

KAREN DEMARIA
PO Box 420975
SUMMERLAND KEY, FL 33042

DATE: May 19, 2025

RE: City of Key West Tree Commission Budget Resolution

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this in support of a resolution to stabilize and increase the staff of the urban forestry department. I was the former urban forestry manager for over 13 years and during my tenure, staff included myself and an administrative assistant/permit technician. During the entire time of my employment, I requested an assistant every year during the budget cycle. I recognized at the start of my employment with the city that the amount of work required to do the job successfully was more than one urban forestry manager and a permit technician could handle and made my concerns known to management.

City code Sec 110-286, Personnel, states “as provided by the annual city budget, the city manager shall provide appropriate staff to enable the tree commission to full fill its duties.....” I was barely able to fulfill the duties required of the tree ordinance and tree commission related to the submittal and processing of applications, processing of permits, inspections, documentation, enforcement, and closure of permits when it was myself and a permit technician then add on top of that work, the work of supporting staff from other departments with their projects including planning, engineering, and community services. I did the best I could, and I continued every year requesting an assistant. It was common for me to work 50 hours a week just to get the basics of the job done.

In past budget discussions, the previous finance director would say that the Tree Commission needed to start requiring fees in order to add staff. In August 2022, fees were initiated related to the processing of Tree Commission permits, projects, and enforcement cases, and some urban forestry department reviews. Last year during the 2024-2025 budget discussion, the Tree Commission supported by members of the city commission, approved two resolutions, TC24-01 and TC24-02, that were subsequently approved by the City Commission (May 9, 2025 and September 12, 2024) that supported the hiring of additional staff to support the work of the urban forestry department and tree commission to include the hiring of an assistant and also, supporting the goal of increasing the tree canopy. The canopy resolution states that the urban forestry department should be adequately staffed in order for the resolution to succeed. Presently, the urban forestry department is NOT adequately staffed and is barely able to function in its duties to support the tree commission.

What is not being done? Enforcement cases are not being processed in a timely manner, signed Tree Commission Settlement Agreements have not been followed up on and processed to the Special Magistrate, as required, old tree commission permits have also not been sent to the special magistrate as

recommended by city code, proactive management of the tree canopy and newly planted trees is not being done and basic education of the public and staff is being done on a very limited basis. Also, updates to the land development regulations have not been done.

Since February 2025, the permit tech position has been vacant. A new urban forestry manager and a part time assistant urban forestry manager was also hired in February 2025. It has come to my attention that upper management is not allowing the permit tech position to be filled therefore, reducing the staffing so that instead of the previous 2 positions working toward the requirements of the tree ordinance, there are now 1.5 positions. The tree related resolutions from 2024 mentioned above requested a minimum of 3 positions. We seem to be moving backyard not forward.

Why is the permit technician position so important? That position helps to allow the urban forestry manager to actually think, to be able to write reports, review plans and documents in a manner that allows for thought and no mistakes, and to meet with the public and clients whether in the office or in the field. The permit technician takes applications, reviews them for completeness, verifies ownership, inputs the applications into TRAKIT and the Excel tree database, processes the permits, collects the fees, creates and processes the tree commission meeting notice letters, creates and processes the permit close out reminder letters, scans all the related documents into the city electronic filing systems, and answers basic questions from the public related to the tree ordinance and permitting requirements. The permit tech position is an integral part of the urban forestry department team.

I strongly recommend and support any resolution from the Tree Commission to the City Commission that reminds the city commission of their agreeance in 2024 to increasing not decreasing the urban forestry department staff. A permit tech position is greatly needed and should be staffed, and the assistant position should be made to a full time position.

Sincerely,

Karen DeMaria

Karen DeMaria

KWTreelady@gmail.com

Attachments: Copies documents related to TC2024-01 and TC2024-02

- 5 *Acknowledging and accepting for consideration the recommendations from the Tree Commission set forth in "TC Resolution 21-01".

Sponsors: Vice Mayor Kaufman

Attachments: [Resolution](#)

[Cover Memo](#)

[TC Resolution 24-01](#)

Legislative History

4/2/24 Tree Commission Passed

- 6 *Authorizing Literacy Volunteers of America-Monroe County, Inc. to conduct it's Annual Caribbean Street Fair on Saturday, July 20, 2024, from 10:00 A.M. to 9:00 P.M. (Set up at 8:00 A.M.); Pursuant to Terms and Conditions set forth by the City Manager; Authorizing the closure of the 200, 300 & 400 blocks of Duval Street between the hours of 10:00 A.M. to 9:00 P.M.

