

MINUTES
University Lakes, Vegetation and Landscape Committee
August 03, 2023, at 9:00 AM
Facilities, Planning & Construction
ZOOM MEETING

The University Lakes, Vegetation and Landscape Committee (ULVLC) met Thursday, August 03, 2023 for a Zoom meeting online.

Members attending:

Gail Hansen De Chapman – Environmental Horticulture - Chair
Nancy Chrystal-Green – Associate Vice President, Division of Student Life
Gregg Clarke – Director of Operations, Facilities Services
David Conser – City of Gainesville – City Arborist
Adam Dale – Assistant Professor, Entomology and Nematology Department
Linda Dixon – Director, Planning, Design & Construction
Ryan Klein – Assistant Professor, Environmental Horticulture
Bart Knowles – Major, UF Police Department
Tim Martin – Associate Professor, School of Forest Resources and Conservation
Brandi Renton – Associate Vice President, Business Affairs
Tom Schlick – Assistant Director of Grounds, Facilities Services
Matt Williams – Director, Office of Sustainability

Members not attending:

Fernando Alferéz – Assistant Professor, Citrus Horticulture
Donna Bloomfield – Grounds, Facilities Services
Carlos Dounac – Assistant Vice President, Planning, Design & Construction
Maya Fives – Student
Basil Iannone – Assistant Professor, Forest Resources and Conservation
Brian Keith – Associate Dean, Library Administration
Melanie Nelson – Associate Professor, Medicine
Lucas Majure – Assistant Curator, FLMNH

Visitors attending:

Rachel Mandell – Sr. Planner, Planning, Design & Construction
Melissa Thomas – Administrative, Planning, Design & Construction
Melanie Heflin – Project Manager, Planning, Design & Construction
Frank Javaheri – Director of Construction, Planning, Design & Construction
Cydney McGlothlin – University Architect, Planning, Design & Construction
Savanah Partridge – Planning, Design & Construction
Kaylee August – Office of Sustainability
Laurie Hall – CHW
Caeli Tolar - CHW
William Belote – Sigma Alpha Epsilon
Scott Knight – Wetland Solutions Inc.
Jordan Benton – Facilities Services
Ronnie – Contractor for the MP07840 project
Chris – Rep for Sigma Alpha Epsilon

I. Adoption of Agenda and Minutes

Motion: Tim Martin made a motion to approve the agenda and the July minutes.

Second: Adam Dale

Motion Carried Unanimously

II. MAJOR PROJECTS

None

III. MINOR PROJECTS

MP08096 – Campus Landscape Design Enhancement Plans Phase I Project #5 & #10 – Design Development Melanie Heflin

Melanie introduced herself and stated that she was before the committee for Part II of Phase I of the project. There were originally four projects in this phase, but Tom Schlick from Grounds stated he would be able to handle two of the projects in house to save expenses. The two projects that will be handled by this project are Project #5 – SW 13th Street & Stadium Road and Project #10 – SE Corner of 13th Street & SW 5th Ave (corner of Norman Hall & Inner Road). Caeli Tolar from CHW gave the rest of the presentation.

Caeli showed the location of the two projects. The projects are intended to beautify campus and bring each site into compliance with the Landscape Master Plan.

Project #5 includes the north and south sides of Stadium Road at the SW 13th street intersection. The project proposes removing the existing brick curb planters and walls and adding a new brick wall on the south side of Stadium Road to mirror the existing wall located on the north side. The project will tie into the existing irrigation. The scope also includes replacing building ID signs to comply with the new Wayfinding standards. There are no tree impacts anticipated. Caeli explained that the project team will work with Grounds to plant flowering plants and ground cover.

Project #10 includes the SE Corner of 13th Street & SW 5th Ave at the corner of Norman Hall & Inner Road. The scope includes the possible removal of existing brick planters, signage, and site furnishings to improve pedestrian circulation and make the area compliant with the Landscape Master Plan. Caeli showed the existing brick walls and planters. A portion of the site is shaded, so the project will be putting in shade plants and ground cover.

The committee asked about the planters on the sidewalks and why they're being removed. They don't serve a purpose to direct traffic or pedestrians. Tom stated they are an eye sore and a safety concern with the pedestrians coming from behind the planters to cross the road. The committee asked about the trash receptacle in the Project #5 area and mentioned it may be a location to use the Big Belly trash can.

Motion: Tim Martin made a motion to approve this project as presented.

