

CITY COMMISSION WORK SESSION
September 12, 2016

The work session was called to order by Mayor Steve Leary at 2:09 p.m. in the Commission Chambers, 401 Park Avenue South, Winter Park, Florida.

Members present:

Mayor Steve Leary (arrived 2:40)
Commissioner Greg Seidel
Commissioner Sarah Sprinkel
Commissioner Carolyn Cooper
Commissioner Pete Weldon

Also present:

City Manager Randy Knight
City Clerk Cynthia Bonham

Presentation – Mead Garden long range plan

Mead Botanical Garden Executive Director Cynthia Hasenau commented that they are going to summarize what has been accomplished with the funds provided by the City over last 5 years, the improvements made, the programming that is taking place, the funds that have been raised and the number of people involved with the garden. She stated they will also discuss what will be done with the future investment they plan to make in the garden, what the City's commitment means in terms of the quality of life for the citizens, as well as the potential that exists for economic impact. Ms. Hasenau introduced Heather Caldwell, Forest Michael, Cynthia Wood, Linda Keen and Jeffrey Blydenburgh.

Linda Keen read into the record the presentation that they provided (attached).

Commissioner Sprinkel asked about the timeframe to achieve their goal. Ms. Keen stated it would take 10-15 years to achieve their goal.

Commissioner Cooper addressed this presentation being similar to the one presented years ago with the master plan and wanted to understand what the final goal is. Ms. Keen explained the Commission has before them what they have accomplished in the last five years and that they were not in the same place five years ago with their thinking compared to where they are today. She explained the master plan from 2007 was not done by a garden design expert and they did not have conditions that they wanted met from them like they would today because they now understand a lot more. She stated that ended up with a master plan that was not as usable. Ms. Hasenau spoke about the difference between ornamental gardens and natural gardens.

Commissioner Seidel asked about the fiscal impacts and their request of \$100,000 per year for capital. City Manager Knight spoke about the prior Commission funding commitments and City staffing at the garden. Ms. Hasenau commented about the public-private partnership they have with the City and the types of things they sometimes pay for. She spoke about their desire to be better at their communication skills because of their lack of staffing.

Future funding was discussed as related to the City's portion and the obligation they have to find additional charitable contributions in addition to the City's contributions. There was discussion regarding future Commissions not being bound by what they approve because future Commissioners can change what the current Commission approves.

Commissioner Weldon commented positively about what the organization has already done with funds provided by the City. He spoke about the prior request for the City to fund the \$150,000 projected cost to do a complete master plan. He complimented Mead Gardens for backtracking on that and realizing that is the organization's responsibility. He spoke about the \$85,000 recommended by the City Manager and the capital request forthcoming that he wanted to know exactly what those funds would be used for.

Commissioner Sprinkel commented that she would like to see what the step by step process will look like for the following years so they have a long term plan. Mr. Blydenburgh commented that will be a part of the master plan process that will take around 9-12 months and one deliverable will be a year by year phase of what is happening.

Presentation – Electric undergrounding update

Public Works Director Troy Attaway spoke about previous discussions regarding revising the existing undergrounding plan to be more efficient, timely and fiscally responsible. He stated they want to provide larger scale projects where they could loop all the feeds instead of having one way feeds that are underground. He summarized the improvements they want to make in the plan. Dan D'Alessandro spoke about the overhead lines.

Mr. Attaway provided a new revised project plan area and their undergrounding efforts for 26 different projects that more in a geographic area and allows them to provide looped feeds and do an entire neighborhood instead of one street. He stated this will also mostly eliminate the underground feeding overhead and will be assessing the existing undergrounding in those geographic areas as some undergrounding is old. He stated their goal is to complete about 5 miles per year and estimated 2-3 projects per year. He stated they are anticipating completion third quarter of fiscal year 2026. Mr. Attaway stated the intent is to retain the current priority list and spoke about what they have accomplished so far this year.

The funds budgeted per year was discussed. Mayor Leary asked for more regular updates. Mr. D'Alessandro spoke about trees and that Forestry personnel are aware of what is taking place so they coordinate efforts.

Upon comments, Mayor Leary asked staff to pull together an expedited CRA plan to bring to the CRA Advisory Board and then to the CRA Agency meeting.

Commissioner Sprinkel addressed the importance of a lot of communication since the plan has changed.

The meeting adjourned at 3:20 p.m.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Cynthia S. Bonham". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end of the last name.

City Clerk Cynthia S. Bonham, MMC

September 12, 2016, City Commission Workshop Presentation by MBG Inc.

As you are all aware, Mead Garden is composed of 47 acres of land originally deeded to the City in 1936 by five individuals, to be operated as a botanical garden. After receiving our 50(c)3 status, our Board of sixteen (16) volunteers have stewarded the Garden, operating Mead under a Lease from the City since 2012 as a public-private partnership. And indeed, this is a City-owned asset, and one of the best.



