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## **TREE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING August 25, 2020**

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Attendance: Richard Whitehead, Chairman  
Erica Kipp, Vice Chair  
Andrew Strauss  
Peter Viteretto

Cindy Cossuto

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

## **1. CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Whitehead called the meeting to order at 6:12 P.M.

Mr. Whitehead provided an update from Tropical Storm Isaias and said it was a dry storm like Hurricane Sandy where there were high winds, but it did not have the accompanying rains and as a result, the winds brought a lot of salt onto the properties and damaged trees. He said the Tropical Storm Isaias also caused more electrical outages than Hurricane Sandy and left over 100,000 people in Connecticut without power. He said we are now seeing salt damage on trees because the salt is sitting on the foliage of the trees and it did not get rinsed off by the rain and he is anticipating that the damage to evergreen trees will show up later because that will take a little longer to occur.

Mr. Sotnik said there were 208 locations where either City or Private trees or limbs were damaged that DPW had to respond to. Mr. Strauss asked if the 208 locations were in a specific part of Norwalk or if it was evenly spread. Mr. Sotnik said it was across most of the City, but the Cranbury and Silvermine areas were hit the hardest. Mr. Whitehead said in regards to the salt injuries it is more apparent on the southern exposure of the trees because the wind had come off of the water and all of trees that fell had fallen from the south to the north due to the prevailing winds from the east band of the storm. Mr. Strauss asked if that will affect the leafing in the Spring of 2021. Mr. Whitehead said it will to some degree because leaves are still manufacturing food for the trees for later in the season, so it weakens them a bit, but they will leaf out and re-foliate, but it will stress the overall vigor.

Mr. Whitehead said in the private sector, the post storm cleanup is still occurring and a lot of people have now become "tree paranoid" and want to cut down big trees because they see the damage that can occur and are requesting to have healthy trees removed in fear that another storm may bring them down.

## **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 MINUTES OF THE TREE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING OF JULY 28, 2020.**

On page 3, Item iii, Mr. Viteretto asked for confirmation that the trees that will be planted on Belden Avenue are going to be Pin Oak Trees.

On page 3, Item 6a, change “were” to “where”

On page 4, Item 7 change “Maple Trees” to “Oak Trees”

On page 5, Item 9, add the discussion regarding Dunbar Field as follows:

Mr. Viteretto said that Dunbar Field is as a good candidate for street trees and they can easily plant 14 trees, but there is a recreational plan for resurfacing the field. Mr. Sotnik said the project will be going on through next year so we need to be careful what gets planted there because they could possibly get damaged by the construction activity. Mr. Viteretto said that section of Silvermine Avenue can really use trees even if it's a year out and if it's not part of the resurfacing project for the field. Mr. Whitehead suggested waiting for the project to be complete and follow up with the trees when the work has been completed. Mr. Viteretto asked why the trees are not part of the project and suggested working in tandem with Parks and Recreation. Mr. Sotnik said that D.P.W. talks with Mr. Roberts on a regular basis and it is a funding issue and they were not able to plant the trees as part of the project. Mr. Whitehead stated that as he had suggested, they can follow up with the trees once the project has been completed. Mr. Viteretto said he will do an aerial plan to present to Mr. Roberts and Mr. Hughes.

**\*\* MR. STRUASS MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS AMENDED.**

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

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

Mr. Sotnik had no new illegal cuttings to report. He said the two previous illegal cuttings that were reported are still being investigated. Mr. Viteretto asked if the locations of the illegal cuttings were on Belair Road and Belden Avenue. Mr. Sotnik said “Yes.”

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

a. Planting Locations – Spring/Fall 2020.

i. 151 Woodward Avenue – 5 - 10 trees (TBD) - Fall 2020.

