



**CITY OF NORWALK
TREE ADVISORY COMMITTEE**
Norwalk City Hall
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**Minutes
TREE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
February 25, 2020**

Attendance: Erica Kipp
Peter Viteretto
Andrew Strauss
Cindy Cossuto

Staff: Chris Torre, DPW Superintendent of Operations
Paul Sotnik, Deputy Tree Warden
Dilene Byrd, Secretary

Others: Laurie Mirra, Village Creek Neighborhood Liaison
Anna Thurston, Secretary, Norwalk Tree Alliance
Kathy Lezon, Eversource
Kevin Separy, Eversource

1. CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Kipp called the meeting to order at 6:00 P.M.

**2. APPROVE THE MINUTES OF TREE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING OF
JANUARY 28, 2020**

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

3. REPORT - INCIDENTS OF ILLEGAL CUTTING

Mr. Sotnik reported and said that there are no new incidents of illegal cuttings to report this month. He stated that he and Mr. Torre are working on the investigation related to the illegal cuttings on Belden Avenue. Mr. Torre suggested public education and outreach for Avalon and other developments. Ms. Kipp agreed and said at least for the first offense public education and outreach is a positive way to deal with a negative

situation instead of compounding it with a negative response. Mr. Sotnik said that a representative from Avalon will be contacting them once they have spoken to their corporate office and that he has given them a copy of the guidelines. Mr. Torre said he does not believe the trees will need to be removed and they may rebound with some care, but will require that they provide a donation to either the Tree Advisory Committee or the Tree Alliance to plant trees in addition.

Mr. Strauss asked for a status update on the illegal cutting in front of Collins Funeral Home. Mr. Torre said a little more effort should have been put on where the trees were planted because they were planted close to the electric lines and in front of his signs. He also suggested contacting a representative from Collins Funeral Home and request that they plant a tree on their property at their cost to replace the tree. Mr. Strauss said he will make contact with them.

Mr. Mirra asked for a status update on the illegal cuttings of three trees at 20 Splitrock Road and they made a parking space in front of the house. Mr. Sotnik said that he will contact Planning & Zoning to see if this is something that would fall under their jurisdiction for parking in the zoning setback area.

Ms. Kipp asked if there is a list of where the Tree Advisory Committee wants to plant trees. Mr. Sotnik said "yes". Mr. Sotnik also said that any donations that are received will be put into the Capital Tree Planting account. Mr. Torre suggested confirming with the Legal Department regarding the funds being put into a capital account without them first going into the general fund and then being transferred.

4. EVERSOURCE LAKEVIEW POLE REPLACEMENT PROJECT IN SILVERMINE AREA

Mr. Sotnik said there were some changes related to the Lakeview pole replacement project and said that representatives from Eversource will provide an overview of the revised project.

Ms. Lezon introduced herself as the Community Relations and Economic Development for Eversource and introduced Mr. Separy and said he is the lead distribution engineer that was involved with the design of the project.

Mr. Separy gave an overview of the Project and read the Eversource Electric Reliability Upgrade Project Scope as follows:

Scope: Eversource will be performing a reliability upgrade project on several of our distribution lines in Norwalk and New Canaan to improve electric reliability in the area. The work involves the installation of new poles and additional spans of wire in the areas where facilities currently exist, as well as the installation of new poles and wire in some new areas.

They will be constructing a second path for electricity between Norwalk and New

Canaan that is expected to reduce the number of customer's outages and improve reliability in the community. Please note that this work will not interrupt electric service to homes or businesses.

Timeframe: To be determined in the next three to four months once other projects are finalized. They will update the City of Norwalk as soon as possible once we know the schedule.

Customer Outreach: Once they establish the start date, nearby property owners will be contacted and provided with a telephone number and an e-mail address if they would like additional information. Additionally, as part of the Project they will be performing door to door outreach ahead of construction.

Mr. Separy said they have spent a great deal of time re-engineering the Project so that it will have less of an impact on tree trimming, and that 178 poles will be replaced, but they are going with a type of construction that requires less tree clearance so the impact to the tree trimming will be less than the initial design due to the spacer cable which is in a diamond formation and the weight of the cables that are being used. Ms. Kipp asked if they are anticipating a number of trees will need to be removed or trimmed for the installation of the 178 poles. Mr. Separy said there will be minor trimming and there are 14 trees that will have to be removed. Ms. Lezon said the 14 trees are in the City Right-of-Way and they are working with Mr. Sotnik and Mr. Torre and they have identified some of the trees to be hazardous that would need to be removed, and are in the process of being posted. Mr. Torre said the trees will be reposted from last year for transparency purposes.