Mead Botanical Garden is well positioned to enhance and promote the four pillars from the Vision Winter Park work.

Pillar #1 – Cherish the quality of life, by promoting a place for nature, with active, walkable, safe and lighted areas, clean air and water, and an enhanced healthy lifestyle

Pillar #2 – Define a sustainable future for the Garden, using collaboration and master planning

Pillar #3 – Integrate arts and cultural events, into the Garden

Pillar #4 – Build, enhance and embrace our 76 year-old Winter Park institution, Mead Botanical Garden, for lifelong learning about nature, and the value of the world in which we live.

All of these pillars can and will be achieved at Mead Botanical Garden.

Over the years, our board has learned what makes up these 47 acres – the ecosystems, wildlife and habitat, the plants that are here (some dating back to the garden's opening in 1940), the infrastructure needs of the garden and we have a clear picture of its diverse users. Looking to other successful gardens around the country and the world, we have gained insight into the best ideas in function and design that can be applied to Mead and appeal to the citizens of Winter Park. We have identified experts in garden design, as well as best practices in programming and oversight.

What will Mead look like in 20 years? We do not know at this point. And, it is not up to us alone to make the final decision of what Mead can become. But it will be made in partnership with you, the Winter Park City Commission and the Winter Park Community. The "ultimate" plan must be comprehensive and sustainable and include features and programs that correspond to the needs and interests of our community.

This plan must also include best practices for the conservation of our natural resources, as well as venues for education, arts and culture. Mead is a "natural" botanic garden, not a traditional "ornamental" botanic garden, such as Leu Garden. This establishes Mead's distinction as a 21st century "natural" botanic garden, which puts us in the forefront of the current trend in botanic gardens around the country.

Our future plans may involve revenue areas that can offset some of the financial needs of the Garden. And, it will also include showpiece horticultural areas; a Visitor's Center to welcome and guide visitors; convenient parking; safe ADA compatible lighted trails and access-ways; designated areas for learning about nature, earth and water resources; areas for cultural and arts performances; areas for quiet and solitude; areas for celebratory community gatherings and weddings; and, most of all, **natural beauty**.

We have learned that botanic gardens can generate enormous economic benefits for their communities. Take for an example the Coastal Maine Botanic Garden. We have been regularly consulting with this "natural" botanic garden, which is similar to Mead in basic operating size, and has been open for 15 years. It was constructed three miles outside Boothbay Harbor, and as you

can see from this chart, it started with an attendance of 0 in 2006. In 2016 it had an attendance of 155,000, and a community economic annual impact of over \$39.5 million dollars.

To orient our minds as to what the possibilities and future may be, let us look at few other Gardens we have researched:

(Series of slides of other gardens)

Today Mead is a magnet of activity and exploration, as well as solitude and serenity, drawing an estimated 47,000 visitors annually. Mead is a living museum, a vibrant classroom, an ecological learning lab, and a place for people of all ages to see plant collections and experience the natural world, — a special place for memorable occasions, concerts and cultural events. And, of course, our number one visitors are the birds.

Mead Garden can become a primary visitor destination, and a spectacular asset of the City of Winter Park.

During the years of our involvement in Mead, the City has contributed approximately \$760,000, and we have leveraged our 501(c)3 charitable status to generate about \$3.2 million dollars in donations and grants for the Garden, plus receiving over 66,000 volunteer hours — a staggering amount of community involvement. This is the major strength and advantage of our public-private partnership.

With what the City has made possible, from your investment of operating and capital allocations over the past five years, along with our financial resources and manpower commitment, we have transformed the Garden with these significant capital projects:

Remodeled the tractor barn creating our Learning Center

Remodeled, reroofed and added a covered deck to the Environmental House

Dredged Alice's Pond — restoring its natural habitat

Removed invasive species, created access paths, replanted the "old" City clay pit making it into an Environmental Storm Water Learning Garden

Rebuilt the dilapidated greenhouse, created the Legacy Garden, and expanded the Camellia Garden, adding over 400 Camellia bushes

Restored the "historic" Pole Barn, now being used as a classroom and venue for rentals

It all comes down to people – and then there are the real stories . . .

Ian is a military veteran and photographer (and we have scores of photographers involved in Mead) who came to the Garden looking for a quiet outdoor place to do tai chi, and hold classes for other veterans. And then there are Bill and Joe, recent retirees who individually came to the Garden every morning for a walk. These three (3) men, who previously did not know each other, have become good friends, meeting daily in the Garden, sitting in the pole barn. They have also become ambassadors for the Garden, greeting people and pointing out special spots that newcomers might miss.

