

**MINUTES OF CITY OF GRIFFIN TREE BOARD**  
**WEDNESDAY, March 1, 2006**  
**8:30 A.M.**

**City Hall conference room, 231 E. Solomon St.**

Those present were Tree Board Chairman & Public Works and Utilities Director Brant Keller, Secretary & Stormwater Deputy Director Milton McCarthney, Members: Mainstreet Director Carolyn Byrd, Plant the Future representative Jerry Walker, Electric Assistant Director Tom Ridgway, Stormwater Environmental Technicians Kreg Jenkins and Sheila Daniel, Georgia Forestry Commission's Berle Bud, City Commissioner Doug Hollberg, and City Manager Kenny Smith.

Those absent were Development Services Director Frederick Gardener, and Citizen at Large Wade Hutcheson. The meeting was called to order by Chairman Keller.

Citizen attendees included Martha McDaniel, Dianne Dunnaway and others.

Information Packages were distributed containing:

- A) Minutes of the February 8, 2006 Tree Board,
- B) Urban Forest Management for City of Griffin 1992-present summary sheet,
- C) City Of Griffin Tree Ordinance,
- D) "Evaluation of 9 Oaks Along Maple Dr" arborist report,
- E) Petition and signatures regarding Tree Removal by the City,
- F) City of Griffin Street Tree Re-Inventory Report dated Nov. 2003 by Southern Urban Forestry Assoc.

**Old Business:**

**Item 1) Chairman Keller** opened the meeting and **Ridgway** motioned to approve Feb 8 minutes (package A), seconded by Byrd and unanimously approved.

**New Business:**

**Item 2) Keller** started new business by reading and did an overview of COG Urban Forest Management Program from 1992-present (package B).

**Item 3) Keller** discussed the last hazardous tree survey (package D) and the re-inventory report was pointed out (package F). **Keller** stated that these reports were pretty specific and to the point of what all the problems are from limb decay to mushrooms on trees. He also stated the total inventory of trees was on the GPS system in case there were any questions that may come up.

**Item 4) Keller** next recounted the suggestions made from the Maple Dr tree replacement meeting at City hall on Feb 13, 2006 concerning the Maple Drive tree replacements. **Keller** said the suggestion of the cost of underground power and underground utilities being funded by SPLOST is a possibility announcing that the preliminary cost of materials alone for a project of that size, not including labor, is \$1.8 million. Another suggestion from the meeting **Keller** discussed was planting large trees with mature 80'-100' tall canopy and planting 3 inch and 4-6 feet tall trees, which would be done. From

another suggestion, **Keller** said a full time staff City Arborist and dedicated tree crew will be reviewed at budget time. The final suggestion **Keller** described from the meeting was putting the trees on a Historic Preservation list leading to possible funding.

**Item 5) Keller** stated the delineation markings that you see on Maple are strictly to figure out what utilities are presently in place underground and to aid in site survey and selection.

**Item 6) Keller** brought up the tree report prepared for Diana Dunaway, “Evaluation of 9 Oaks Along Maple Dr” (package D), where the arborist submitting the report recommended several of the trees to be taken down. **Keller** said staff has compared Dunnaway’s list (package D) to our Street Tree Reinventory report (package F), and many of those trees on Dunnaway’s list (D) that were suggested to be removed are the same trees that have been the most noted and talked about in regards to being removed.

**Item 7) Keller** recommended that the existing tree board be put on moratorium for 90 days, then dissolving the present tree board and creating a newly comprised board. **Keller** said the new board composition could include one person from Plant the Future, one person from each voting district in the City of Griffin appointed by the City Commission (giving 6 representatives), one Member at Large (i.e. the 7<sup>th</sup> district), one City Commissioner, one DDA member, and one Industrial Authority member (giving 11 members total). **Keller** also recommended that the City staff not serve on this board anymore and City staff would participate strictly in a support function and listen to what is going on at the meetings. **Keller** also recommend, that the Public Works Department no longer have anything to do with trees from a managerial stand point and that the Electric Department can take the lead since electric does most of the tree pruning and generate most of the complaints and issues.

**Item 8) Keller** enlightened the board of several comments made by citizens which arose at the City commission meeting the previous night, Feb 28. **Keller** described a comment made in a letter presented during the Commission meeting stating the City of Griffin didn’t have a tree management program, and that it was offensive for him to hear that kind of statement. **Keller** went on to state that the letter requested a tree plan designed in context and to have all the trees inventoried in the City. Keller mildly explained the City has done all that. **Keller** described the three urban forestry tree grants awarded to the City and how getting that number of grants is a substantial feat accomplished by only a few cities. Keller also noted that not many other cities GPS their trees and very, very few have done all of these things in combination like the City of Griffin has.