Sponsors: City Manager Childress

Attachments: [Resolution](#)

[Cover Memo](#)

[Special Event Application](#)

- 7 *Authorizing Integrity Sports, Inc. to conduct the Southernmost Half Marathon on Sunday, October 13, 2024, from 6:00 A.M. to 10:00 A.M. (Set up will be at Higgs Beach on Saturday, October 12, 2024); The race will be starting from Higgs Beach Park and ending at Higgs Beach after running through City; Pursuant to terms and conditions set forth by the City Manager; Providing for an effective date.

Sponsors: City Manager Childress

Attachments: [Resolution](#)

[Cover Memo](#)


[Application, Approvals & Maps](#)



MEMORANDUM

Date: May 9, 2024

To: Honorable Mayor and Commissioners

Via: Albert P. Childress 
City Manager

From: Katie P. Halloran
Director, Planning Department

Subject: **File 24-5695 Presenting Tree Commission Resolution 24-01 in response to a City Commission request for budgetary and personnel recommendations to support the City's urban forestry program**

Introduction

The Planning Department recommends that the City Commission carefully consider and take action to realize budgetary and personnel requests as outlined by the Tree Commission through Resolution 24-01. These requests would function to support and improve the City's capacity to protect and improve its trees and shrubs, natural areas, and the forestry program's education and outreach services.

Background

The City Manager requested that the Tree Commission provide a presentation to the City Commission. The City of Key West Tree Commission Chairman, Misha D. McRae, presented to the City Commission at the February 8, 2024 hearing. At that hearing Commissioner Kaufman requested that the Tree Commission provide specific budgetary and programmatic recommendations to the City Commission at their earliest convenience. At their April 2, 2024, hearing, the Tree Commission discussed future actions and investments that could improve tree protection and support environmental and strategic plan goals associated with the urban tree canopy, and the Tree Commission. With support from the outgoing Urban Forestry Manager Karen DeMaria, and the Tree Commission attorney, Kendal Harden, the Tree Commission developed and approved Resolution 24-01, for consideration by the City Commission.

For fiscal year 24/25 the Tree Commission recommends that the City Commission consider allocating funding for the following:

- Establish one full-time position with job title, "Assistant Urban Forester".
- Train and credential up to two arborists within Urban Forestry and the Community Service Department with International Society of Arboriculture ("ISA") certification.
- Acquire an insulated aerial vehicle for proper vegetation maintenance.
- Fund routine vegetation maintenance.
- Fund annual training for proper installation and maintenance of local vegetation.
- Hire outside maintenance crews, when necessary.
- Finalize and implement the Evergreen Study for the Urban Forester and all associated positions.

Procurement

Tree Commission Resolution 24-01 provides multiple budgetary recommendations for City staff and City Commission consideration for fiscal year 24/25. The resolution also requests that City staff determine the exact funding required to fulfill the aforementioned budgetary and personnel recommendations and that City Commission allocate that funding for FY 24/25.

Recommendation

The City Manager's Office recommends the Mayor and Commission consider Tree Commission Resolution 24-01 and consider allocation of associated funding during fiscal year 24/25 budget hearings. The Planning Department supports the Tree Commission's recommendations.

Exhibits:

Exhibit A – Tree Commission Resolution 24-01

RESOLUTION NO. _____

**A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COMMISSION OF THE
CITY OF KEY WEST, FLORIDA, ACKNOWLEDGING AND
ACCEPTING FOR CONSIDERATION THE
RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE TREE COMMISSION SET
FORTH IN "TC RESOLUTION 24-01"; PROVIDING FOR
AN EFFECTIVE DATE**

WHEREAS, at its meeting on April 2, 2024, the Tree Commission approved a resolution which contains several recommendations for funding, staffing, training, equipment and services for the urban forestry office and related staff to protect and enhance the health, growth and planting of trees in the City in fiscal year 2024-2025; and

WHEREAS, the City Commission acknowledges the recommendations of the Tree Commission, and requests City staff to address these requests, and make further recommendations to the Commission during the budget approval process; and

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF KEY WEST, FLORIDA, AS FOLLOWS:

Section 1: That the City Commission acknowledges and accepts the recommendations of the Tree Commission set forth in "TC Resolution 24-01."

