



CITY OF NORWALK
TREE ADVISORY
COMMITTEE
Norwalk City Hall
125 East Avenue, PO Box 5125
Room 225

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Members of the public who wish to provide public comment are encouraged to submit those via email in advance of the meeting. For these comments to be read into the record, they should be submitted at least three hours in advance of the meeting start time. Please email Dilene Byrd at dbyrd@norwalkct.org to provide written public comment prior to the meeting.

Minutes
TREE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
May 26, 2020

Attendance: Erica Kipp, Vice Chair
Andrew Strauss
Peter Viteretto

Absent: Richard Whitehead

Cindy Cossuto

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

1. CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Kipp called the meeting to order at 4:30 P.M.

2. PUBLIC INPUT - GUESTS AT COMMITTEE MEETINGS MAY SPEAK TO ANY ITEM ON THE AGENDA. (COMMENTS SHALL BE LIMITED TO NO MORE THAN THREE (3) MINUTES PER SPEAKER.)

There was no input from the public this evening.

3. APPROVE THE MINUTES OF TREE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING OF FEBRUARY 25, 2020

**** MR. STRAUSS MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS AMENDED.**

****MR. VITERETTO SECONDED THE MOTION.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

4. UPDATE - 2020 EVERSOURCE TREE TRIMMING PERMIT

Mr. Sotnik said he had received an email from Eversource with a list of specific locations related to the storm cleanup that Eversource had requested be added to the 2020 Tree Trimming permit. He said that Mr. Torre and he had discussed it and agreed to approve the request so they will be adding the locations to their 2020 permit.

Mr. Viteretto said that he has been watching what Eversource is doing on Comstock Hill Avenue because unless they had asked for permission or were specific about the trees, they go back to their old ways and they will clear to the sky unless someone says something, and their cuts are not always flush to the ground. He said he had an issue at 24 Comstock Hill Avenue in New Canaan, where the property owner had everything clear cut on the lot and had he contacted the Tree Warden in New Canaan, but he has not yet received a response back.

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

Mr. Sotnik said these are the trees that had some of the lower branches snapped off of the trees and the Tree Advisory Committee had agreed to send letters to the business's

and put the letters on the trees, but due to Covid-19 and the restaurants just beginning to open back up, staff does not think it is an appropriate time to start issuing the letters. He said that Mr. Whitehead has pruned the trees up higher and they will be monitoring the trees and if anything happens to the trees the businesses will be contacted on a case by case basis. Mr. Strauss said that the trees look very good.

6. REPORT- INCIDENTS OF ILLEGAL CUTTING

Mr. Viteretto asked for an update on the cuttings at Avalon on Belden Avenue. Mr. Sotnik said that Mr. Torre and he have been following up with them but, the issue has been tabled due to Covid-19, but they will be followed up with again when the time is appropriate.

Mr. Torre said he has received an email from their Attorney requesting what the city is asking them to do, but he has not yet responded because he wanted to discuss it with the Tree Advisory Committee before he replies. Mr. Viteretto said in his opinion the trees need to be replaced. Ms. Kipp asked what the nature of the email was. Mr. Torre said that Mr. Sotnik and he had discussed exploring options on what they can do and the Attorney is requesting information on what the City is requesting from them. He said that he did receive an email from the property manager after Mr. Sotnik and he had met with him stating that their Attorney wanted to know what the City was looking for in terms of replacement or damages, but due to Covid-19 Mr. Sotnik and he have not yet discussed it with the Attorney.

Mr. Viteretto said he is simply asking that they replace the trees because taking money and putting it elsewhere does not solve the problem of the visual damage that they did. Mr. Torre asked Mr. Viteretto if he is speaking on behalf of the entire Committee. Mr. Viteretto said it is his opinion as a Committee member. Mr. Torre said we need to also be consistent on what we do regarding illegal cuttings and we have never made someone remove and replant trees in this type of situation.

Mr. Sotnik said that there are no new illegal cuttings to report this month, and the illegal cuttings on Belden Avenue and Dock Road have been tabled due to Covid-19 issue.