**Item 9) Walker** discussed his history with the City of griffin tree program from 1972 to present. **Walker** told of his extensive qualifications as an arborist, including publishing two articles on tree diseases in the International Society of Arboriculture Journal. Walker appreciated Doug Hollberg Jr. and Sr.’s participation in City trees throughout the years and thanked Doug Hollberg Sr.’s urging him into a position he has continuously served in for 30+years. **Walker** opinionated that Griffin has made tremendous advances, and that maybe it was time for a new composition of the tree board.

**Item 10) Carolyn Byrd** discussed her participation on the tree board for 15 years and gave approval of a new board composition.

**Item 11) Hollberg** told of being in office since Jan 2004 and his privilege of serving on the Board for that period. **Hollberg** described living on Maple and his feelings about the large shade trees targeted to come down very close to his house. **Hollberg** described the whole city partnership between Plant the Future, City of Griffin, businesses, and people working together on plantings from Hammond Dr. to Experiment Street to Greenbelt parkway. **Hollberg** described how this board has had to make decisions for what's in the best interest for the whole community. **Hollberg** applauded the city staff for their effort and thought it is time to let the citizens take the responsibility and give the directions instead of having staff out there taking shots and taking blow's at them. **Hollberg** recommended the Industrial Development Authority have a representative on a newly formed tree board. **Hollberg** wants to see Maple Drive citizens plant 6" caliper trees and corridor residents put their money in the pot to supplement the increased sized planting. \

**Item 12) Ridgway** told the group of the reality in his department, that trees and power lines do not get along whether the power lines are overhead or underground. **Ridgway** discussed the concept of putting the power lines underground on Maple Drive as a nice concept, but a backhoe and a 2' wide by 4' deep trench down Maple Drive was probably going to end up killing more trees rather than saving trees at all. **Ridgway** described the large trees along Maple as overgrown with power lines, and so high now that not even a bucket truck could reach them increasing the cost tremendously. **Ridgway** said his department is looking at other ways to solve all the electrical problems in the City including a system wide study trying to find different ways for resolution with customer service in mind. **Ridgway** continued that there is power outages and trees all over the city and not just on Maple Drive. **Ridgway** said if the City was looking at putting distribution underground, then burying cables in areas with large apartment complexes that are served with overhead would make more people content than areas with problems with the trees. **Ridgway** relayed that he didn't have a problem with redrawing the composition of the tree board after looking at the legality of it, since we would be turning the city's liability over to an independent board that would recommend what trees get cut down since we've already paid for tree reports and studies.

**Item 13) Hollberg** relayed that last night a tree discussion group was at Dr. Dunaway's house when a tree limb fell at the corner of Milner and Maple Drive and how strange it was that Rodney (McCord) comes down last night to talk about trees and at 9:00, power gets shut down. The community was all with out power for 1.5 hours. **Hollberg** described attitudes of folks on Maple and College loving trees, folks who don't live on Maple and College caring less, and a lot of them say the tree board could care less about the trees, which is wrong. That main power runs serve other neighborhoods and they blame the trees along Maple and College with outages. The city and the tree board have tried to balance the beauty of the trees and the power supply.

**Item 14) An Unidentified Lady** voiced that she didn't live on Maple Drive but traveled up and down that road and could tolerate a limb coming down on a power line, if in fact, there was a choice between tree removals or not to remove. She explained her point as not that the (City) hasn't done its job, but that citizens have a tremendous passion here for the trees in the area of Maple Dr. She reiterated the problem that the City doesn't have the money, period, to do what needs to be done and to prune trees properly in order to protect them much longer on Maple and College. She expressed thoughts that as the evaluation process showed, it's too late for many of the trees in the corridor. She commented it wasn't the tree board's fault; it was City of Griffin Administration's fault we didn't bring in any money to make the tree program work better.

**Hollberg** stated we do maintain our trees and reiterated that we spend about \$200,000 a year on pruning citywide, reminding the meeting the City doesn't just prune Maple Drive and that pruning is done county wide all the way out to the river.

**An Unidentified Lady** commented that when you divide all those trees by \$200,000 it's nothing, really, She continued not saying you didn't bring enough money, I'm just saying there's not enough money to do what needs to be done on Maple.