Section 2: That City staff is directed to determine costs and feasibility of the Tree Commission recommendations, and make further recommendations during the budget process for Fiscal Year 2024-25.

Section 3: That this Resolution shall go into effect immediately upon its passage and adoption and authentication by the signature of the Presiding Officer and the Clerk of the Commission.

Passed and adopted by the City Commission at a meeting held this _____ day of _____, 2024.

Authenticated by the Presiding Officer and Clerk of the Commission on _____ day of _____, 2024.

Filed with the Clerk on _____, 2024.

Mayor Teri Johnston	_____
Vice Mayor Sam Kaufman	_____
Commissioner Lissette Carey	_____
Commissioner Mary Lou Hoover	_____
Commissioner Clayton Lopez	_____
Commissioner Billy Wardlow	_____
Commissioner Jimmy Weekley	_____

TERI JOHNSTON, MAYOR

ATTEST:

KERI O'BRIEN, CITY CLERK

RESOLUTION NO. TC Resolution 24-01

A RESOLUTION OF THE TREE COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF KEY WEST, FLORIDA, RECOMMENDING THE ALLOCATION OF FUNDING TO CREATE ONE FULL-TIME POSITION WITH THE JOB TITLE OF "ASSISTANT URBAN FORESTER," THE ALLOCATION OF FUNDING FOR TRAINING AND CREDENTIALING FOR UP TO TWO ARBORISTS WITHIN THE COMMUNITY SERVICE DEPARTMENT, THE ALLOCATION OF FUNDING FOR AN INSULATED AERIAL VEHICLE FOR PROPER VEGETATION MAINTENANCE, THE ALLOCATION OF FUNDING FOR ROUTINE VEGETATION MAINTENANCE, THE ALLOCATION OF FUNDING FOR THE HIRING OF OUTSIDE VEGETATION MAINTENANCE CREWS, AND THE ALLOCATION OF FUNDING FOR ANNUAL TRAINING FOR PROPER INSTALLATION AND MAINTENANCE OF LOCAL VEGETATION, AND THE FINALIZATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EVERGREEN STUDY FOR FISCAL YEAR 24-25; PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE

WHEREAS, City Code Section 90-182 assigns power and duty to the Tree Commission to protect and enhance the health, growth, and planting of trees in the city; and

WHEREAS, at its meeting of April 2, 2024, the Tree Commission discussed future actions and investments that could improve tree protection and support strategic plan goals for environmental protection in the City of Key West; and

WHEREAS, the Tree Commission determined to request that the City Commission and City staff consider for Fiscal Year 24-25 the creation of a full-time position of Assistant Urban

Forester, to allocate sufficient funding for two members of the community service department to be trained as certified arborists, to allocate sufficient funding for an insulated aerial vehicle for proper vegetation management, to allocate sufficient funding for routine vegetation maintenance, to allocate sufficient funding for the hiring of outside vegetation maintenance crews, and to further allocate sufficient funding for annual training for proper installation and maintenance of vegetation, and to finalize and implement the Evergreen study for the Urban Forester and all associated positions, to further the mission of the tree commission; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE KEY WEST TREE COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF KEY WEST, FLORIDA AS FOLLOWS:

Section 1: That the Tree Commission recommends that during the budget process for FY 24-25, that City Staff and Commissioners create a full-time position for "Assistant Urban Forester";

Section 2: That the Tree Commission recommends that City Staff and Commissioners budget funds for the Urban Forestry and Community Services Department to obtain arborists training and certification from the International Society of Arboriculture ("ISA");

Section 3: That the Tree Commission recommends that City Staff and Commissioners budget funds for an insulated aerial vehicle for proper vegetation management;

Section 4: That the Tree Commission recommends that City Staff and Commissioners budget funds for annual training for proper installation and maintenance of local vegetation;

Section 5: That the Tree Commission recommends that City Staff and Commissioners budget funds for routine zoned vegetation maintenance;

Section 6: That the Tree Commission recommends that City Staff and Commissioners budget funds for the hiring of outside vegetation maintenance crews, if necessary;

Section 7: That the Tree Commission recommends that City Staff and Commissioners finalize and implement the Evergreen study for the Urban Forester position and all associated positions;

Section 7 8: That the Tree Commission requests City staff to determine and allocate the exact funding required to fulfill these requests, and to recommend such funding for City Commission approval in the FY 24-25 budget.

