



Keep Winter Park Beautiful & Sustainable Advisory Board Regular Meeting Minutes

January 21, 2025 at 11:45 AM

City Hall Commission Chambers
401 S. Park Avenue

Present

Becky Distad, John Page, Stephen Pategas, Sam Stark, Zeina Matar-Ghantous, Terry Hotard

Absent

Mark J. Yonker

Staff Present

Sustainability Manager Sara Miller, Sustainability Specialist Nicole Marshall, Natural Resources and Sustainability Administrative Coordinator Victoria Tabor, Electric Utility Engineer Manager Mourad Belfakih

1. Call to Order

Sam Stark called the meeting to order at 11:46 a.m.

2. Consent Agenda

- a. Approve the minutes of November 19, 2024

Motion made by John Page to approve the minutes, seconded by Becky Distad. Motion carried unanimously with a 6-0 vote.

3. Public Comments (for items not on the agenda)

4. Action Items

- a. Winter Park Library Seed Funding

Community Outreach Librarian Jen Russo introduced herself and requested continued funding for the Winter Park Library Seed Library, which aims to enhance access to seeds and support a gardening community for food sustainability. The initial goals include implementing the seed library, building community partnerships, and offering classes by master gardeners.

The Seed Library offers 300 packets of seeds—10 different types, including fruits, vegetables, herbs, and wildflowers—three times a year. The library is seeking \$3,000 to fund 9,000 seed packets and promote the gardening program with seed paper bookmarks.

When asked how additional funds would be used, Ms. Russo mentioned expanding seed variety and outreach efforts, proposing a 10% budget increase. She also noted that the

Keep Winter Park Beautiful & Sustainable (KWPB&S) logo appears on seed packet labels and at outreach events. The program targets children in grades K-5, ages 6 to 10.

Motion made by Mr. Pategas to raise the budget to \$3300 to approve the seed program; seconded by Becky Distad. The motion carried unanimously by a 6-0 vote.

5. Non-Action Items

a. Decorative Street Lighting Survey Results - Mourad Belfakih

Mr. Belfakih announced that 12 lights were installed at Lake Knowles and Lake Weber, with 83% of residents voting in favor. If the budget allows, the city plans to add decorative street lights, starting after the utility undergrounding is completed around 2030.

Mr. Hotard questioned whether a photometric study was conducted, emphasizing that lights should not be spaced 150 feet apart. Mr. Belfakih confirmed that with a photometric study the average spacing should be about 80 feet.

Ms. Distad, a Chestnut Avenue resident, mentioned her neighborhood agreed to pay for their lights and asked if their costs would be waived once the city implements decorative lights citywide. Mr. Belfakih noted that discussions are ongoing about energy costs, maintenance, and whether those who previously paid will be prioritized for installation under the current \$200,000 budget for decorative lights.

b. Utility Box Maintenance Plan Update - Mourad Belfakih

Mr. Belfakih shared the costs for painting the utility boxes, stating that 25% of the city's boxes would cost \$46,700. However, the budget for this task is not with the electric utility department.

Mr. Hotard referred to land development code Section 58-84, which requires property owners to provide space on-site or within a building for necessary transformers and switch gear. These installations must also be adequately screened from the street. Unfortunately, this requirement has often been ignored. For example, on Palmer Avenue, a three-phase transformer and switch gear have been placed just inches from the sidewalk in front of a new home, leading to graffiti appearing on it. The transformer should have been set back on the property with a distribution easement. He stated that the conditions of these transformers is frustrating—especially the one in front of the historical museum, which is covered in graffiti. Visitors see this unsightly equipment as they approach, and while we struggle to find someone to paint it. It is crucial for the city to ensure compliance with the land development code, as this regulation is not optional.

Ms. Matar-Ghantous recommended using in-house resources rather than obtaining multiple bids. She asked how often the work is needed, the paint's durability, its quality,

and if a sample is available. If the project goes out to bid, there should be clear specifications regarding sun and rain resistance.

Mr. Belfakih noted that if there's a budget, all details must be thoroughly checked. Ms. Matar-Ghantous also asked if the city had painted the boxes, and the answer was no.

Mr. Hotard noted that many unattractive utility boxes were inherited from Progress Energy and were in poor condition when the city acquired the utility. He suggested involving the Rotary Club in Winter Park for a community painting project to improve their appearance. However, Mr. Belfakih raised concerns about liability related to painting high-voltage boxes.

