



**CITY OF NORWALK  
TREE ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
Norwalk City Hall  
125 East Avenue, PO Box 5125  
Room 225  
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**Minutes  
TREE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING  
January 28, 2020**

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Attendance: Richard Whitehead, Chairman  
Peter Viteretto  
Andrew Strauss  
Cindy Cossuto  
Erica Kipp

Staff: Paul Sotnik, Deputy Tree Warden  
Dilene Byrd, Secretary

Others: Laurie Mirra, Village Creek Neighborhood Liaison  
Louise Washer, Pollinator Pathway  
Michael Masome, Silvermine Area Resident

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Whitehead called the meeting to order at 6:00 P.M.

**2. APPROVE THE MINUTES OF TREE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING OF  
NOVEMBER 26, 2019**

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

There was a discussion regarding the shrubs that were removed at Oyster Shell Park and Ms. Washer said that there was a festival that was scheduled in the park and there was a decision made by Recreation and Parks to cut the area and everything was cut. She said that this has started a dialogue and they are working together now so it evolved into an ultimate solution. She said the same thing had happened at Woodward Park where full grown Holly Trees were removed without anyone's knowledge and suggested a call before you cut type of program for the city. Mr. Sotnik said unlike Call Before You Dig that is a service provided by the State, it would have to be an internal City service and there is no staff to support that type of an extensive process.

### **3. REPORT - INCIDENTS OF ILLEGAL CUTTING**

Mr. Sotnik reported and said that there are no new reports of illegal cuttings and Mr. Torre is still working on the investigation related to the illegal cuttings on Belden Avenue. Mr. Whitehead said the trees should be removed and levy the fine because leaving the trees sends a bad message. Mr. Viteretto said because the location is so highly visible he suggested contacting the press to run a story. Mr. Sotnik said once the investigation has been completed he can contact Mr. Morgan to do a press release.

Mr. Mirra asked for a status update on the illegal cuttings of three trees at 20 Splitrock Road. Mr. Sotnik said they are still working on that investigation.

### **4. LDS TREE PLANTING INITIATIVE**

Mr. Strauss said the Church of Latter Day Saints has a 200 year anniversary this coming year and Mr. Broadbent, President of the Norwalk Tree Alliance, is a member and leads the regional effort. He has suggested to them that they commemorate the anniversary by planting trees in the communities that their congregations service, including Norwalk. He said they are going to give 200 trees and out of those 200 trees they would like to give 15-25 trees to Norwalk. Mr. Viteretto said that he has sent them a list of locations and criteria based on the size of the trees that included Riverside Cemetery and Union Park Cemetery as well as schools and housing to be tied together as an educational program. Mr. Strauss suggested that Mr. Whitehead and Mr. Viteretto represent the City and the Tree Advisory Committee in working with Anna Thurston on the plan. He also said that he will draft a letter from the Tree Advisory Committee thanking the Church.

### **5. 2020 EVERSOURCE TREE TRIMMING PERMIT**

Mr. Sotnik said that he and Mr. Torre met with representatives from Eversource on January 15<sup>th</sup> and he presented the map of the enhanced tree pruning, backbone and scheduled maintenance pruning locations, and said they will be doing work in the Silvermine area but this work has nothing to do with the Project with the new poles which has been put on hold. He said this is all work related to scheduled maintenance work, regardless of the new Pole Project. Mr. Masome said there are several large pine trees that Eversource had completely shaved off above the power lines and they now look like a hazard. Mr. Sotnik said in that case, they are supposed to remove the tree and he asked if they are on City or Private property. Mr. Whitehead said he believes they are on private property. Mr. Viteretto asked if they had requested to Eversource to remove the tree. Mr. Masome said "yes" and they had threatened him to sign the permission slip, saying that if they don't sign the release and something happens that he would be responsible if the tree causes damage to the wires. Mr. Whitehead said that residents would not be responsible for any damaged wires and that is very misleading. Mr. Sotnik said that he will contact Eversource and Mr. Torre because that is a problem and request the individual be removed from the crew working in Norwalk.

He stated that the City does not condone either Eversource or any of its contractors behaving this way with Citizens to get them to sign permission slips.

