



**CITY OF NORWALK
TREE ADVISORY COMMITTEE**
Norwalk City Hall
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**Minutes
TREE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
November 26, 2019**

Attendance: Richard Whitehead, Chairman
Peter Viteretto
Cindy Cossuto
Erica Kipp (via phone)

Staff: Paul Sotnik, Deputy Tree Warden

Others: Laurie Mirra, Neighborhood Liaison

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Whitehead called the meeting to order at 6:01 P.M.

**2. APPROVE THE MINUTES OF TREE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING OF
OCTOBER 22, 2019**

**** MR. VITERETTO MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS SUBMITTED.
** MS. COSSUTO SECONDED THE MOTION.
** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

3. REPORT - INCIDENTS OF ILLEGAL CUTTING

Mr. Sotnik said that Mr. Viteretto had sent an email to the Committee members regarding the Avalon Apartments on Belden Avenue illegally trimming the trees. He said that Mr. Torre had done a site visit, but the management company is closed on Sundays and Mondays and Mr. Torre is still trying to make contact with them. He said there are a few options which include issuing a fine, make them replace the tree, do a combination of both or require the manager along with their landscaper to come in and have a class with Mr. Viteretto for proper pruning. Ms. Kipp asked how much the fine would be. Mr. Sotnik said it could be as much as \$750 per tree. Ms. Kipp suggested that a fine be levied so not to lose credibility. She also said she thinks the class is a great idea

because the goal of the Committee is to educate and bring them into compliance, not punish by issuing fines alone. Mr. Viteretto said the trees will need to be replaced.

Mr. Whitehead said the DEEP also requires a licensed arborist to prune trees for hire if they are over 15' tall, so they can also be fined at the State level. Mr. Viteretto said the objective is to get the trees replaced. Ms. Kipp suggested tabling the item until Mr. Torre makes contact with the Management Company and reports back to the Committee. Mr. Viteretto suggested the property managers of Waypointe and other similar developments also be put on notice because their Contractors are seeing this. Mr. Sotnik said they can make them aware. Mr. Whitehead said the action will need to be taken swiftly.

Mr. Viteretto asked if the Planning & Zoning and Redevelopment Agency should also be contacted and made aware of the situation. Mr. Sotnik said if it causes a violation of the terms of the permit for Zoning, but it also falls under the jurisdiction of the Tree Warden. Mr. Whitehead suggested that they notify those departments to make them aware that the Tree Advisory Committee is taking action. Mr. Whitehead suggested implementing fines and replacements for all of the trees. Mr. Sotnik recommended fining them for a portion of the trees in addition to the cost of the replacement trees and also requiring them to take the educational pruning class and if they don't attend the class, fine them for all of the trees.

Ms. Mirra asked the status of the illegal cutting that she had reported at 20 Splitrock Road and 12 trees were lost between City and private trees. Mr. Sotnik said that he will contact Mr. Montgomery to investigate. Mr. Whitehead said they have created auxiliary parking in front of the property out by the road. Mr. Sotnik said that he will contact Planning & Zoning.

4. UPDATE - TREE PLANTING PROGRAM

a. Planting Locations- Expended Budget for fall 2019

Mr. Sotnik said that 34 trees have been planted at the following locations:

- 13 trees on Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Drive.
- 3 Arborvitaes trees on Fox Run Road.
- 10 trees at various locations in East Norwalk and that he will be placing an order for one additional tree on Cloverly Circle.
- 2 trees at 23 Walnut Street.
- A Redmond American Linden tree was replaced on Washington Street that was out of the warranty period.
- There were replacement trees planted at 38 First Street; Gregory Boulevard and one tree on Ludlow Manor.

Mr. Sotnik said the total cost of the plantings was \$ 32,791.85 which leaves a balance of \$18,473.15 in the tree planting account for Spring 2020 plantings. Mr.

Whitehead said they will need to begin looking for locations for the Spring plantings. Mr. Viteretto said that 10 trees on Belden Avenue will need to be planted

and 6 Bradford Pear trees will need to be removed. He suggested working with DPW on the removals and suggested planting Pin Oaks and if Avalon wants to replant a different species he is open to that. Mr. Whitehead said he would like a mixture of two species. Mr. Viteretto suggested the other species are London Plane Trees.

Mr. Sotnik said the Tree City USA applications are due December 31, 2019, and if there is anything anyone on the committee would like to include as part of the application it will need to be sent to him as soon as possible.

b. Replacements

Mr. Sotnik said he has requested the following the following replacements:

- Three replacement trees on Richards Avenue.
- A Red Maple at 24 Alden Avenue.
- A Red Oak at Fodor Farm and a replacement on Broad Street.

Mr. Whitehead said that two of the trees in front of the cemetery need to be replaced on Broad Street. Mr. Sotnik said that he has contacted Mr. Norman and requested he look at all of the locations. Mr. Whitehead said they have requested that Almstead Tree replace trees that are under warranty and we give them new purchase orders which get filled immediately, but it is almost December and none of the replacement trees have been planted. He said moving forward if there are replacement trees he will be requesting that the replacement trees are planted prior to issuing a purchase order for new plantings.

5. UPDATE - EVERSOURCE POLE REPLACEMENT PROJECT IN SILVERMINE AREA

Mr. Sotnik said that on Friday he received an e-mail from Mr. Barber and he read the e-mail into the record as follows:

Dear Paul and Chris,

I was just alerted that the system project on Silvermine Avenue has been suspended for this year and possibly even next year due to budget cutbacks. We will be finishing whatever tree work that we had started in the area this week and will resume when they receive the go ahead from engineering. However, since the circuit is part of the 2020 maintenance schedule we will address the consented trimming and removal work at that point in time, most likely in 2020 unless we get the go ahead sooner from the engineering division. The hazard tree budget for 2019 has been spent so any removals other than for emergencies will have to wait until January, 2020 at the earliest, when the budget is reset. As far as the 2020 planning meeting we can get together after the Holidays for the permitting work.