**Item 15) Keller** stated it was time to go back to how Jerry Walker and he talked about how the tree board composition should be set up in 1992, and that there are people that actually live in the community who wish to participate. **Keller** continued that in fifteen years, up until three weeks ago, the city has had tree meetings, even about trees on E. College and nobody else showed up even after being notified. **Keller's** point was stated that it was great for this activity and participation to take place today because he believed it is healthy and from adversity something better will grow back. **Keller** reasoned the community will hopefully be long term responsible for what comes out of maybe dissolving of this board. **Keller** reiterated that the City of Griffin doesn't go around trying to ruin the environment just for the sake of doing it.

**Item 16) McDaniel** said she came last night to speak before the board of commissioners and did want to present to the tree board the petition with some of the people that did sign it. **McDaniel** just wanted to make sure that the board knew that the group cares about our trees a great deal. **McDaniel** wanted to summarize for the people that were or were not there that they know and believe that there are trees that need to come down. **McDaniel** said her group did, as neighbors, hire their own arborist who agreed with a lot of your (Dr. Walker's) opinions and thought that was a fair thing that they did. **McDaniel** said her group was unhappy about having no plan of how we're (City) going to handle the trees particularly on E. college and Maple Dr. which are two of your great tree line streets that you (City) talk about in your home page. **Keller** remarked the reason why you see all those utility markings on E college right now is to make sure a root ball of a 6" caliper tree is not going to hit utilities, and big trees growing around sewer roots are not wanted either, but you must be able to get the root ball in the ground with relation of where either water or sewer underground utility is. **Keller** recalled when we did downtown streetscape and 6" caliper trees came in on a lowboy with the size of the planting hole from curb to curb in the middle of the median. **Keller** stated he really wasn't sure if we can resolve the issue of a 6" tree planting, so 2½" has a better survival rate in our right of way. **Keller** explained that's why those utility markings are there since the root ball is

going to be as wide as or wider than this table and why we located the utilities now for compatibility. **Keller** asked **McDaniel** if a 2" tree was acceptable.

**McDaniel** responded that no, like she said last night a 3" is the minimum you could probably put in there and described the diameter of the trunk of the tree which would be 3", that would be the minimum. **McDaniel** thought it would depend upon utilities there now since certainly we don't want you to hit a water line as you're planting a larger tree. **McDaniel** continued saying if the idea of kicking in some extra dollars for a larger tree if it fits is fair and reasonable. **McDaniel** commented that most of people in this area think and feel like you are trying to trick us and are you trying to put something over on us?

**McDaniel** talked of working with the property owner and being up front with them, telling them we're (City of Griffin) going to have to cut down your (home owner) tree and offer the bigger tree alternative explaining the calipers we (City) can plant because we got water lines running thru here. **McDaniel** suggested not going out there and just do it to be doing it with out saying a word because that's what hacks people off more than anything else go out there in secrecy and start digging a hole in somebody's front yard they get mad. **McDaniel** said she knew, from all her years of being a politician, that if you talk to the people and explain to them just what and why you're doing they have more respect for you. **Keller** responded that's why we had a meeting on the 13<sup>th</sup> of February and invited everybody on Maple Dr. to that meeting, and that's how that list of activities that I've already measured off got started.

**McDaniel** stated she thought #1, the city ought to pay for the tree. I think that it ought to be worked out that if the property owner wants to plant bigger than 2-1/2" that's fine too. I also believe you ought to be up front when you cut down the tree to go and talk to that particular property owner and explain to them what you are doing and why and what you intend to plant back again, as long as you pass up crape myrtles, mimosas, it could have been dogwoods...

**Walker** questioned what about all dogwoods?

**McDaniel** All dogwoods would be attractive to have an under story of some dogwoods on Maple. **Walker** commented we've got 23% now. We've got too many.

**McDaniel** opinionated we could never have too many dogwoods stating it is her own personal opinion. If they don't want that and they want an oak tree planted back in there in that particular place that's fine. **McDaniel** said she realized the tree board takes a lot of hits and that is the reason why she went to the City Commissions last night, basically the buck stops within the City Hall. **McDaniel** continued that this group should have representatives, but you all are a basically cross eyed group and the decisions are made in the lap of Commissioner Hollberg, thank you.

**Walker** stated we didn't bring up about the opportunity for homeowners to plant the trees on their private property because we had already tried that on College and were not getting a very good response at all. **Walker** commented a lot of the group didn't how many responded, which was 5-6 out of that whole street and wondered how many people did **McDaniel** think would be willing to have some planted on their own property?

