

City Commission Workshop

Date: Thursday, May 15, 2025

[video](#) and [agenda packet](#)

Present: Mayor Fred E. Cleveland, Vice Mayor Lisa Martin, Commissioner Valli Perrine, and Commissioner Jason McGuirk; Commissioner Brian Ashley; Commissioner

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Comments from the public included the following:

- ❖ Asked City to strike a balance that will respect property owner's rights and avoids burden of city mandates; Encouraged City to continue to engage stakeholders
- ❖ Voiced concerns regarding tree mandates for single family property owners/residents and unclear why sudden interest in this issue
- ❖ Noted that the planned 2010 changes to the sign ordinance will present a hardship for Dixie Freeway Habitat for Humanity if that sign is required to be removed.
- ❖ Concerns voiced regarding Saxon Ave construction site and height of grading due to missing storm retention areas and water runoff from recent rainstorms.
- ❖ Questioned the quality of the contract and gaps in agreement for Deering Park Project. Also referenced the 3/25/25 City meeting and proclamation of Tree City USA.
- ❖ Asked that the City consider having more than one person to review requests that are submitted to City for exemptions to ordinances.

WORKSHOP -Sign Amortization Program

Staff Report By: Shane Corbin - Developmental Services Director

Background: Under ordinance 54-21, the city commission approved a path for future designated vintage pole signs to stay after the required removal. The NSB Historic Preservation Commission was tasked to review and approve vintage sign designation applications. There are currently four (4) vintage signs within the city. (Southern Paint, Pappa's Restaurant, Pappa's Plaza, and the Dairy Queen). The final amortization date for all non-vintage pole signs is November 29, 2025 which will impact 145 signs.

- It was common in the 50, 60 and 70s to have pole signs; Currently, NSB has moved towards permits for Monument-styled Signs as this is more modern.
- Prior amendments to ordinance (11.8.2011) stated that all pole signs had to be removed within ten years; and this was extended during COVID to November 29, 2025.
- Mr. Corbin is seeking guidance from Commissioners regarding enforcement.
- Reviewed criteria for current signage for Monument-style signs.
- 11/23: NSB stopped issuing permits for face replacements on pole signs.
- 11/24: Pole signs must be removed if change of use, tenant or ownership.

Commissioner Comments:

Commissioner McGuirk: Monument-style signs are not visible nor are they artistic. Would like to move slowly so City is not harming small businesses due to cost associated with signs. Currently, new businesses must adhere to current sign permit requirements which replace the Pole sign with a Monument-style sign.

Commissioner Martin: Monument-style signs are preferred for safety reasons. During hurricane season, pole signs do not fare well and pose a threat to people and property.

Thinks we should stay with the decision to move to use of Monument-style signs. Asked what has been done by the City to notify businesses about the sign changes over past 12 years.

Commissioner Perrine has received at least 5 complaints about the use of the large “flag poles” by businesses on Canal Street. Suggested new letters be sent to businesses.

Commissioner Ashley Mentioned that Denny’s sign on Rte 44 is in disrepair and asked if repair has been addressed with the business by the City. He also inquired about any joint meetings with County & City on this issue.

Mayor Cleveland: Asked if there was a middle ground to have signs changed at time of disrepair or storm damage. Recommended an “attrition-based approach” to replacing pole signs as opposed to setting a date certain.

City Manager stated that we work to preserve character of area and do not make changes abruptly. Could provide CRA financial assistance in the redevelopment areas.

Sidewalk Project (*Presenter: David Ray - Director, Public Works*)

Background: 120 Miles of Sidewalk; \$30 - \$40k is budgeted Annually for Repair; Over the past 5 years most “new” sidewalks have been the result of transfer from the County

STUDY RESULTS:

- ❖ Sidewalk Analysis & Score: Good 77%; Fair 21%; Poor 2%
- ❖ Year 1 objective is to address anything rated as “Fair” or “Poor” within priority areas

Repairs: City brought in a contractor to help with repairs. Recent repairs have been completed on Canal and Riverside Drive. City staff will be meeting on Monday, 5/19/25 to review survey results and plans. Seeking to prioritize high pedestrian traffic areas when mapping out Stage I repairs. The goal is to develop a 2 – 7-year plan.

Obstacles are Right of Way Obstruction, Construction Activity, and Lack of Available Space

The City Manager noted that there is partial funding based on the need/priority of repairs. He will meet with staff to identify needs for repairs or updates.

Landscape Ordinance

- There were 255 tree removal permits processed in May of 2022. 4 were denied as the request was not in compliance with current regulations.
- Since 2023, there have been 7 violations of trees being removed.
- There is a state exemption for tree removal by a residential property owner if a home or structure is in danger due to a dangerous tree. The property owner is required to secure a report from a certified Arborist.
- There is a fine if a tree is removed without a permit. The penalty is 31 trees must be planted on property or donated to the City if the offender’s property is too small.
- There was discussion about concerns regarding monetary fines up to \$70,000 for removing a healthy tree without a permit. A question was posed if a resident could come to the Commissioners if they were fined and they could not afford the fine.
- The current Permit fee to request to remove a tree is \$28.00.
- This year a total of 89 trees have been donated because of violations. Public Works plants these on city property.

- Trees preserve and increase canopy and are a benefit to communities.

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A comment was made that we need to hold the local tree service vendors accountable for violations and permit requirements. City staff admitted that this is a huge part of the problem when there are violations to the tree removal ordinance. The City has no method to monitor tree removal companies and cannot take recourse against the vendor for violations. It is the responsibility of the property owner to follow the city ordinances.

The City Manager commented that the current ordinance for tree removal is excessive and the proposed changes are more reasonable. Policy decisions will be needed for instructions on clear cut tree removal criteria.

Maintaining a balance between "Tree City USA" and the protection of individual property rights was discussed. The City Commission will be discussing this topic again during its first regular meeting in July 2025.

COMMISSION COMMENTS

Closing Remarks:

- 27th Avenue beach access and park have been reviewed. Contracts sent out for solicitation. FEMA funding is not a straightforward path and this is complicated. Following a protocol that is dictated by FEMA.
- County has Grant money for storm water initiatives and NSB to take part.