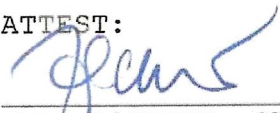
Section 8: That this Resolution shall go into effect immediately upon its passage and adoption and authentication by the signature of the Presiding Officer and the Clerk of the Tree Commission.

Passed and adopted by the Key West Tree Commission at a meeting held this 2nd day of April, 2024.

Filed with the Clerk on April 2, 2024.


MISHA McRAE, CHAIR

ATTEST:


KERI O'BRIEN, CLERK



MEMORANDUM

Date: September 12, 2024

To: Honorable Mayor and Commissioners

Via: Todd Stoughton
Interim City Manager

From: Katie P. Halloran
Director, Planning Department

Subject: **File 24-5834 Presenting Tree Commission Resolution 24-02, Canopy Incentives**

Introduction

The Planning Department recommends that the City Commission carefully consider and take action to the requests as outlined by the Tree Commission through Resolution 24-02. These requests would function to support and improve the City's canopy coverage.

Background

The City Manager requested that the Tree Commission provide a presentation to the City Commission. The City of Key West Tree Commission Chairman, Misha D. McRae, presented to the City Commission at the February 8, 2024, hearing. At that hearing Commissioner Kaufman requested that the Tree Commission provide specific budgetary and programmatic recommendations to the City Commission at their earliest convenience.

At their March 5, 2024, and June 4, 2024 hearings, the Tree Commission received public input and discussed future actions and investments that could improve tree protection and support environmental and strategic plan goals associated with the urban tree canopy, and the Tree Commission.

With support from the outgoing Urban Forestry Manager Karen DeMaria, and the Tree Commission attorney, Kendal Harden, the Tree Commission developed and approved Resolution 24-02, for consideration by the City Commission.

Procurement

Tree Commission Resolution 24-02, Increasing Green Inventory of Canopy Trees, provides multiple recommendations and goals for City staff and City Commission consideration for the next fiscal year and for years to come. The resolution also acknowledges that the goals and recommendations cannot be done without the urban forestry division being adequately staffed to manage the goals and recommendations.

Recommendation

The City Manager's Office recommends the Mayor and Commission consider Tree Commission Resolution 24-02. The Planning Department supports the Tree Commission's recommendations.

Exhibits:

Exhibit A – Tree Commission Resolution 24-02

Exhibit B – Tree Commission Staff Report

RESOLUTION NO. _____

**A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COMMISSION OF THE
CITY OF KEY WEST, FLORIDA, ACKNOWLEDGING
AND ACCEPTING FOR CONSIDERATION THE
RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE TREE COMMISSION
SET FORTH IN "TC RESOLUTION 24-02";
PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE**

WHEREAS, at its meeting on July 2, 2024, the Tree Commission approved a resolution which contains recommendations to increase the tree canopy cover in the City of Key West; and

WHEREAS, the Tree Commission's resolution recommends that the City of Key West should make it a priority, when appropriate, to plant canopy trees on public property and in city parks;

WHEREAS, the Tree Commission recommends that the City of Key West should increase green inventory by obtaining grant, community, and private funding; and

WHEREAS, the Tree Commission recommends implementation of an adoption program for public and private property planting, and through adequate staffing of the Urban Forestry Division; and

WHEREAS, the City Commission acknowledges the recommendations of the Tree Commission, and requests City staff to address these requests, and make further recommendations to the Commission during the budget approval process.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COMMISSION OF
THE CITY OF KEY WEST, FLORIDA, AS FOLLOWS:

Section 1: That the City Commission acknowledges and accepts
the recommendations of the Tree Commission set forth
in "TC Resolution 24-02."

Section 2: That City staff is directed to determine costs and
feasibility of the Tree Commission recommendations and make further
recommendations during the budget process for Fiscal Year 2024-25.

