Voicemail from Gloria Sheen, June 4:

"Hello, this is Gloria s Sheen. I'm trying to leave a live call in comment, so I'm just going to do so at this time. So this is city resident Gloria Sheen. I'd like to thank the board members of the USC and counselor Kim Ronney for your commitment to our canopy. I'd also like to thank Urban Forester, Keith Aiken for his active engagement with community members. Above all, I'd like to commend the UFC board members on the policy working group and enforcement working group past and present, who have called for much needed standards that are currently missing from our governing documents. The amendments to chapter 20 that were proposed by the policy working group, but ultimately rejected and that were discussed in last month's UFC meeting were completely on point and should have been given greater consideration and made actionable by the reviewing departments over the last 18 months. I weighed in on examples of harm done to our canopy, have called for proper redress. While the board members of the UFC have recognized and acted upon many of my concerns, the city's response has often been that we can't go back and change the past or our hands are tied. However, when the city is presented with the opportunity to take corrective actions and affect measurable gains on behalf of our canopy, such as adopting all of the proposed amendments made by the policy working group, or requiring same species replacements, when trees absolutely have to be removed, the city seems to drop the ball. The climate resiliency goals set forth by our municipal leaders look good on paper, but actions, no mere words demonstrate where the city's priorities really are. If the city wants to properly address the problem of the heat island effect and issues of inequity that stem from that, or erosion issues that impact our storm water or worsening air quality, or all of the aforementioned, a significant part of the solution already exists with the mature trees. The city is clearly not doing enough to protect our green assets. Lastly, a comprehensive definition for landmark trees should have been set forth in our municipal code a long time ago. So to city departments, I urge you, let's get this right. There's no better time than the present. Thank you."

Also from Gloria via email, June 19. Includes 2 attachments:

"Dear Urban Forestry Commission Chair Karen MacNeil and Board Members (in alphabetical order) Dawn Chavez, Chris DeFiore, Chardin Detrich, Michael David Fisher, Zoe Hoyle, Ed Macie; City Council Liaison Kim Roney, Urban Forester Keith Aitken, and Ex-Officio Voting Members AJ Hardie and Tyler Van Hook,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide public comment.

If I were to identify three areas that require the City of Asheville's attention as it concerns the health and future of our urban canopy, I would name the following:

1. Transparency and accountability for projects that harm publicly owned trees
2. Building a support team dedicated to enforcement of Chapter 20 and Chapter 7-19 violations
3. Acting upon awareness of sources of environmental toxins that harm tree health with the goal of mitigating or banning harmful product use; Adopting natural alternatives that do not harm trees, pollinators, wildlife, and humans

Transparency and Accountability

These two areas are noted as a single action item because they must be paired.
While transparency in projects that will or that may potentially harm trees is a favorable start, what must then happen is the adoption of practices to safeguard trees that will be impacted and the establishment of standards for accountability should there be issues.
Too many times, I have seen projects underway that paid no heed to the calamitous impact to trees that could have been avoided had there been thoughtful planning.
Trees are not an afterthought.

I have discussed transparency and accountability in previous public comment submissions. Here are a few for ease of reference:

August 1, 2023 - Please see "UFC Public Comment 8.1.2023"
Public Comment - Google Drive

December 5, 2023 - Please see "Public Comment 11.07.2023"
2023-12-5 Agenda & Documents - Google Drive

I had shared the findings of my FOIA investigation with certain staff members of the City of Asheville.
Assistant City Manager Ben Woody and I had a conversation in July of 2025 regarding the very troubling and widespread damage to trees caused by the US Army Corps of Engineers subcontractor AshBritt. I had informed him that I would soon be issuing a report about why the City of Asheville should commit to an engagement with the Urban Forest Strike Team hosted by the Southern Group of State Foresters in advance of the next natural disaster because putting all of our faith on a subcontractor with a record of fraud, waste, and abuse would not be prudent. Mr. Woody had indicated that this suggestion could be incorporated into the Urban Forest Master Plan.
I am attaching a copy of my report for your records.