**McDaniel** questioned if the city would help plant them on to our property and who pays for the tree?

**Hollberg** responded yes, you give us a tree easement in your front yard, whether it be 5x5, 6x6, the grid would be cut out, the city comes in and would dig the hole, plant the

tree, and for 2 years keep it mulched, watered, taken care of. **Hollberg** stated the City would pay for a small tree. If we get the big tree...

**McDaniel** said well wait a minute now. You have apples and oranges there. You got to be consistent. If you put a tree on private property and you get a tree easement, you got to put equal amount or better on City right of way.

(MULTIPLE PEOPLE TALKING)

**McDaniel** continued you can't give them out free to put them in somebody's yard then charge the property owner to put them out in then median. That ain't going to work.

**Hollberg** (picked up the discussion)... with the sponsor program I was trying to describe, we wanted to upgrade instead of going with all 2" trees or 3" trees, let the neighborhood pay for 6" trees. **Hollberg** described that the money needed to help subsidize the program could come from Plant the Future or personal funds, but the property owners would come together and upgrade instead of going with all 2" trees or 3" trees, property owners would pay for 6" trees. **Dunnaway** suggested a neighborhood committee that works with the City and melts the plans together.

**Item 17) BUD** described his involved with forestry for over 25 years and the Sustainable Community Forestry Program he works on and how many communities are facing the same problems and situations as Griffin. Budd also commented on the excellent job the City does with its trees and how Griffin is well above a lot of similar cities. **Bud** described the water oaks planted in the 1920's along many of the city streets like College and Maple, and that unfortunately the life is 60-80 years at best. Over that 60-80 years, most of these water oaks have been infringed with power lines and improper pruning over the years. Damages happened to them, impacted by development, sprinkler systems, sidewalks, cars have hit them, lot of problems happen to these trees, and its unfortunately particularly in the historic areas of most of the cities, a lot of these older trees are facing their enemies. I think Griffin is taking the right approach to deal with these aging trees. **Bud** described a windshield survey he did of Maple and E. College back last summer and said the City was going about the replacement in the correct manner by utilizing a certified arborist to look out for these trees and when trees become hazards they should be removed. **Bud** expressed the City's responsibility to remove those trees before one breaks and falls thru the windshield of a vehicle or falls on somebody's head and somebody gets killed.

**Unidentified Lady** agreed that people pruning the trees have some sort of course on the proper way of pruning a tree since we have had inexperienced people out there trimming trees and that's part of our problem today in cutting around the power line instead of having some motivation to do a better job of trimming.

**Keller** addressed line pruning, previously brought this up in 1992, and called it "pruning through" a tree. The city's budget, and I've gone thru this process year in and year out, has never allowed for "pruning through" to happen since there isn't but so many dollars in the pot. After 1998, I quit putting in the budget for an arborist and I quit putting in for money to prune trees. I had put in for \$450,000 for a full time paid arborist, a supervisor, 2 grounds people for the 15 years I've been here and it's never got out of the first round of the budget.

**Item 18) An unidentified gentleman** spoke of the problem I have and reason I'm so skeptical about the programs you do, is the two big oak trees on Maple Dr. near my house came down and were solid as a rock with not one hole in any of the branches.

**Keller** addressed that issue saying there's a lot of second guessing, and would be happy to provide you 528 pages of printed documents of trees and where they fell out in the rating. I'd be glad to give you a summary. Keller described three different arborists surveys so we have some outside opinion. I can't stand out there from a financial standpoint and hire a second opinion for a third time. We do what we do and this is the process. We use this survey every 3-5 years we re-rate trees and then we send out our arborists to verify that tree needs to come down with the data that we have available. At the Maple meeting on the 13<sup>th</sup> of February, we agreed that all the trees would not come down at the same time, and we would replant the trees as necessary to get the re-forestation started. We would pro-long some removals until some of the trees achieved a certain height. One of the things that I have not heard anybody talk about today is multiple species. All I've heard is the same tree going down the same line, but what happens when something comes in your neighborhood and blight comes in, what is it going to look like 20 years from now?

**Item 19)** There was no Tree Removal List presented this month.

Following brief discussion, on motion by Mrs. Byrd, seconded by Ridgway the meeting was adjourned due to time constraints.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

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Milton McCarthney, Acting Secretary

ATTEST:

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Dr. Brant Keller, Chairman