Mr. Torre said he noticed that on Route 7 just over the Wilton line there are pole replacements that are being done and he did not think there would be a big difference from a 35' - 40' pole to the 50' - 55' poles, but there appears to be, and when they had spoken he was told the scope would be less than was originally proposed, but he doesn't see how that is possible if the poles that will be installed are similar to the ones being installed on Route 7. Mr. Viteretto said they were told the poles would be 35' and once installed would be approximately 5' higher than they are today and that is what they expect to be done. Mr. Separy said that they will be using mostly 45' and 50' poles so when they are installed 43' will be seen above the ground. Mr. Viteretto said that seems high and asked what they currently are today. Mr. Separy said most poles are 40' and 45' in total length and are 38' above ground.

Mr. Viteretto said that the tree trimming work has already begun as part of the original project and asked how much more tree work they anticipate will need to be done than has been currently done. Ms. Lezon said they have a 2020 vegetation management plan and each year they meet with Mr. Sotnik and Mr. Torre to discuss their various circuits that they will be performing trimming or tree removals on and the work for 2020 has started, and some of it is along Comstock Hill Road which coincides with this project, but she does not believe that the tree work for the Project has started. Mr. Viteretto said it is his understanding that the trees that are currently being removed are part of the earlier Project so the neighborhoods expectations are that they are currently

working on removing trees as part of the Project. Ms. Lezon said from what Mr. Barber had said there will be no ground to sky clearing and they have worked with their Contractor and the design team and tried to minimize a lot of the tree work that was originally anticipated.

Mr. Sotnik asked that Mr. Separy speak about the reduction of the horizontal foot print of the required trimming. Mr. Separy explained that normally they have an 8' to 10' wide cross arm and in this Project, they will be using a spacer cable which is in a diamond formation that comes off the top of the pole and is very rigid which then requires fewer trees to be pruned. He said it is the most resilient type of construction that can be used.

Mr. Torre said that 74 of the new poles will be 50' poles and suggested as a group do a site visit to get a visual of the potential impact prior to the actual installation. He also said that Eversource has come a long way in not pruning up to the sky and removing trees unnecessarily and Mr. Barber and the Eversource staff are very accommodating and go out of their way to work with the City. Mr. Viteretto said over the past 30 years the residents in the Silvermine area have worked to keep the streets relatively clean and have trained the trees along the street to meet the 30' plus height pole and now are increasing to 50'. Ms. Kipp thanked the representatives of Eversource for working with the Tree Advisory Committee.

Ms. Kipp requested that the representatives from Eversource along with Mr. Barber report back to the Committee when there are more details available and a more concrete timeline for the start of the Project.

5. DAMAGE TO WASHINGTON STREET LINDEN TREES- LETTER TO BUSINESS OWNERS

Mr. Sotnik said the letters to the business owners will be distributed once Mr. Whitehead has signed them.

6. UPDATE - TREE PLANTING PROGRAM

- a. Planting Locations- spring 2020
 - i. 151 Woodward Avenue - 5 trees.
Mr. Sotnik said that five (5) trees will be planted in the Spring of 2020.

Mr. Sotnik asked if there are any other potential locations for tree plantings. Mr. Viteretto suggested eight trees for Belden Avenue, but said that trees will need to first be removed prior to the planting. Mr. Viteretto requested that Mr. Sotnik send him an aerial photo of the area and he will map the locations.

Ms. Mirra said that 12 trees were lost on Splitrock last year and there are residents who would be interested in a tree planting. Ms. Kipp suggested that a letter be sent to the City requesting them.

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.

c. Update - LDS Tree Planting Initiative

Ms. Thurston introduced herself and said that she is new to Norwalk and she works on a forum of religion and the environment and has been tasked by her Congregation's to lead the volunteer donation group. She said it is their 200th year Anniversary and the Diocese is donating 200 trees and Norwalk will receive 30 - 35 of those trees. The trees are a gift and on April 26, 2020 there are volunteers who will plant the trees. She said that she has been working with Mr. Whitehead and Mr. Viteretto to look at possible planting locations and said the trees can be planted at a maximum of three sites. The criteria for the locations are easy access to the site and the site is a safe location protected from traffic where trees are needed. Mr. Viteretto said they will also need to go to a location where they can be maintained and watered easily. Ms. Thurston said they will be donating the trees, but cannot do the maintenance or watering once the trees have been planted. Mr. Viteretto suggested Riverside Cemetery. Ms. Mirra suggested Woodward Park. Mr. Viteretto requested a sign off from the property owners at Woodward Park. Ms. Kipp suggested Veteran's Park as a possible planting location. Ms. Thurston said the order for the trees has to be placed in two days and the four locations that were being considered are Riverside Cemetery, Woodward Avenue, Calf Pasture Beach Road and Norwalk River Valley Trail. There was further discussion and it was decided that Ms. Thurston would work with Mr. Sotnik on the planting program and finalize the locations. Mr. Torre said he will have DPW staff help to dig the holes and if given the locations will pick up the trash remaining from the planting work. Mr. Sotnik asked about the species selection. Ms. Thurston said that she will e-mail the list of species to choose from to the Tree Advisory Committee. Ms. Thurston said once all of the trees have been planted she would like a map of the locations. Mr. Sotnik said the locations will be geo-located and included on the GIS map.