Mr. Sotnik said that he and Mr. Whitehead had gone to 151 Woodward Avenue and marked locations for three (3) Honey Locust Trees and three (3) London Plane Trees that will be planted in the Fall 2020. Mr. Viteretto asked if any more

trees can be planted along that stretch. Mr. Whitehead said “Yes,” but prior to him and Mr. Sotnik going out he had a site meeting with the property manager and it turns out that there is a group of property owners which had joined in on a call and were opposed to planting any trees along the frontage of the property, but he explained that the Tree Advisory Committee would offer the first six (6) trees to show them would it would look like and requested that they partner with the Tree Advisory Committee to plant on the entire frontage of the property on a one for one basis. He said that the property owners will review the locations where the six (6) trees will be planted and respond back with an approval. If they agree and the trees get planted, he will circle back and offer to continue the planting that Mr. Viteretto had designed for Woodward Park. Mr. Viteretto requested that the aerial be sent to him. Mr. Whitehead said the property can accommodate approximately 25 to 30 trees.

- ii. Calf Pasture Beach Road - 4 trees - Spring 2020.  
Mr. Sotnik said that four (4) trees have been planted.
- iii. Belden Avenue and West Avenue - 10 trees - Spring 2020.  
Mr. Sotnik said that six (6) of the ten (10) trees have been planted, but he has stopped Almstead from planting at this point until the Fall because it is not the proper time of the year to plant them.
- iv. Monroe Street - 2 trees.  
Mr. Sotnik said the trees will be planted in the Fall.
- b. Replacements.  
Mr. Viteretto said there was no water in the gator bags on the replacement trees when he checked them.

**6. UPDATE - DEVELOPMENT OF FALL 2020 - SPRING 2021 TREE PLANTING LOCATION LIST.**

- a. Committee Member Street List Assignments/Reports.  
Mr. Sotnik said that Mr. Strauss had sent him a group of twelve (12) trees to be planted in the area of Fourth Street. Mr. Strauss said that he does not see an opportunity for plantings on Cove Avenue because they have already planted trees over the last few years and at this point it has enough trees between what the Tree Advisory Committee and private property owners have planted. He said there may be possible plantings on Fifth Street, but it is currently being paved and may have to be done in the Spring 2021 planting so he primarily focused on Fourth Street and homes where they had lost trees due to the storm. He said that he would be happy to accompany Mr. Sotnik when he does the site visit for the planting locations that he had submitted.

Mr. Sotnik said that Ms. Cossuto had sent him a group of ten (10) streets for possible planting locations that she was going to look at in her area of the City. Ms. Cossuto said there are eleven (11) properties that she is interested in for possible plantings, but she needs information on how to contact the property owners. Mr. Strauss suggested that Mr. Sotnik share the letter that he had worked on with Ms. Cossuto. Ms. Kipp suggested once Ms. Cossuto receives the property owner information to mail the letter to the property owners rather than going to the locations.

Mr. Strauss asked what the target number is for the trees to be planted in the Fall 2020. Mr. Sotnik said he would like to have 30 to 40 locations. Mr. Whitehead said if the planting list falls short of that number then at the next meeting the Committee will discuss adding additional locations.

Mr. Viteretto said that the Wall Street Business Association is pressing the property owner of Peoples Bank to plant four to five trees along the frontage at their cost. Mr. Sotnik said that he will provide the property line information because if the trees are planted in the City's Right-of-Way, an encroachment permit is be required.

Mr. Strauss asked that a sheet be put together defining the roles and responsibilities of a Neighborhood Tree Liaison. Mr. Sotnik said that they already have that information. Mr. Strauss requested that Mr. Sotnik send it to him and Ms. Kipp for review. Mr. Strauss asked if there are any other sections of the City that need a Neighborhood Tree Liaison. Mr. Viteretto said there was a gentleman for the Silvermine area that had attended one of the meetings and he was willing and able and suggested contacting him, but for the Silvermine area it would be more for canopy management. Mr. Strauss said he will also contact Mr. Broadbent who lives in the Cranbury area and ask him for suggestions. Ms. Kipp said it is very important for the Committee to have as many "boots on the ground" as possible and it would be great to have a group of people like Ms. Mirra who are passionate and involved in things that are happening in their neighborhood. Mr. Whitehead said the areas in Norwalk that really are in need of trees are the commercial and rental property areas and those are the areas we need to target. Ms. Kipp suggested looking for a business owner that can act in the capacity of a Tree Liaison. Mr. Strauss suggested contacting the Chamber of Commerce.