Section 3: That this Resolution shall go into effect
immediately upon its passage and adoption and authentication by
the signature of the Presiding Officer and the Clerk of the
Commission.

Passed and adopted by the City Commission at a meeting
held this _____ day of September, 2024.

Authenticated by the Presiding Officer and Clerk of the
Commission on the _____ day of September, 2024.

Filed with the Clerk _____, 2024.

Mayor Danise Henriquez _____

Vice Mayor Sam Kaufman _____

Commissioner Lissette Carey _____

Commissioner Monica Haskell _____

Commissioner Mary Lou Hoover _____

Commissioner Donie Lee _____

Commissioner Clayton Lopez _____

DANISE HENRIQUEZ, MAYOR

ATTEST:

KERI O'BRIEN, CITY CLERK

RESOLUTION NO. TC 24-02

A RESOLUTION OF THE TREE COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF KEY WEST, FLORIDA, RECOMMENDING THAT THE CITY COMMISSION INCREASE GREEN INVENTORY OF CANOPY TREES BY OBTAINING GRANT FUNDING; RECOMMENDING INITIATION OF PROGRAMS TO ENCOURAGE THE PLANTING OF CANOPY TREES; RECOMMENDING THAT THE CITY IMPLEMENT AN ADOPTION PROGRAM TO ENCOURAGE THE PLANTING OF CANOPY TREES ON PRIVATE PROPERTY; RECOMMENDING THAT THE CITY SET OF GOAL TO INCREASE GREEN INVENTORY; RECOMMENDING THAT THE URBAN FORESTRY DIVISION BE ADEQUATELY STAFFED TO MEET THESE GOALS; PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE

WHEREAS, the Tree Commission recognizes that canopy trees are essential to the beauty, comfort, sustainability and history of Key West; and

WHEREAS, the Tree Commission recommends that the City of Key West should make it a priority, when appropriate, to plant Canopy Trees on public property and in city parks; and

WHEREAS, the Tree Commission recommends that the City of Key West should increase green inventory by obtaining grant, community, and private funding; and

WHEREAS, the Tree Commission recommends that the City of Key West should initiate programs with other local organizations, citizens, and government entities to encourage the planting of canopy trees in parking lots, schools, and other areas that currently have the space to accommodate such

canopy trees; and

WHEREAS, the Tree Commission recommends that the City of Key West implement a canopy tree adoption program to encourage homeowners and business owners to plant canopy trees on their properties; and

WHEREAS, the Tree Commission recommends that the City of Key West should set a goal of increasing the City's green inventory; and

WHEREAS, the Tree Commission recommends that to ensure that the City's goals are met, the City of Key West should adequately staff the urban forestry department.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE KEY WEST TREE COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF KEY WEST, FLORIDA AS FOLLOWS:

Section 1: That in order to facilitate the planting of more Canopy trees, the Tree Commission recommends the City of Key West to obtain grant funding that is specific to the planting of canopy trees and increasing the City's green inventory.

Section 2: That in order to facilitate the planting of more canopy trees in the City of Key West, the Tree Commission recommends that the City initiate programs with other local organizations, citizens, and government entities to encourage the planting of canopy trees in parking lots, schools, and other areas that currently have the space to

accommodate such canopy trees.

Section 3: That in order to incentive planting of more canopy trees, the Tree Commission recommends that the City implement a canopy tree adoption program by allocating funding for the procurement of individual trees that are intended for planting on private residential property throughout the Community, to encourage and empower homeowners and business owners to plant canopy trees on their properties.

Section 4: That the City should commit to increasing the City of Key West's green inventory by forty (40%) percent.


Section 5: That in order to ensure that these goals are achieved, that the City of Key West should adequately staff the urban forestry department.

Section 4 6: That this Resolution shall go into effect immediately upon its passage and adoption and authentication by the signature of the Presiding Officer and the Clerk of the Tree Commission.

Passed and adopted by the Key West Tree Commission at a meeting held this 7 2nd day of ~~May~~ July, 2024.

Authenticated by the Presiding Officer and Clerk of the Key West Tree Commission on 11th day of July, 2024.

Filed with the Clerk on July 2nd 11 , 2024.


MISHA McRAE, CHAIR

ATTEST:


KERI O'BRIEN, CITY CLERK