

TOWN OF WELAKA TREE BOARD MEETING AGENDA

**March 28, 2024 at 6:00 PM
Honorable Willie Washington, Jr. Town Council Room
400 4th Avenue, Welaka, FL 32193**

(This meeting will be broadcasted, for view only, on the Town of Welaka Facebook page)

- 1. CALL TO ORDER**
- 2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**
- 3. ROLL CALL** by Town Clerk, Meghan Allmon
 - Aaron Levine - present
 - Janis Brown - present
 - Pamela Washington - present
 - Patti Nielsen - present
 - Kenneth Pagano - absent
 - Town Attorney, Patrick Kennedy - present
- 4. APPROVAL OF CURRENT AGENDA** - Motion to approve 3/28/24 Agenda by Brown and seconded by Nielsen. Passed 4/0.
- 5. APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MINUTES:** February 22, 2024 Tree Board Meeting Minutes
Corrections – None.
Washington made motion to approve the 2/22/24 Meeting Minutes and Brown seconded. Passed 4/0.
- 6. PRESENTATIONS** - None.
- 7. CORRESPONDENCES** – Last minute correspondence from Pagano. 3/23/24 at 10 AM, Saturday – Levine read the email that Pagano sent to the Tree Board. Dugger contacted the Chief about trees being cut down at The Church of Welaka. They were volunteers and said they had no tree permit. Five cut trees that were water oaks. No heritage trees were cut, only damaged/rotten trees. Doreen, the church manager, arrived and shared info and was to go to Town Hall Monday morning.
Levine – appears no violations occurred. We need to expedite the permit process possibly with the building dept. and focus on general awareness about the ORD they are updating.
Nielsen – during the last Town Council meeting, Mayor mentioned it may be included in the utility bill/newsletter to get the word out.
Washington – did someone come in to ask?
Allmon – yes, Doreen came in Monday morning and we said that they had no idea a permit was needed, or the process to obtain one, if needed.
Kennedy – have them write a letter explaining what they’re doing and what they want to cut down and flag the trees so someone can come look at it. Not too fancy.
Brown – where does that paper end up?
Levine – we could have a standard letter in the office and a file or folder for them.
Nielsen – when will we have this done?
Kennedy – come up with a letter for approval draft.

Nielsen – can she call Kenny if someone is cutting on a Saturday?

Kennedy – no. Violates Sunshine Laws. Letter can be submitted to Town Hall. If the letter says it's an exemption tree, they have to have it marked.

Allmon – a flyer with pictures of some sort?

Kennedy – he cannot do it but can review.

Levine – anyone want to design the draft letter or exemption letter?

Nielsen – having a Workshop soon?

Levine – no other workshop is planned as of right now. The Town Council wanted to have a joint one to review the Tree ORD.

Brown – can we have business cards made so when we approach people cutting trees, we can hand them out?

Kennedy – business cards are only allowed to identify them. Put Volunteer Board Member on the card.

Allmon – if you design some, possibly I can order or print them, as long as that's ok. Tree Board doesn't have a budget for spending.

Kennedy – make people aware of our rules but you cannot stop them from doing tree work.

Brown – if she goes out to the property, may have to call the Chief for Code Enforcement help, that may be too much though.

Kennedy – that's all we have so far.

Washington – it's a lot to take on and he'll do whatever he can to help.

Kennedy – Chief is making us aware that performing Code Enforcement duties may interfere with being a Police Officer.

Allmon – what if we stop work and they've already paid a tree service to be there?

Kennedy – the Tree Board cannot stop someone from hiring and cutting trees down, we have to be careful, but we can suggest what to do.

Levine – water oaks get hollowed out and rotten often.

Brown – preserve the live oaks?

Brown – asked Kennedy – can we send a letter out to all the tree companies in the area.

Kennedy – yes, if you'd like. Most companies need a Town Business Tax Receipt also.