Building Support for Enforcement of Violations

Developing accountability measures will not go far without a body to execute enforcement actions.
I would like to see the Urban Forestry Commission spearheading this. Either the City of Asheville should assign enforcement powers to the knowledgeable and experienced board members of the UFC to act upon violations of Chapter 20 and Chapter 7-19 or have other

dedicated personnel focused on a system of penalties that will demonstrate that harm to our city's living green treasures will be taken seriously.

Acting Upon Awareness of Environmental Toxins Impacting Tree Health and Longevity and Adopting Healthier Alternatives

There is no shortage of literature on the deleterious impact of herbicides like glyphosate, Triclopyr, and other formulations on trees and soil. Unfortunately, these chemicals are still being used by city staff on school and other public grounds. There is a better way.

Additionally, there needs to be increased awareness of the dangers of artificial turf used in public and residential settings.
It is undeniable at this point that synthetic turf is made of countless chemicals and that leaching of these chemicals in combination with the microplastics and nanoplastics that can be shed by the product over its entire lifecycle and passed through the drainage holes into groundwater will harm trees. Please reference my recent letter to the City of Asheville People and Environment Recovery Board for more information.
This is not an "organic" product. It is not anything close to "natural," "non-toxic," or "environmentally friendly" either.
Claims by manufacturers that synthetic turf is "PFAS-free" are also dubious.
With regard to our canopy and trees in residential settings, the turf will trap heat and prevent the necessary exchange of nutrients and gases that are needed for trees to maintain their health. The soil biota gets destroyed. The micro- and nanoplastic exposures via groundwater contamination will adversely impact tree physiology and impair photosynthesis. In my opinion and for these reasons alone, the product should be prohibited from being placed anywhere near trees.

I would appreciate it if the Urban Forestry Commission would take my thoughts into consideration.
I would welcome any feedback or questions. I may be reached via my e-mail address.

Thank you for your service and commitment to our canopy.

Best Regards,
Gloria Shen

Email from Linda Craig, June 20:

"Please out-law the use of Round-Up! It is far more destructive to pollinators, birds and other beneficial as well as beautiful creatures than it is to weeds. It is also toxic for pets, wildlife and humans! So many other solutions for harmless weeds. If people knew and understood the long ranging and far reaching negative effects, surely no one would use it but apparently they don’t so why not make it unavailable and educate them on alternatives?
Thank you!

Linda Craig & Mike Myers
55 S. Market st."

Email from Chrystal Lyons, June 20:

"Please have grounds crews, power companies and whomever else to stop usibg Round up!!

Thank you"

Email from Lynne Gaudette, June 20:

"City of Asheville Urban Forestry Commission

We can be a part of the solution for healthier trees and parks in Asheville, even considering the onslaught of anti-environmental Federal bills and the climate crisis! Alternatives to pesticides and herbicides can make a huge difference for the populations of birds, bees, butterflies, insects (we need them too to feed the birds!) and our animal wildlife. It can also be instrumental in reducing the incidence of cancer in humans in Western North Carolina.

Sadly, in my own back yard the numbers of pollinators I now see are dramatically reduced. My neighbors use Roundup and other pesticides/herbicides that have no doubt caused this to happen, along with utility companies, businesses, our own HOA. That shouldn't be the case since we have butterfly bushes, bee balm, lavender, Shasta daisies, and calendula. If Roundup and similar products were banned in Buncombe County we could see those populations increase dramatically. We need you to help with this.

Please ban the use of chemical pesticides and herbicides in our green spaces, forests and streams - anywhere you have jurisdiction. Outlawing Commercial Roundup products is a great place to start! The glyphosate used in commercial applications AND other chemicals along with surfactants are to blame.

Roundup Commercial is devastating to pollinators not just by destroying their food sources, but also through direct physical and internal harm. The combination of its active ingredient, glyphosate, and the "inert" chemicals in its formula disrupt bees' gut bacteria, impair their navigation, and physically suffocate them.

The specific ways Roundup harms pollinators include:

Gut Microbiome Disruption: Glyphosate acts as an antibiotic. When bees consume it, it destroys the beneficial gut bacteria that are crucial for their immune system, digestion, and defense against pathogens.