7. UPDATE- TREE PLANTING PROGRAM

a. Planting Locations - Spring 2020

i. 151 Woodward Avenue- 5 trees

Mr. Sotnik said that Ms. Mirra had requested 5 trees for Woodward Avenue and they will be planted as long as he receives the signed Right-of-Entry agreements but if he does not receive them soon, the plantings will be done in the Fall 2020.

- ii. Calf Pasture Beach Road- 4 trees
Mr. Sotnik said that Mr. Whitehead had found four locations on Calf Pasture Beach Road and that he has staked the locations.
- iii. Monroe Street - 2 trees
Mr. Sotnik said there is one tree at the Police Department that is not in good condition and as long as he receives approval from the Deputy Chief, it will be replaced. He also said there is a tree on the side of the Police Department that is dead which will also be replaced. Mr. Viteretto said that additional excavation in the tree pit may be needed and that Pin Oaks would be a great species for that location.

b. Replacements

Mr. Sotnik said that Almstead Tree has replaced several of the trees on the replacement list and will also be doing the tree on Washington Street. He said that he has spoken to Mr. Norman and told him that it will need to be done early in the morning and can't interfere with the restaurants or any of the businesses.

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

Mr. Sotnik provided an update and said on May 12, 2020, the Common Council had approved \$65,000 for Capital Tree Planting program budget. Mr. Strauss asked about the tree planting budget for Recreation and Parks. Mr. Sotnik said they received \$50,000.

9. UPDATE - TREE PLANTING FOR 2020 ARBOR DAY- NORWALK COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Ms. Kipp said that she and Mr. Whitehead had tried to observe Arbor Day at some level while still abiding by social distancing and other CDC regulations and were able to plant two trees on the west campus at Norwalk Community College.

10. UPDATE - LESSON PLAN - ARBOR DAY AT NORWALK COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Ms. Kipp said she had put together a lesson plan using Dr. Seuss's The Lorax for Cranbury School where were going to host the event.

11. REPORT- NTA ACTIVITIES

- a. Update:
 - i. Tree Planting Efforts for Taxing Districts.

Mr. Strauss reported and said the Sixth Taxing District gave the Norwalk Tree Alliance a grant of \$3,000 to plant trees in Rowayton. He said that the Third Taxing District has also given \$2,500 for next year.

ii. Legacy Trees Program.

Mr. Strauss said the number of people that have passed away due to Covid-19 in Fairfield County is over 1,000 and the idea is to create a program with The Norwalk Tree Alliance, The Norwalk Community College Tree Advisory and the Norwalk Tree Advisory Committee. He said the program would be called Norwalk Memorial Trees whereby we would provide trees to people who want to plant trees in memory of loved ones that they have lost. He said the individual would pay for the cost of the tree and the installation and the NTA would use their negotiating leverage with the nurseries and also give them a certificate. Mr. Viteretto asked if the Tree Alliance will take the initiative on that. Mr. Strauss said he will take the initiative and will present the idea at the next Norwalk Tree Alliance meeting which is scheduled for this Thursday.

Mr. Strauss asked Mr. Torre if he had any ideas on how to get the City involved. Mr. Torre suggested speaking with Lamond Daniels, the Chief of Community Services and George Tsirinides, the Chair person for Public Works Committee of the Common Council. Mr. Strauss said he will put some thoughts together and share them with Mr. Torre, Mr. Sotnik and Ms. Kipp.

Mr. Viteretto suggested a dedicated website or some location within City Hall to use for documentation, but avoid the plaques on the trees themselves which don't last long and get forgotten about.

Mr. Strauss said he doesn't see this as an extension of the City Tree Planting contract, but as a new program and suggested looking for a funder that can provide matching funds.

12. OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Viteretto asked if additional substantial documentation is needed for the removal of trees on Belden Avenue. Mr. Sotnik said if they are more than 8" they will need to be posted for removal. Mr. Viteretto discussed the replanting and said that he and Mr. Whitehead had originally discussed planting Pin Oak Trees instead of Red Oak Trees but he had a conversation with the CT D.O.T. and they had said that Red Oak Trees are good urban trees, and will be mixed with London Plane Trees. Mr. Sotnik said that he will send the list to Mr. Norman to see if he can get the trees.

Mr. Sotnik said that a total of 17 trees will be planted as a Spring 2020 planting.

13. ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting adjourned 5:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Dilene Byrd