Levine – these were volunteers doing the tree cutting this past Saturday. Does anyone want to draft the letter?

Brown – She will start drafting up a letter to the residents, and a flyer/letter for tree companies.

Levine – no other correspondences.

8. **REQUEST TO SPEAK** – Chris Kelly – he's cut down about 12 camphor trees. He would dig a hole and burn the stumps. Does not like camphor trees and removed to make room for his house. He never thought he needed to reach out to Welaka to cut down or trim trees on his own property. The ORD that he read is structured, it exempts removal but only after an inspection. Welaka is one of those places where the government tries to be less of a burden. He found some readings that states tree removal exemption information with certain tree size. Encourages property owners to remove invasive trees voluntarily from their property. Suggests that we carve out those paths and not requires an inspection is done, especially on the weekend when he wants to do tree work himself sometimes.
- Levine – the Florida plant list has been adopted here. We discourage people from planting these invasive plants/trees. Maybe someone should come out to confirm.
- Kelly – he disagrees. We don't call a Town representative when we catch a rat, we remove it. The burden here is to carve out certain species and that we want to promote the removal of, those would be the invasive/exotic species.
- Levine – agrees 100%. The population at large may need to be thinned out.
- Kelly – will bring to the Council that people here do know what species are invasive. A volunteer can look at the app and see if it's invasive. He wants to be able to do yard work without asking. If there's public safety matters, yes, send the Code Officer or the Law, but I know what trees are removable.
- Washington – we are amending the ORD. Another workshop?
- Levine – yes with the Town Council.
- Washington – asked Kelly to come.

Kelly – just asking for the Tree Board to take this under consideration.

Nielsen – on the Welaka website, possibly put pictures of trees on the website?

Kennedy – no need to debate right now. You won't be in violation of the ORD if you cut down a camphor tree, just check to make sure prior to cutting.

Nielsen – we are trying to better the community.

Kennedy – makes sense to try a version of what Kelly said.

9. NEW BUSINESS

a. Board Members Open for Discussion:

Nielsen – break the ORD down into a smaller section to present to the Council?

Washington – the Council wants to sit down with the Tree Board.

Levine – a joint workshop is what they need to discuss.

Washington – they're basically finished with the ORD and are waiting on the workshop with the Council to get the ORD adopted.

Levine – he noticed from the Tree City USA standards, there's 4 standards: having a Board, a public tree care ORD, arbor day and a PROC, and a forestry budget with \$2 per capita. Community must document the removal/planting of trees. The Town's already spending money on tree work. We'd need the amount of money spent for the last year.

Allmon – offered to send the Board the 2023 Tree Expense check register.

Levine – Allmon shared Tree Adoption Forms with him and he made copies to spread the word to foster a sense of community pride of adopting a tree.

10. OLD BUSINESS

a. Review of ORD 2015-1 WELAKA TREE ORDINANCE

Levine – we have already done this, and the Town Clerk will schedule the workshop with the Tree Board and Town Council.

Kennedy – are you setting the regulations to be more strict? Is this intentional?

Levine – there's no champion trees here but heritage trees, yes, but we can further discuss this with the Council workshop. He read the definition of champion and heritage trees.

Kennedy – so a tree with an 8" diameter cannot be cut down? Offering his help with the tree ORD because he's helped Towns for 20 years. You'll have a hard time getting people to get a permit for an 8" tree removal.

Levine – possibly we can up the regulated size from where it is now.

Kennedy – a development review process should address this and not the yard updating process. There's landscaping codes and others also. He was concerned about this. The 15% canopy might be hard to enforce also. Makes sense with a big lot clearing, but with spring cleaning going on, it may be hard to enforce. Make sure the ORD is clear, especially when including the Code Enforcement Dept.

Levine – will make more changes when we have the workshop.

Kennedy – he came tonight so he could ask these questions and make suggestions/guidance.

11. PUBLIC COMMENT – None.

12. ADJOURN –6:53 PM.