasn't involved with it, but when Ted Eyre was the mayor and Tim Tingey was the planning director, they tried to tackle this issue. They wanted to enforce people that didn't have any plant material in the park strip to have plant material. The problem came when they went out and started citing people. Then, once they started citing, everyone else started saying, "well, what about all of these people" and it got to be that everybody was turning in people all around the city. The question becomes, how do you bring everybody into compliance? So, essentially, it is a law on the books that the city doesn't enforce. So, it's really a problem because if somebody is just digging everything up and pouring concrete or putting in rocks, then they're essentially in violation.

Judith said that those who have concrete are not really going to dig it up.

Doug feels like the education piece may be the best thing.

Judith would love to see examples for people to look at. She said that she is interested in changing her park strip but would like to see a variety of ideas. She doesn't know where to go to see examples and doesn't know how to go about beginning.

Darin held up the brochure that was done a few years ago and said that it would be nice to come up with a general look so that you follow the same design for the new brochures so they all look and feel similar.

The mayor said that was a great idea and that he liked that.

Tammy suggested getting some photos of examples to include in the brochure. Darin suggested putting the photos on the website with a direct link.

Jan said that people are going to continue to put cement in as long as they see their neighbor next door doing the same thing. They'll think, they did it, why shouldn't I? They may also think, I can park up here. Getting education via newsletters or the Murray Journal would be helpful.

Darin continued saying that is all they wanted to discuss with the mayor.

The mayor, Doug and Tammy left the meeting.

Arbor Day Poster Contest Theme

Matt reported that the Arbor Day Poster Contest theme would need to be chosen at the meeting as the poster paper was going to be delivered on February 16th. Matt got online and looked at a few Tree City USA cities. He shared that they are using the following themes:

Trees are Terrific in all Shapes and Sizes!

Trees are Terrific and Forests are too!

Trees are Terrific and Cool our Communities!

Darin also handed out a list of ideas as well.

Judith really liked the theme, "Trees are Terrific in all Shapes and Sizes. She felt the kids could just really run with that. It would also be something that would be easy for teachers to turn over to their students and that the kids would have a blast with it.

Geneal thought, Cool our Communities sounded good.

Judith mentioned, All Four Seasons, but felt the students would all do the same things. For the sake of judging, it would be fun to have All Shapes and Sizes. There would be a lot of creativity the kids could use, banyan trees and fir trees, for example.

Jan liked All Shapes and Sizes more than "All Four Seasons" because the students could use any of the seasons if they wanted.

Darin agreed that he liked in All Shapes and Sizes. He also said that these themes have been used throughout the country in years past.

Judith did say that any of the themes would be new to the elementary school students now even if the theme had been used in the past.

Judith made a motion to use, "Trees are Terrific in all Shapes and Sizes". Darin seconded the motion.

Arbor Day Poster Contest Judging Date

Matt reported that the posters were going to be picked up from the school on Thursday, March 16th. Hence, the judging would need to be done the week of March 20th. He then asked if the Commission could pick a date.

After some discussion of schedules, it was decided that the judging would take place on Tuesday, March 28th at 5:00 pm.

Judith asked if she should invite Cathy Singer from the Nature Center to the next meeting. Matt told Judith it would be fine to invite Cathy to the April meeting.

Shade Tree Member for District #4

Matt asked if anyone on the commission had an idea for who could fill District #4's spot. Judith wondered what the boundaries were, and Matt said it was around Vine Street to 5600 South and 20th East to 900 East.

Bruce Turner did say that the mayor's office is usually responsible to fill the commissions and he asked Matt to send Doug and Tammy an email letting them know there was an opening on the Shade Tree and Beautification Commission and to get their suggestions.

Geneal suggested checking to see who the past District #4 Beautification winners were and perhaps using one of those names.

With no other business to come before the Commission, Darin moved to adjourn the meeting. Judith seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 8:41 am.

The Commission will meet on Tuesday, March 28th at 5:00 pm at the Power Department to judge the Arbor Day posters.

The next scheduled meeting of the Shade Tree and Beautification Commission will be at 8:00 am on April 3rd at the Power Department.