COUNTY DEPARTMENT AGENDA REQUEST

Department:	Buildings and Grounds Maintenance	Presenter(s):	Greg Ownby
Meeting Date:	Wednesday, July 1, 2009	Type of Request:	Old Business

Wording for the Agenda:

Update on the landscaping project at the Old Courthouse.

Background/History/Details:

Last year, the County recognized that the landscaping at the Old Courthouse Square needed to be updated/replaced. Many of the plantings have "outlived" their beauty and the grassed areas need to be rehabilitated. Buildings and Grounds Maintenance developed a preliminary design and contacted the Extension Service for assistance with identifying drought resistant plants and to evaluate the health and viability of existing plants. The Extension Service took on the project and a number of committees, including Master Gardeners, industry professionals, and county staff are working to develop an final overall design that will include low water, low maintenance, indigenous plantings. The large trees, however, present issues to be considered. The overall condition of the large, old trees is in question, and UGA has promised to have their experts evaluate the trees for the presence of disease and to recommend treatment, or even removal, if their root systems are compromised. Until this evaluation has been completed, a final design is on hold because the presence of trees, their root systems and canopies, affect what what can be planted, including types of grasses, etc. A new design will include water conservation elements, pervious hardscaping, and the removal/replacement of some of the "tired" plantings. Most of the work will be done by the County's Buildings and Grounds personnel. Grant funding is expected for some of the cost, but until a final plan is developed, the entire cost cannot be known. At this time, the Extension Service is awaiting the evaluation of the trees by the UGA expert. In order to resume some degree of progress on this project, there is some work County personnel can perform that will not interfere with a final design, if that would be helpful.

What action are you seeking from the Board of Commissioners?

Hear update. Determine if the County wishes to wait indefinitely for the evaluation by UGA or is some other action should be taken to help move the project along.

If this item requires funding, please describe:

Grant funding is being sought. Final cost is unknown. May require funding from the County in the future.

Has this issue come before the Commissioners in the past?	Yes	If so, when?	
Do you need audio-visual for the presentation?		Back-up Material Submitted?	No

STAFF USE ONLY

Approved by Finance	Yes	Reviewed by Legal	Yes
Approved by Purchasing	Yes	Approved by County Clerk	Yes
Administrator's Approval	Yes		

Staff Notes:

Planning Session
Old Courthouse Landscape Development Project
Friday, February 13, 2009

People in attendance:

- Nancy Howard - Fayette County Engineering Dept.,
- Robbi Martin - Andy's Nursery, Virginia Gibbs - Fayette County Chamber of Commerce,
- Patsy and Ed Gullet, Main Street Art Show,
- Brian Wismer, Fayette Main Street
- Sheldon Hammond, U.G.A. Cooperative Extension – NW District, and
- Craig Gross – U.G.A. Cooperative Extension – Fayette County

Background:

- The group was shown some pictures taken from the Old Courthouse as they entered the room and the items were discussed. Craig went over the topics that were discussed in the previous planning session. Reminded of Mr. Krakeel's initiative that the landscape be an educational showpiece featuring new and innovative ideas and materials for the public to see and utilize.
- Craig discussed the Urban Tree Foundation Grant and the fact that we received almost $3,250.00 to produce and "educational program and exhibit" at the landscape.
- Nancy discussed the 319 Grant that the county wrote – hoping for award notification in late March or April.
- Materials and suggestions discussed in the last meeting were handed out. Materials included:
    - Permeable pavers
    - Cisterns
    - Irrigation options

Discussion was then held on components to think about when planning:

- Virginia Gibbs – security and access to the trash receptacles.
- Patsy and Ed Gullet - Art Show
    - walking paths
    - traffic flow
    - display areas
- Educational Aspects
    - Rain gardens
    - Rain barrels
    - Signage
    - Usability
- Irrigation
    - Irrigation types
    - Weather utilization for programming
    - Education for accurate and precise irrigation
- Grass/Turf
- Plants/shrubs

The group discussed the landscape and the hardscape that currently exists. After viewing pictures of some of the existing plants, it was decided the next step would be to conduct a health and value audit of

the plants. Sheldon was going to contact Dr. Kim Coder at UGA to have them do assessments and evaluate the trees and shrubs.
Discussion was conducted on what kind of educational exhibits could be done and the best feasibility for demonstrating while still allowing for a open flow to conduct the Art Show and other events on the grounds. Some topics included were:

- Access to the building via the east side sidewalk (vehicles drive on it)
- The inner circle – possible reworking or eliminating it to be more feasible for education and movement
- The shaded path on the northeast corner - accessibility
- Possible removal of the perimeter fence (shrub hedge)
- Cisterns/rain barrels
- Irrigation systems

Conesus of the group was to come up with a list of ideas, suggestions and goals for the landscape.

- Those would include storm water management /water conservation (cisterns, rain barrels, water gardens, etc)
- Irrigation (narrowing to 4-5 things and looking to the future)
- Hardscape (permeable pavers, grass blocks, etc.)
- Turf grass suggestions – possibly a variety showcase
- Plant varieties and suggestions
- Design considerations (xeriscape, drought tolerance, native, shade area, hardy areas, etc)
- Open Design for special events (Art Show)

The Next Steps:

1. Continue work on fund development
2. Conduct tree and plant evaluation – Sheldon Hammond and Dr. Kim Coder (UGA)
3. Present evaluation to county administration
4. Come up with goals for each program group
    - **Water Conservation** – Nancy Howard (Wade Lester)
    - **Irrigation** – Sheldon Hammond (Wade Lester)
    - **Hardscapes** – Nancy Howard, Robbi Martin and Craig Gross – Josh Kirby
    - **Turf grass considerations** – Sheldon Hammond and UGA – Griffin
    - **Plant suggestions** – Craig Gross and Fayette County Master Gardeners
    - **Design Considerations** –
    - **Art Show Plan** – Ed and Patsy Gullet and Brian Wismer
5. Compile goals and share with group to determine final plan ideas
6. Create final design and submit for approval

The names associated with each program group are based upon those that volunteered at the planning session or that stated that they would be interested in participating. It is not a final or complete list of those involved in each group.

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