## **6. DAMAGE TO WASHINGTON STREET LINDEN TREES - LETTER TO BUSINESS OWNERS**

Mr. Whitehead said there has been damage done to the street trees on Washington Street from either the patrons coming from the bars and/or restaurants or the business owners. Almost every tree has had the lower branches broken off and that he gone back repaired them by and properly pruning the trees. He said that he along with Mr. Sotnik and Mr. Viteretto have drafted a letter stating that there will be a fine issued if there is damage to the trees. They will have them laminated and hung on the trees and a copy of the letter will be given to each of the business owners that has a tree in front of their business. He said that in the future, one thing to consider when planting sidewalk trees is that larger size trees may need to be used to get a tree with a higher crown. Ms. Cossuto suggested the letter be put on the City website. Mr. Viteretto also suggested that a press release be done.

## **7. PARTNERING ON FIVE STAR AND URBAN WATERS RESTORATION GRANT PROGRAM**

Ms. Washer provided an overview of the grant and said that they have applied for a \$50,000 grant, but will not know if it has been awarded until June. She said it is a Five Star Fish and Wildlife Grant that they had done with the Hudson Housatonic Conservation partnership. She said they have been working at Oyster Shell and Woodward Park as part of the pollinator pathway to replace the missing trees and fill in the shrubs. This would provide an opportunity to purchase the planting materials and plant 30 trees at Oyster Shell Park, 30 trees at Woodward Park along with 200 shrubs at various locations. She said they will be trying to connect the two parks by filling in some of the street trees that are missing, but they are costly so they will begin by planting ten of those. Ms. Kipp asked when the grant application is due. Ms. Washer said on January 30, 2020. Ms. Kipp asked if the application is complete. Ms. Washer said it is basically done. Mr. Whitehead said if anyone hasn't been to Woodward Park or Oyster Shell Park recently, he encourages that they do so because it's nice to see the progress that has been made.

Ms. Mirra said there is another possible grant from One Tree Planted. It is an opportunity for a \$1,500 grant through the Blackrock Company as a corporate donation for saplings and seedlings for the wetland area of the park and they would include fencing to protect them from the deer.

## **8. UPDATE - TREE PLANTING PROGRAM**

- a. Planting Locations- spring 2020
  - i. Woodward Avenue - 5 trees.  
Mr. Sotnik said that we could plant five (5) trees on either side Woodward Avenue in the Spring of 2020.
- b. Replacements  
Mr. Sotnik said that no new tree orders will be issued to Almstead Tree until the replacement trees that are currently on the list have been completed.

Mr. Whitehead said that there are currently 18 trees proposed on the planting list for the Spring of 2020 and just over \$18,000 in the budget.

## **9. INFORMATION:**

- a. Tree City USA Bulletin, November/December 2019.  
Mr. Sotnik distributed.
- b. Arbor Day, January/February 2020  
Mr. Sotnik distributed.

## **10. 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 the first planning meeting is scheduled for February 7, 2020 at 10:30 A.M. at Cranbury School.

Ms. Kipp said that NCC will be holding an Arbor Day/Earth Day celebration on April 21, 2020.

## **11. COLLABORATIVE EFFORT WITH MARITIME AQUARIUM**

Ms. Kipp said she received an email today stating the NCC is the second Tree Campus U.S.A. in the State of Connecticut. She said in order to keep the status they will need to keep doing what they have been doing so she will be scheduling the next meeting in February 2020.

Ms. Kipp said there will be a Ground Wars screening held on February 12, 2020 at 5:30 P.M. at NCC on pesticides in our environment and she has received a grant to pay for the screening. She said there is a link to sign in for the screening and following the screening there will be a panel of three people that will include a politician and a medical Doctor.

Ms. Kipp said she was approached for a grant that the Maritime Aquarium already has and they wanted to work with Tree Advisory Committee. She said part of the grant is education and the next part is resilience and they want to work with the Tree Advisory Committee on tree planting and they will purchase the trees. She said she will invite a representative from the Maritime Aquarium to attend the February 25, 2020 Tree Advisory Committee meeting.

## **12. REPORT - NTA ACTIVITIES**

### a. Update

#### i. NTA Annual Planning Retreat

Mr. Strauss reported and said the annual planning retreat was held in January and they had good participation.

#### ii. Board/Program Organization

Mr. Strauss said they have reorganized into four committees that include a finance committee, education committee, communications committee and programs and events committee. He also said that the Tree Alliance is searching for a Treasurer.

## **13. OTHER BUSINESS**

Mr. Sotnik said that the Tree City USA and Growth Award have been submitted and received positive feedback from Mr. Donnelly regarding the Tree School.

## **14. ADJOURNMENT**

**\*\* MR. VITERETTO MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**\*\* MR. STRAUSS SECONDED THE MOTION.**

**\*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:15 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Dilene Byrd