Continuing the list of improvements we have completed or are contemplating:

We funded and built a magnificent outdoor performance stage ~ the Grove, used for events like Valentine's Day with the BuzzCats and the Florida Symphony Youth Orchestra holiday concert

Refurbishing and landscaping the Little Amphitheater, home to many memorable events

We are designing and preparing to enhance the entrance area to Mead Garden

Completed the southern section of the Nature Boardwalk over the wetlands in Lake Lillian, restored with open-water and replanted habitat - - made possible by the \$400,000 grant from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, and the \$50,000 grant from Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

Replanted natural habitat and purchased and planted dozens of trees on the property

Established and expanded the Butterfly Garden

Established the City's first Community Garden

Constructed a trailhead and walkable paths and trails

With these capital projects in place, we have then been able to offer effective and exciting programming, utilizing and extraordinary volunteer service, with over **66,000 hours of volunteer commitment**.

Created and expanded our Summer Youth Camp Program, with over 360 campers in 2016 ... this year we had an incredibly long waitlist of over 100.

I must tell you about one of our campers:

Sarah came to us as a camper in the summer of 2012. Her mother was reluctant to register her because of her condition - a mild form of autism that impacted her social and communication skills. Emily rarely spoke, was difficult to understand, and could be overwhelmed in unfamiliar situations. Our Camp Director Stephanie encouraged her mother to give Mead a try. The first day was rough, some meltdowns during hikes. Stephanie and the staff got through it, and each day got better and better. By the end of the first week, Sarah had such a great experience that her mother asked if she could come back the following week, and the week after that, and the week after that...

Since that summer in 2012, Sarah has been back nearly every week. This year, Sarah, who is now 14 years old, has become part of the CIT Volunteer Camp Staff.

We have also:

Regularly hosted major family-centered events in the Garden, such as the Duck Derby, Backyard Biodiversity Day and the community-wide GROWvember Plant Sale

Offered field trips and programs for schools and civic groups, such as the Scouts

Created on-going education programs, and our new Tyke Hikes for families

And we completed all of these activities through collaboration and partnerships with many affiliated groups, such as the Winter Park Garden Club, Orange Audubon Society, Florida Native Plant Society, Camellia Society, Valencia College, Rollins College, Full Sail University, Florida Symphony Youth Orchestra, and the Winter Park High School Band

As to the future, how can we enhance and develop the "renewed" Mead Garden and empower the economic driver that it has the potential to become?

We propose a new Master Plan be prepared by a "garden design" expert, through funding from our organization, with significant input from the City and community, that addresses these components as to the "future" Mead Garden's needs:

- Security and Signage
- Lighting
- ADA Trails and Paths
- Convenient Parking
- A Visitor Center

Places for education, arts & cultural performances and nature play
Horticulture Showpiece Gardens
Sculpture and water features
Quiet and Solitude

What will all of this cost? At this early stage, we estimate it may cost approximately \$10 million dollars in capital funding to bring Mead up to its potential, and our shared vision.

It will also involve an operating budget to run the Garden once it is completed. The required budget will depend on what makes up the Garden and related programming, as defined by the Master Plan and the community.

As a point of reference, let us take a look at a neighboring garden we all are familiar with – Leu Garden, a City of Orlando asset. The annual operating cost for Leu is \$2.5 million dollars. Of this, \$900,000 is received from on-site revenue and grants, with the City of Orlando providing \$1.5 million dollars annually.

While we will not look like Leu, Mead Garden in the future will require a larger operating budget than we have today.

We have and will use our 501(c)3 status to help leverage the needed investments in Mead, however we must also have the City's help to achieve our goals. We will not only need to complete a sophisticated and detailed Business Plan, as well as a "new" Master Plan, but we will also need staff to provide the strategy and collateral materials to secure the major donations leading up to a Capital Campaign.

It will be essential to carefully layer grant opportunities, and the timing of those awards. Funding from the City of Winter Park is essential in our ability to acquire matching grants. For example, the *Florida Cultural Facilities Grant*, which has funded many organizations around the State including Naples Botanic Garden, Bok Tower Gardens and the Jacksonville Zoo, they require that matching funds be in the bank before we can even apply for the grant.

It will also be imperative to choose a fundraising window in our community, to minimize competition from other organizations that are raising funds at the same time.

In five to seven years, after securing major "seed gifts," we will be in a position to successfully launch a Capital Campaign to complete the development of the Garden. We will leverage private investments and philanthropy and use the benefits of our non-profit status.

With all of that said, we stand at an important and pivotal point in the Garden's history. The residents need the City's continued participation and support for this City-owned asset.

Today we ask that the Capital Allocation of \$100,000 be included in your 2016-17 fiscal year budget, which will be used to make continued improvements to enhance this wonderful asset.

In addition, we ask for your commitment to fund Mead Botanical Garden for the next five (5) years.

We're excited to go forward with you in enhancing this garden as a very special place of nature in the heart of Winter Park. And, Mead Botanical Garden is a place where all the major pillars of the Vision Winter Park can come to life.

We at Mead Botanical Garden, Inc. offer our caring stewardship, our charitable status for leveraging investments, and our knowledge base for this endeavor.