Mr. Sotnik said that he and Mr. Torre have decided to contact the Senior Management of Eversource because they had to have known budget wise that this was going on, and the project should have never been started if they did not have the funds to start and finish the project. Mr. Whitehead thanked staff and Mr. Viteretto for bringing it to the attention of the Tree Advisory Committee.

6. INFORMATION:

- a. Arbor Day, November/December 2019.

Mr. Sotnik distributed.

7. UPDATE - 2020 ARBOR DAY CELEBRATION LOCATION

Mr. Sotnik said that the Principal of Cranbury School has agreed to host the 2020 Arbor Day celebration and they will begin the planning in January.

8. UPDATE - KEEP AMERICA BEAUTIFUL GRANT - 50 WASHINGTON STREET

Ms. Kipp provided an update and said the grant itself is done in terms of meeting the guidelines. She said Keep America Beautiful has requested that she and Mr. Shockley present a webinar and it will be held on December 11, 2019, at 3:00 P.M. and she will send an e-mail with the link.

Ms. Kipp said she has a friend who is an architect and his firm was contacted to redesign one of the elementary schools in Norwalk and there was a company at the meeting that was discussing introducing solar panels as part of the renovation, and when he was doing his presentation, he had mentioned that in order to have the solar panels, they would have to remove about 16 trees and Mayor Rilling along with other people from Norwalk said that is not going to happen in Norwalk. She said that goes to show the Tree Advisory Committee's reputation as a group and how Norwalk takes trees seriously.

9. UPDATE - SEPTEMBER MEETING - TREE CAMPUS USA AT NORWALK COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Ms. Kipp said in December she will be submitting for Tree Campus USA and she will be sending an e-mail to Mr. Whitehead to see if there is anything else that was paid for since the last invoices that she has. She said other than that the submission is completed and ready to be submitted. Mr. Whitehead said that he will e-mail Ms. Kipp the inventory of trees that was taken as well as a sample sign for the tree species. Mr.

Whitehead said if Norwalk Community College gets approved they will only be the second college in the State and the first Municipal College.

10. PLANNING FOR FUTURE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM EVENTS/LECTURES

Mr. Whitehead said another tree planting session was held recently at Woodward Park with Factset and he will send Mr. Sotnik the photos. He said that it was a successful event and they had also mulched the existing trees and installed deer protection. He stated that 30 volunteers from Fact Set had attended and they had also donated \$3,500. He indicated that 13 trees were delivered and installed around the perimeter of the playground, and that 20 shrubs were also installed for the pollinator pathway. Mr. Viteretto asked if the press was contacted. Mr. Whitehead said a representative from The Norwalk Hour was there. Mr. Sotnik said anytime there is an event like this to contact Josh Morgan so he can do a press release.

Mr. Whitehead said Mayor Rilling did a proclamation at Oyster Shell Park and he had also attended the tree planting at 50 Washington Street.

11. REPORT - NTA ACTIVITIES

a. Update

i. 2019 NTA Board Member Election Results

Mr. Whitehead reported and said that Mr. Alan Broadbent has been elected as the new President of the Norwalk Tree Alliance and Mr. Strauss is the Vice President. He said the Secretary position has been filled and that Susan Simmons will continue on as the interim Treasurer, but they are searching for a new Treasurer.

ii. Tree School expansion to third elementary school

Mr. Whitehead said they currently have two elementary schools involved in the Tree Farm and the Tree School and they will have four first grade classes this year.

iii. Development and funding for outdoor classroom at Fodor Farm

Mr. Whitehead said that the tree school has been the main focus and they have met with Mr. Sotnik and Parks and Recreation to get the outdoor classroom approved. He said they will be searching for sponsors for the outdoor classroom. Mr. Sotnik said the tree school will need to be approved by the Recreation and Parks Committee prior to searching for sponsors and funding.

Mr. Whitehead said that there will be no meeting of the Tree Alliance in November and that it will be rescheduled to the first week in December and the December meeting will be cancelled.

12. OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Viteretto said the branches on the trees at the SONO Collection are too low and they are aware of it, but asked if a letter should be sent. Mr. Whitehead said once the trees are out of warranty they can be elevated.

Mr. Viteretto asked if there is currently a rehabilitation of the Planning & Zoning regulations going on. Mr. Sotnik said not that he is aware of, but that he will contact Mr. Wrinn to check. Mr. Viteretto said that if there is, this would be the time to look at the vegetation ordinance in a non-aggressive way.

Ms. Mirra said it seems trees are being removed inadvertently by the City and asked what the process is prior to a tree being removed. Mr. Sotnik said prior to any trees being removed they would need a permit from the Tree Warden and depending upon the size, the trees would be posted. She said what had happened at Oyster Shell Park and the removal of the trees and shrubs at Woodward Park where no one knows who removed them should be prevented from happening in the future. Mr. Sotnik said all requests for tree work on City property should be going through the Customer Service Center. Mr. Whitehead said any tree on City property that has a caliper of over 8" needs to be posted or reviewed so there is a definitive process already in place and when that is not followed there are penalties and fines.

13. ADJOURNMENT

**** MR. WHITEHEAD MOVED TO ADJOURN.
** MR. VITERETTO SECONDED THE MOTION.
** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:12 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Dilene Byrd