Suffocation and Mortality: Research shows that surfactants and co-formulants used in commercial Roundup products can physically mat the hair on a bee's body, which incapacitates their tracheal systems and leads to rapid death by suffocation.

Cognitive and Navigational Impairment: Even at low, non-lethal doses, glyphosate impairs a bee's sensory and cognitive abilities. It disrupts their spatial learning and memory, making it difficult for them to associate floral scents with food and find their way back to the hive.

Habitat and Forage Elimination: Broad-spectrum herbicides eliminate the weeds and native wildflowers bees and butterflies rely on for nectar and pollen. For example, the eradication of milkweed directly threatens the survival of Monarch butterflies, as it is the only plant their larvae can eat.

DANGERS TO HUMANS The health risks to humans depend on how long a person is exposed and whether the chemical is touched, breathed in, or swallowed. Cancer Concerns: The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), which is part of the World Health Organization, classifies glyphosate as a "PROBABLE HUMAN CARCINOGEN". They linked it to a higher risk of non-Hodgkin lymphoma, a type of blood cancer.

Short-Term Poisoning: Getting the spray on your skin or in your eyes causes severe irritation, burning, and rashes. Breathing in the spray mist can irritate your nose, throat, and lungs, sometimes triggering asthma attacks. Internal Harm: Swallowing the product can cause severe burning in the mouth, vomiting, diarrhea, and even kidney failure. Long-term exposure may also damage healthy human gut bacteria and impact fetal development in pregnant women

DANGERS TO BIRDS Herbicides like Roundup generally do not poison birds instantly the way insecticides do, but they still threaten bird populations in several ways. Starvation: This is the biggest threat. Roundup wipes out the weeds and wildflowers that native insects need to survive. Because 98% of all land birds feed insects to their babies, killing off the local bug population deprives young birds of their primary food source. Developmental and Organ Damage: Studies on birds exposed to glyphosate-based weedkillers show that it can cause oxidative stress, damage liver and kidney tissue, and weaken eggshells. It has also been shown to slow down embryo growth and cause brain tissue damage in developing bird eggs.

Loss of Nesting Spaces: When large patches of brush and weeds are cleared away by chemicals, birds lose the physical cover they rely on to hide their nests and protect their young from predators.

CHEMICAL-FREE ALTERNATIVES: You can kill weeds without chemicals by using heat, barriers, and manual tools. These methods clear unwanted vegetation while keeping bees and butterflies safe.

Boiling Water: Pouring scalding water cooks weeds instantly. This works best for cracks in sidewalks and driveways.

Flame Weeders: Using a small propane torch melts the plant cells. This destroys the weed down to the root.

Solarization: Covering the ground with clear plastic sheets traps sun heat. This bakes the weeds and seeds underneath.

Sheet Mulching: Layering cardboard or newspaper blocks out all sunlight. This smothers weeds and BUILDS HEALTHY SOIL.

**Investigate planting non-invasive ground covers in Western North Carolina to replace the weeds: For Sunny, Drier Areas, Creeping Phlox (Phlox subulata): It is excellent for rock gardens and slopes, Green and Gold (Chrysogonum virginianum) .Wild Strawberry (Fragaria virginiana) For Shady, Moist Areas: Canadian Wild Ginger (Asarum canadense), Allegheny Spurge (Pachysandra procumbens), Creeping Phlox (Phlox stolonifera) For Slopes & Erosion Control: Common Wood Sedge , Meehan's Mint (Meehania cordata).

I understand you are having a public meeting on June 25th. Please consider the information I have provided in this email and do the right thing for your citizens and wildlife!

Regards,

Lynne Gaudette"

Email from Janice Stevenson, June 20:

"I'm in favor of more green spaces, more tree plantings, more careful husbanding of the trees we do have—use of green alternatives instead of herbicides. Also I'd like to see that the urban forest is given at least as much attention as economic development gets. We need to make environmental protection a priority. More hotels not needed.
Sent from my iPhone"