Second: Adam Dale

Motion Carried Unanimously

MP07840 – Sigma Alpha Epsilon Retaining Wall – Design Development Rachel Mandell

Rachel introduced herself and explained that Fatima, the project manager, was double booked this morning and unable to attend. Rachel noted that Bill, the house representative, and Ronnie, the contractor, were on the call. Rachel showed the location of the project. The wall surrounding the basketball court area needs to be supported. There are two trees proposed to be removed on the north side of the project. They will not be impacted by the construction, but the roots are affecting the existing retaining wall and the canopy shades over the basketball court.

Ronnie explained that the existing wall had previously been repaired and is starting to cave in again. The tree roots are pushing against the wall. The canopy of the tree is over into the owner's property and hanging over the basketball court. The new wall will help with water issues. There will be a sock pipe to help with mitigating the water and it will tie into a stormwater box.

Ronnie said that the original wall was built as a privacy fence and not a retaining wall. In 2013, a repair was done with cables to pull the wall back straight.

Rachel restated that the project is proposing that the two Sycamore trees be removed. The committee asked about the cables and where they are planted. Ronnie stated they are to the north of the trees. The wall is part of the original house and the owner is wanting to preserve the existing wall. The committee asked to have more information on the trees causing the bowing. The committee stated if the new wall would be constructed to handle the grade, there should not be any reason to take down the trees.

The committee asked if the project manager and design team could come back to the committee with more information regarding the need to remove the trees in order for the committee to make an informed decision.

Ronnie and Bill said they would be going forward with putting in the wall but would come back to the committee with better pictures and information about the trees. They said that an onsite visit would be welcomed if it would help make a decision. Gregg Clarke stated they needed to get a statement from GLE that the roots are affecting the wall since the committee felt it was not clear.

The committee asked about the height of the wall. The tree roots usually grow in the first 12 to 18 inches of soil, so it may be the soil or water causing the issue and not the trees.

Motion: Adam Dale made a motion to table this project decision to the next LVL meeting and for Bill and Ronnie can come back with addition information and context so the committee can make an informed decision.

Second: Ryan Klein

Motion Carried Unanimously

IV. OTHER BUSINESS

Landscaping and Natural Resource Projects

Jordan Benton / Tom Schlick

Jordan introduced herself and stated that she wanted to talk about the projects developing before the Fall semester. There will be path trimming along the northwest border of the Reitz Ravine woods, which will be trimmed about 4 to 5 feet off the sidewalk. The lights in the area are obstructed from view, and they will be trimmed back as well to enhance safety along the walkway. Tom clarified that there were only shrubs and small saplings in the area, so there would be no tree impacts.

Stormwater maintenance work is needed on the southern extension of Fraternity Creek in Lake Alice Gardens. The creek has silted to the point of no longer containing material when it storms. The creek will be dredged back to its original depth using a backhoe and tractor.

The silt buildup has occurred over the past two years. It is overflowing the bridge during storms, so it needs to be dealt with soon. Grounds usually does this work during winter break, but due to the overflow, it is imperative to complete it now. The soil collected is used by Grounds later across campus.

The committee asked about posting signage to indicate that this is an improvement project. Tom said he has signage that can be put up. Jordan added she could provide something online as well.

The committee asked whether 5 feet was enough or too much to dredge. Some members of the committee are working on the Watershed Management Plan. The committee asked that Grounds perform only what is absolutely necessary to be done now until the plan is finished. Tom stated that by then, it will be filled again. For now, Grounds will be dredging it to 5 feet, and when the Plan is in place, they can re-address the area.

The committee asked about disturbing the vegetation around the creek. Tom explained that there will be some damage to the vegetation, but it will grow back in a year or so. There is a leak near the dam and some disturbance, but it will be packed with clay. The committee mentioned the invasive species in the area, and Grounds suggested removing it now to make things easier. The other vegetation will be disturbed, but Grounds will not remove the roots, tubers, or rhizomes so they will regrow.

A Risk Assessment was conducted on the Live Oak heritage tree located on the corner of Inner Road and Newell Road. The assessment showed it at moderate risk. Tim Martin asked if he could give a small presentation about the tree before a motion is made.

Tim showed Google Earth images to reference the age of the Live Oak. He also displayed an image of the tree currently, specifically a very large branch that fell off the tree. There is also a crack in the east-facing branch that is compromised. He showed the crosswalk at the corner of Inner Road, which was a concern because the location causes pedestrians to congregate under the crown of the tree. The picnic tables have been removed from under the Live Oak to prevent people from being under the tree as well.

