

**From:** Dale E. Coy  
**To:** [Clerk](#)  
**Subject:** Public Comment for entry July 21, 2020  
**Date:** Monday, July 20, 2020 2:26:20 PM  
**Attachments:** [Observations about Urban Forest Care performance.docx](#)

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\*\*\*Comment for acknowledgement at the Council meeting July 21st, and  
incorporation into the Action Letter.

I do not intend to present it in person or by telephone.

Please let me know that you received it, and if there are questions.

Dale E. Coy  
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At the City Council meeting on July 14<sup>th</sup> 2020, I presented Public Comment on Lee's Summit commitment to Environmental Stewardship and City Aesthetics. That Public Comment was presented by telephone and was brief, being limited by policy to 3 minutes or less.

I present here some related background and detail.

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Observations about Urban Forest Care performance and City commitment:

My interest in Lee's Summit's Urban Forest management began several years ago, when I noticed several trees being cut down in city right-of-way along Todd George Parkway. This happened several times, with trees that were not doing well – and the trees were not being replaced. It seemed clear that trees along that parkway were not being cared for.

I then began noticing that trees on right-of-way of other major streets and parkways had been similarly disappearing.

I inquired about this from the Public Works Department. I was told (reliably, by several people) that trees along streets and parkways are “too much trouble”, and that – “if it dies, it dies, is cut down and not replaced”. (As far as I can determine, there is no official policy. However, there is rather clear evidence of the “if it dies, it dies” practice.)

Doing some research in the City Ordinances, I found: (Section 19-200) “The Beautification Commission shall coordinate and promote projects for the beautification of the City. The Commission will also serve as the City Tree Board for the City of Lee's Summit, Missouri.”

So, several years ago, I started regularly attending (as an observer) the monthly meetings of the Beautification Commission. At one such meeting, I asked a question about dead trees along city parkways. I did not receive much of a response, although I was assured that the Beautification Commission was somewhat concerned about trees in the city. And I am well aware that the

Beautification Commission had been annually conducting an Arbor Day Tree Planting (always at a school), and that they were happy that Lee's Summit has been a "Tree City USA" for a number of years.

I contacted the chairperson by email (July 2017), quoting the City Ordinance. I was answered "Thank you for sending this information to me. I find it VERY interesting in that I've been on the commission for about 15 years and have never seen this. No one ran it by us during the time I've been on the commission, and I didn't know that it existed."

The City Ordinances also state (Section 19-204 – Duties and Responsibilities) "It shall be the responsibility of the Commission to study, investigate, counsel and develop and/or update annually, and administer a written plan for the care, preservation, pruning, planting, replanting, removal or disposition of trees and shrubs in parks, along streets and in other public areas. Such plan will be presented annually to the City Council and, upon its acceptance and approval, shall constitute the official comprehensive City tree plan for the City of Lee's Summit."

Neither the Beautification Commission chairperson, nor any other member, was aware of these duties and responsibilities.

Subsequently, I was told by the Beautification Commission that they are the City's Tree Board, but as volunteers, they have no authority, personnel, or budget to perform the duties of Tree Board, nor to fulfill the requirements of Ordinance Section 19-204.

Additional research indicates that the city has never had a "Tree Plan", and no such plan has ever been presented to or approved by the City Council. Note: I communicated concerns about these issues to various city officials, including the Mayor, during July-September 2017. As far as I know, there has been no official resolution.

The City Ordinances also state (Section 19-211 -- Tree Species) "The Administrator will maintain an extensive list of recommended trees for planting. The purpose of this listing will be to maintain diversity in the total tree population. This list shall be available to residents of the City upon request to aid in the selection of trees for private and public properties. The list of recommended trees may be updated

periodically by the Administrator to reflect new developments or species that will affect the community urban forest.” This list is not available for the City of Lee’s Summit.

I was told “LSPR utilizes the Missouri Department of Conservation Urban Trees Booklet”. Having obtained a copy of this May 2009 booklet, I find that for instance it actually recommends planting Elm trees (which are no longer considered desirable anywhere).

I appeared before the City Council (May 21<sup>st</sup>, 2019) and presented Public Comment about the issues with the Comprehensive Tree Plan, the List of Recommended Trees, and other issues.

#### OTHER OBSERVATIONS:

The Beautification Commission has a longstanding tradition of planting an Arbor Day tree at a school in Lee’s Summit. I have been informed (by Mark Dunning) that this practice is now being questioned (“preference would be to place the tree in one of the parks”) – amid concerns about liability, supporting equipment, etc.

In late 2017, the Tri County Water Authority installed a new water line on the East side of Ranson Road, and in the process removed many trees. The Princeton Heights HOA was paid for 14 trees (as large as 30-inch trunk diameter). Princeton Heights was not required to restore the appearance of Ranson Road by replanting trees, and did not do so.

The same project resulted in Lee’s Summit Parks & Recreation being paid for 10 trees (as large as 12 inches) and 38 bushes at Happy Tails Park. It was not required that those trees be replaced.

Regarding the Arbor Day Foundation’s Tree City awards: I obtained a copy of the last application form submitted (2018 Application for Certification). The application states that the Community has a Tree Board (technically true). The Tree Board Chair is listed as Brooke Chestnut (she is a Parks Dept. employee, and not a member of the Beautification Commission Tree Board). The application is signed (Mayor or Equivalent Signature) by the Parks Administrator. I’m puzzled by how the Parks Administrator is equivalent to the Mayor.

Since its beginning (before 1988), the Beautification Commission has been administratively and financially supported by the Parks and Recreation Department. In 2019, City administration moved the Beautification Commission to the Cultural Arts Division for support. There has been no associated change to City Ordinances – and technically the Beautification Commission remains the Tree Board and responsible for the City Tree Ordinance.

Note: Cultural Arts Division does not have trucks and other equipment, nor personnel, to support the Commission's activities in tree planting, downtown planters, etc.

I have focused this comment on management of the urban forest. But I should also note that environmental stewardship is an important element. A great way to fight climate change is to increase the number of trees – and care for existing and new trees. In the process, aesthetics and livability are also improved.