Ms. Cossuto and Ms. Thurston left the meeting at 7:00 P.M.

7. UPDATE - FY 2020 - 2021 CAPITAL TREE PLANTING BUDGET REQUEST/STATUS

Mr. Sotnik said there are four phases to the Capital Budget process and the first phase has been completed and the Finance Director has recommended the \$65,000 that was requested. The Planning Commission, the Mayor and the Common Council still have to make their recommendations and approval.

8. INFORMATION:

- a. Tree City USA Bulletin, January/February 2020.
Mr. Sotnik distributed.

9. UPDATE - PLANNING FOR 2020 ARBOR DAY - CRANBURY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Mr. Sotnik said they had a very good planning meeting on February 7, 2020, and the Arbor Day tree planting will be held on April 24, 2020, at 1:30 P.M. at Cranbury Elementary School. The next planning meeting will be held on Friday, March 13, 2020 at 10:00 A.M. at the school. Ms. Kipp asked if a species has been selected. Mr. Sotnik said not yet, they are still deciding.

10. PESTICIDE SCREENING AT NCC

Ms. Kipp said that a screening was held at NCC on pesticide applications on common areas and it was well attended. She said there was a professional panel that consisted of a Marine Biologist, an Environmental Attorney and Mr. Whitehead as the Arborist.

11. COLLABORATIVE GRANT EFFORT WITH MARITIME AQUARIUM

Ms. Kipp said the Tree Alliance has formally submitted a letter to collaborate with the Maritime Aquarium on a NOAA grant and will find out the status of the grant in or around June. She said it will include educational programming, plantings, invasive plant species removal and it is also an opportunity to get more trees.

12. PLANNING FOR FUTURE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM EVENTS/ LECTURES

Mr. Sotnik said that Mr. Roberts has approached him regarding wanting to do an educational program event sometime in the Fall related to trees and suggested a joint event with DPW, Recreation and Parks and the Tree Advisory Committee. Mr. Strauss suggested that Mr. Sotnik discuss it at the next Tree Alliance Committee meeting. Mr. Torre suggested adding a program to the DPW Open house.

13. REPORT - NTA ACTIVITIES

- a. Update
 - i. Outdoor Classroom presentation at February 12, 2020 R&P Committee Meeting
Mr. Strauss said that he and Mr. Broadbent presented the Outdoor Classroom idea to the Recreation and Parks Committee of the Common Council. He said

that Mr. Roberts and Mr. Sotnik attended the meeting and the project was well received and the next step is that Mr. Roberts will draft a letter.

- ii. TTD Tree Lottery and Spring 2020 Planting
Mr. Strauss said the grant from the Third Taxing District is likely to be approved and a Tree Lottery will be held beginning in March. The first 15 - 20 respondents will receive a free tree to be planted in April.
- iii. Tree School: Planning for March 12, 2020 classes at Fodor Farm
Mr. Strauss said the next class will be held in the middle of March and they have received approval for the program from both Brookside School and Columbus Magnet School. He said that Marvin School will also be coming online next year so there will be approximately 200 students serviced next year.
- iv. Fairfield County Giving Day on February 28, 2020
Mr. Strauss said for the first time, the Tree Alliance will be involved in the Fairfield County Giving Day on February 28, 2020.
- v. February 27, 2020 Board Meeting
Mr. Strauss said the next Tree Alliance board meeting will be held on Thursday, February 27, 2020.

14. OTHER BUSINESS

Ms. Mirra provided an update on the cleanup of invasive removals at Woodward Park and said they had 40 volunteers and removed a lot of phragmites. She also said that they received grant money from One Tree Planted. She said there will be another day of invasive removals and One Tree Planted would give additional planting materials. Mr. Viteretto said there needs to be a plan for the managed care once the plantings are done.

15. ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting adjourned at 7:19 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Dilene Byrd