The presentation also mentioned a smaller Live Oak with damage at the base of the tree trunk. The base has concrete in it but is still in good condition. The canopy is competing with the crown of the larger, damaged tree. Tim showed the supports used to help stabilize large tree branches.

Tim stated he moves to retain the Rinker Live Oak but reduce the risk by implementing several points. He explained the proposed points and opened the meeting for discussion.

The committee discussed each point of interest and agreed to try and save the tree. The committee felt that one of the issues was the bus stop location. Many students get off the bus at the site, so there is a risk for pedestrians. The committee thought that barriers may be a good option.

The committee asked Tom if supports could be used on the north side of the tree. The road and sidewalk on the north side do not have enough room to put the props for the large branches. The supports would be in the road.

The committee asked what the timeline was for a tree with a wound like this before more mitigation would be needed. Dr. Klein stated that there was a publication done on bark intrusion damage during a hurricane on about 1500 trees with bark intrusion and other defect wounds, and they did not fail. Most of the time, people think that because of the bark damage on the tree, it will fail, and that is not true. In the survey, there was not a single failure in the trees. Some do occasionally fail, but most of the trees do not.

The crack in the large branch is concerning and should be removed. The tree should be re-examined for risk after storm events. Removing the risk is what we are aiming for. If mitigation options are implemented, the risk of failure and harm will be reduced, and the bracing could ensure that the branches do not break. They also need to look at the response growth and whether the tree is reacting to the damage in an attempt to save itself. The smaller tree should remain because if the larger tree fails, there will already be a tree established on site.

The Risk Assessment concluded that the risk would be lowered if the mitigation options were implemented. Dave, the City Arborist, stated he agreed with the assessment and would also agree that trimming the cracked limb back with supports would reduce the risk and allow the branch to sprout out.

The committee asked about the number of pedestrians on the sidewalks under that tree. If the risk is reduced enough, will the sidewalks be usable? With the construction for the next year and a half, will that change the way the sidewalks are used? The Risk Assessment stated that if the mitigation is followed, there should be low risk, and access to the sidewalks would not have to be restricted. Linda showed a Google Map of the tree to help illustrate where the branch broke and which one is cracked. She stated that there will be a resurfacing project on Newell soon, and recommended changing the crosswalk to guide the students better. The crosswalks could be combined.

Grounds should reduce the end weight reduction and cut the cracked branch, and then monitor about once a semester or after a storm event. Tom volunteered to do the monitoring, and will also have an arborist come out quarterly to assist. Tim displayed a slide of the proposed final motion, and the committee discussed what should be included in the motion to mitigate and retain the tree at the same time. Regarding the cracked branch, it would be about a 5 or 6-foot stub that will sprout out, and then Grounds could perform periodic trimming, restoration and monitoring. If that doesn't work, then bracing could be incorporated on the cracked branch. The committee discussed the wording of the final motion and then submitted the motion.

Motion: Tim Martin made a motion that states the following:

Final Motion:

1. Maintain the Rinker Hall Live Oak while reducing risk by:

- i. Reduce length of large cracked eastern branch back to edge of sidewalk, allow to resprout and eventually prune sprouts into new branch: this will avoid creation of new large wound near stem
- ii. Perform end weight reduction pruning in a multi-phased operation. Note details in arborist report *
- iii. Remove dead wood from crown *
- iv. Monitor tree each semester and after storms, and re-assess within 2 years *
- v. Future sidewalk, road, utility, and other work should include special attention to protecting this tree's root system
- vi. If even with these mitigations there is still concern from risk management, or if future assessment identifies new risk, additional mitigation should be considered before entertaining tree removal. Additional mitigation could include:
 1. Incorporating attractive landscape barriers to discourage people gathering under tree crown
 2. Move pedestrian crosswalk under west side of crown further to the north or south to reduced pedestrian congregation under crown *
 3. Remove picnic tables from underneath south side of tree *

- = mitigations suggested in Workman Forestry arborist report.

Second: Ryan Klein

Motion Carried 3 members voted yes and 1 member voted no.

Chair Report

Gail Hansen de Chapman

Gail stated there were a few things to note. The committee is losing two committee members, Brian Keith and Basil Iannone. She is still working on getting replacements. Second, elections needed to be done. Tim Martin nominated Gail to be chair. The committee agreed with the nomination. Gail accepted to be chair and stated this will be her last Chair appointment.

The committee asked about the trees being cut down at the O'Connell Center and it was still unknown.

There being no further business for discussion, the meeting adjourned at 11:05 AM.