Mr. Page inquired about painting them the original colors and whether the city has a maintenance program. Mr. Belfakih replied that there is no maintenance program in place, but if there is graffiti on them, city staff will be asked to paint over the it.

Mr. Pategas observed that there are no warning signs or barricades around the boxes indicating that they may pose a danger or deliver an electric shock. Anyone could potentially paint them, not just a paint company. Therefore, there seems to be an opportunity for volunteers to get involved in this task, although it would require some supervision.

Mr. Stark suggested something similar to the bus stop signage program. The idea is to partner with Company X or Organization Y, which would pay a fee that covers the costs and provides additional funding. This way, the painting would still be done by a professional, but doesn't become a city expense. There is an engaging way to collaborate with the community to inventory the boxes. We could also tier the pricing based on their locations, allowing the community to invest and creatively contribute to the project.

Ms. Matar-Ghantous suggested tackling a few boxes and exploring different options, such as engaging the Rotary Club or local artists, to see what direction it may lead. Ms. Miller added that this needs to be presented to the Utility Director and provide an update at the next meeting.

Mr. Stark questioned why isn't the city code being followed on screening, stating that it would remove the need to discuss the painting.

Mr. Hotard stated that the City of Winter Park is the only electric utility in the state of Florida that permits transformers to be located in the right of way. Mr. Belfakih mentioned that the main issue with Winter Park was reliability. He expressed his commitment to relocating transformers from the backyards to the front due to storm outages. It would make restoration easier and allow for quick identification of issues. He is currently developing a design to facilitate this change.

Mr. Stark stated that this is a good discussion item. Should staff take any action as a follow-up for the next meeting or should it be brought back for further further discussion or just move on? Ms. Miller advised an update will be provided at the next meeting.

Mr. Belfakih stated he wants the kids and the community to stay away from the boxes as much as possible. Mr. Page emphasized all the more reason to move away from the sidewalk, and to have it somewhat remote. He suggested some kind of landscaping around it, or a fence, to protect the public from potential dangers.

6. Staff Updates

a. Natural Resources & Sustainability

- KWPB&S Green Schools Grant Program
- Community Needs Assessment Survey
- Food Insecurity Initiatives: Killarney Elementary Community Program and Community Gardens @ Winter Park Housing Authority
- Landscape Ordinance Subcommittee Meeting Update
- CFI DOT Grant Update
- Fundraiser-Greeting Cards

Edgewater H.S. is currently the only school that has applied for the Green Schools Grant.

The community needs assessment survey launched in the beginning of December and has been extended; a tabling event was also held.

For food insecurity initiatives, cooking classes are being organized in collaboration with OCPS, and crock pots will be provided. Additionally, the partnership with 4 Roots is continuing and creating new garden beds at the Meadows is under development with plans to replicating this process at the Plymouth Senior Facility.

Regarding the Landscape Ordinance, Mr. Pategas advised the whole ordinance has been rewritten. He is still working with Josh Nye about the trees and input is needed from Gloria Eby about water edge properties

Unfortunately, the CFI DOT grant was not received.

The Greeting Card fundraiser will be available for sale on a platform called RecTrac, in collaboration with Parks and Recreation. The same platform will also be used for dance classes. Once the cards are uploaded, it will facilitate a smooth transition for funds to be transferred to our KWPB&S savings account. Furthermore, we can gain sponsors who can have their names and logos featured on the greeting cards, providing a way to fund the card expenses.

b. Upcoming Events

- Howell Branch Preserve Litter Clean-up - 1/25 9 am @ Howell Branch Preserve Playground
- Love the Earth Tree Planting - 2/8 9 am @ Howell Branch Preserve

7. Board Comments

a. Green Minutes

During her recent trip to Norway, Ms. Matar-Ghantous discovered that 80% of vehicles there are electric.

- b. New Business/Announcements

8. Upcoming Agenda Items

- a. Discussion of Upcoming Agenda Items

Ms. Matar-Ghantous requests the board's assistance in adding items to the agenda. One item to consider is the green events policy from Winter Park. We should initiate discussions on how to proceed and examine our neighboring cities. The board unanimously agreed to include Green Event discussion to next agenda.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 12:50 p.m.

Approved by the board on February 18, 2025
/s/ Bahiyyah Layton, Board Coordinator