Ms. Kipp asked Mr. Whitehead if he has found any arborist that may be interested in joining the Committee. Mr. Whitehead said "no" not yet, but once the storm cleanup is done he will continue the search.

## **7. UPDATE - TREE MAINTENANCE BY SECTION OF THE CITY**

Mr. Sotnik said that Mr. Norman had sent him the information today and said that they continue to do the watering for Fodor Farm, the area of Broad Street, as well as some of the new planting locations. He said that Mr. Norman is still putting together a package of the soil amendments and a proposal for the cost for the trees at Fodor Farm. Mr. Whitehead said the trees on Broad Street did not get watered for quite some time and had gator bags installed, but it may have been too late and requested that Mr. Norman revisit and reassess those trees. Mr. Sotnik said the last time they were watered was July 17, 2020. Mr. Whitehead said that was also only the first or second time the trees had been watered. Mr. Strauss also requested that they look at the trees on Gregory Boulevard near the Cemetery that were recently planted. Mr. Sotnik said the last time those were watered was on July 31, 2020, but he will mention those to Mr. Norman as well.

## **8. RECRUITMENT OF NEIGHBORHOOD TREE LIAISONS**

This was discussed under Item 6 of the agenda.

Ms. Kipp left the meeting at 6:45 P.M.

Mr. Viteretto said that Wilton Avenue is also a good location for plantings, but the parking spaces would need to be restriped so that the car doors don't hit the trees. Mr. Whitehead said he doesn't think that can be done in that neighborhood because parking is already difficult as it is. Mr. Sotnik said that it would also need to be approved by the Traffic Authority. Mr. Viteretto said an alternative would be to install bollards or posts to protect the trees. Mr. Sotnik said that this planting project would need to be looked at more carefully.

## **9. REPORT - NTA ACTIVITIES**

### **a. Update:**

#### **i. Tree Planting Efforts for Taxing Districts**

Mr. Strauss said that this coming week he hopes to be meeting with the winners of the tree lottery and offering them the trees, and he will be working with Tom Arbron who will be taking over his responsibilities next Spring with the Third Taxing District for the NTA.

Mr. Whitehead asked Mr. Strauss if he is still working on the plantings for the Sixth Taxing District. Mr. Strauss said he is not working on it, but Mr. Broadbent has taken charge of that and they won't be planted until the Spring 2021.

- ii. Board of Directors Realignment  
Mr. Strauss said Mr. Broadbent will be doing some recruiting for the NTA. Mr. Sotnik said that he is working with Ms. Sandra Faioes on recruitment with someone from the Brookside Elementary School PTO.

## **10. OTHER BUSINESS**

Mr. Sotnik said that Mr. Arbron had sent an e-mail requesting that the trees that have been removed at the corners of the Stroffolino Bridge be replanted. He said that he has spoken with Mr. Roberts and because there will be some things going on in that area over the next couple of years related to the Walk Bridge project and the realignment of the entrance to Veterans Park, it would be better to wait until the projects are complete and then do it.

Mr. Strauss said that a few people have asked why Connecticut has not more actively buried the power lines and asked if the Committee should have a point of view on that. Mr. Sotnik said the City would like to see them buried underground as long as the work to do it does not require cutting trees down, but the cost to do it is extremely expensive and would require a large investment of Capital Budget money. Mr. Whitehead said that he saw thousands of healthy trees being cut down since Eversource they started the enhanced tree program, which was mandated by the Governor following Hurricanes Sandy and Irene and after cutting thousands of healthy trees down, we had more outages during Tropical Storm Isaias than from the prior hurricanes.

Mr. Sotnik said there have been a lot of calls lately related to solar power and need to be sure that we are very diligent about communicating the potential effects of the tree canopy. Mr. Viteretto said that a solar panel policy needs to be developed. Mr. Sotnik also said that he will contact Mr. Ireland of the Building Department to request that there is a sign off from DPW prior to issuing a building permit for solar panels.

## **11. ADJOURNMENT**

**\*\* MR. VITERETTO MOVED TO ADJOURN.  
\*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:20 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Dilene Byrd