

WEBSTER GROVES GREEN SPACE ADVISORY COMMISSION

MEETING MINUTES

Date: September 13, 2021
Location: City Hall
Called to Order: 5:30 p.m.
Adjourned: 7:00 p.m.
Next Meeting Date: October 4, 2021, 5:30 p.m.

NAME	PRESENT	ABSENT
Annie Russell	X	
Bill Hoss	X (Zoom)	
Pam Bliss, City Council Liaison	X	
Ann Omura		X
Ginger Garrett	X (Zoom)	
Laura Jordan	X	
Lynnda Greene	X	
Jerry Pinkner	X Zoom	
Carrie Coyne, Chairman	X	
Tessa Wasserman	X (Zoom)	
Yvonne Steingrubby, Staff Liaison	X	

Special Guest: Phil Hulse, of SG Collaborative

Mr. Hulse, a partner in SG, spoke to the commission for nearly forty minutes, about the Collaborative’s proposed Douglass Hill. development project for fifteen acres of land in Old Webster, currently under consideration by the city council. Mr. Hulse’s comments covered a range of supposed benefits, including: affordable housing options (condos, apartments) in seven story high-density buildings, retail and dining venues, public spaces for arts/entertainment and public gathering, tailored walkways and green spaces, ample parking, “green roofs” and solar lighting, etc. Mr. Hulse said SG’s environmental consultant had determined the creek overgrown with invasive species and debris; that existing trees were dead or dying, and that little of what exists should be saved.

Discussion by GSAC members was wide ranging but centered most specifically in concern for the survival of the stretch of Shady Creek corridor from Gore Avenue to Rock Hill Road, which the plan would remove entirely. Chair Carrie Coyne emphasized whatever development might be done in this plot must of necessity “all work together” to assure wildlife well-being. Council member Pam Bliss asked if, by SG’s plan, the creek

“could possibly remain ‘natural’.” Other GSAC members expressed concern that concrete walkways through manicured green spaces would disrupt the contiguous pathway resident wildlife need, and negatively impact what is now a healthy natural ecosystem. Questions re just how affordable the condos and rental units would be, how “diversity” would be ensured, and how SG could ensure sufficient parking and orderly traffic in an area already overly congested, were also raised and discussed.

Carrie Coyne closed this section of the meeting by asking Mr. Hulse if he would be willing to meet with environmental specialists and consultants of our choosing, from Shaw Nature Reserve, The Deer Creek Watershed Alliance, and the Missouri Department of Conservation, among others. He indicated he would, and Carrie said she would arrange this meeting soon within the next few weeks.

Old Business:

- A. Douglass Hill update (see above).
- B. She also urged GSAC members to review the MDC “Conservation Planning Guide for Missouri Communities” before the meeting being planned with SG and .
- C. Trees of Distinction Tree Renewal Program Update. Carrie (chair) suggested that, since the SG Collaborative discussion lasted so long, that we would table in-depth discussion of specific plans re combined efforts for Trees of Distinction and Mayors for Monarchs to the next meeting on October 4th. She also said that per the Council’s recent approval of the program, she will soon schedule the first subcommittee meeting. No members have yet been named, but she suggested departing GSAC member Tessa Wasserman be included. Andre Buehler (Dept of Public Works arborist) has asked to be included, as have several GSAC members. The roll out of the program will take a few months to plan, but the “working group,” once decided, will likely begin meeting soon. Launch date is yet to be decided.
- D. Review of “Native Tree and Plant Walk,” held on September 11th. The event was deemed a success, with 22 enthusiastic attendees (mostly Webster residents), as well as representatives of the Missouri Botanical Garden, the St. Louis Audubon Society, Wild Ones, the Missouri Dept. of Conservation, and the Webster Groves Public Library, which is starting an in-house Seed Exchange. Mayor Gerry Welch attended and explained the “Mayors of Monarchs” program that she will officially launch in December. All GSAC members agreed that these periodic public education events—particularly “walks” through local parks—should continue at regular intervals through the year.

Lynnda Greene reported that the library is every interested in working with GSAC to harvest native plant seeds for their Seed Exchange, and has offered to serve as meeting site for any of GSAC’s upcoming public education talks, as appropriate—at no charge.

Their meeting room can comfortably accommodate 40 people according to Covid social distance protocols.

- E. Mayors for Monarchs Pledge. As noted previously, Jerry Pinkner reiterated that Mayor Welch will officially launch the program locally on December 21st. She has indicated that she wants to begin working with members of GSAC early in the new year concerning specific projects for pocket gardens, promotion to the public, and ideally some public education programs or talks through the year concerning pollinator/habitat support.

New Business

- A. Tree City Luncheon will be held on October 8th. Four GSAC members may attend, this year including Pam Bliss, Laura Jordan, Carrie Coyne, and Tessa Wasserman.
- B. Lynnda Greene has renewed her appointment to GSAC for another term
- C. Update on partnership with Webster Groves Public Library. Lynnda Greene reported that library (Debbie Ladd, Outreach Director for the library) has offered to support both Trees of Distinction and the Monarchs program with displays of books and materials of the library's holdings, and offering pamphlets and handouts from various state and local conservation/environmental entities to interested patrons. (Missouri Dept. of Conservation, MoBot, St. Louis County Parks, Audubon Society, Deer Creek Watershed Alliance, Dark Sky Missouri and more.) The library's display of books on native plant gardening prior to the plant walk proved quite popular, with several books being checked out. They would like to coordinate what they display and promote with specific GSAC efforts such as our talks, tree replacement program, Monarchs project, etc.

Updates

- A. Chair: Carrie reiterated that she would be setting up a meeting with Mr. Hulse, GSAC members, and a panel of local professional conservationists, horticulturists, arborists she will select, in the near future—to review SG Collaborative's plans for the project. **Per later memo:* this meeting will be with Deer Creek Watershed Alliance's Technical Advisory Committee (of which she and Yvonne are members), on October 28th. As the TAC is large and meeting space limited, GSAC members will not be able to attend, but they will be able to watch recorded video of the meeting.
- B. Council: Pam Bliss, GSAC's council liaison, said that renovations at Ivory Crocket Park would soon begin, and that a search for a new chief of the city's fire department has begun to replace the retiring chief. She also related that the Council will go on retreat for a strategic planning meeting on October 15.
- C. Staff: Yvonne Steingrubby announced the three projects GSAC and Green Keepers will offer to all city residents on Make a Difference Day, October 23rd. These will be: A tree planting session at Larson Park; an MSD Trash Bash at Lorraine Davis Park; a native plant seed collection event at a park yet to be decided, and possibly a honeysuckle hack.

Yvonne also announced that 1.) She is meeting with MDC to ask them to consider funding a butterfly garden at Ivory Crocket Park. 2) Also, hopefully central trash corrals will be placed in each park, rather than trying to manage multiple trash barrels per park that require many more staff hours to collect.

She also reported that the goats the city “hired” (“Goats on the Go”) in mid-August to browse a small (1/2 acre?) section along of hillside along Shady Creek Nature Sanctuary did a fine job of eating down nearly all honeysuckle, and much of the wintercreeper in the confined space. She plans to bring them back next year to “work over” a larger area, which will allow workers and volunteers easier access to further remove invasive roots.

Next Meeting

The next GSAC meeting will be on October 4, 5:30 p.m., in the City Council conference room.

Adjournment 7:00 p.m.