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TREE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING September 22, 2020

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.

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.)

Ms. Mirra stated that she will no longer be the liaison for Village Creek, but she would like to continue as the liaison for the Norwalk River Watershed Association (NRWA). She said that Mr. Aley is interested in replacing her role as the liaison for Village Creek. Mr. Whitehead requested that Ms. Mirra put him in contact with the Tree Advisory Committee.

Mr. Whitehead asked Ms. Mirra if she will still be working on the tree planting project at Woodward Park. Ms. Mirra said "yes," as well as the possible plantings on Woodward Avenue. Mr. Whitehead thanked Ms. Mirra for all of the time and effort that she has put in to being the Liaison for the Village Creek area.

Ms. Mirra said that she has sent in a photo of a tree that was damaged on Longshore Avenue due to a car accident. Mr. Sotnik suggested that she contact Customer Service at (203) 854-3200 so that it can be documented and tracked.

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

- ** MR. STRAUSS MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS SUBMITTED.
- ** MR. WHITEHEAD SECONDED THE MOTION.
- ** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

4. APPROVE THE NOMINATION OF MS. ERICA KIPP AS THE CHAIRPERSON ON THE TREE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

- ** MR. WHITEHEAD MOVED TO NOMINATE MS. KIPP AS THE CHAIRPERSON.
- ** MS. COSSUTO SECONDED THE MOTION.
- ** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

5. APPROVE THE NOMINATION OF MR. RICHARD WHITEHEAD AS THE VICE CHAIRPERSON OF THE TREE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

**** MR. STRAUSS MOVED TO NOMINATE MR. WHITEHEAD AS VICE CHAIRPERSON.**

**** MS. KIPP SECONDED THE MOTION.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

6. REPORT - INCIDENTS OF ILLEGAL CUTTING

Mr. Sotnik had no new illegal cuttings to report.

Mr. Sotnik provided an update on the illegal cuttings that were previously reported and said that Mr. Torre is still working with the property manager of Avalon on Belden Avenue.

Mr. Sotnik said the property owners of 9 Belair Road, where the illegal cuttings were done, were supposed to contact Mr. Torre and schedule a meeting, but to date they have not contacted him, so he has forwarded the matter to the Law Department and he will keep the Committee updated on the status. Mr. Whitehead asked if the Contractor who did the work without a permit has been contacted in regards to the illegal cutting. Mr. Sotnik said the Law Department will be contacting the Contractor as well as the property owners.

Mr. Viteretto said that he had sent Mr. Sotnik photos of trees that were being trimmed in front of an office on Riverside Avenue. Mr. Sotnik said that he has looked at the trees and they are private trees, so the City has no jurisdiction on this matter.

Mr. Viteretto said that over the weekend there was a significant cut back done to the trees on Silvermine Way. Mr. Sotnik said he will need to determine if they are City trees, but if they are found to be private trees the City would have no jurisdiction.

7. UPDATE - TREE PLANTING PROGRAM

a. Planting Locations – Spring/Fall 2020

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

Mr. Sotnik said planting will be done as a Fall planting if the ownership agreements are executed. Mr. Viteretto asked if the locations have been staked. Mr. Whitehead said that he and Ms. Mirra met with the facility manager and the building owners of 151 Woodward Avenue via cell phone and explained to them that we would like to start planting on the frontage of the property and that the trees would be planted at the City's expense, but it will require a signed tree ownership agreement before the trees can be planted, and if they agreed and like the planting, that the City would like to continue the planting and partner with the property owners on a 50/50 basis.

- He said that following the meeting, he and Mr. Sotnik did a site visit and staked the locations for six (6) trees at the southern border for a Fall planting. He said the facility manager was supposed to get back to him once the locations were staked, but it has been over three weeks and to date, has not been contacted by him. Mr. Sotnik said he still needs the signed ownership agreement.
- ii. Belden Avenue and West Avenue - 10 trees - Spring 2020
Mr. Sotnik said only a portion of the trees were planted on Belden Avenue due to the heat and Almstead Tree will be finishing the planting, but that they are having a hard time getting the Linden Trees. He has requested that they look to get quality trees to complete the planting that was started in the Spring. Mr. Viteretto suggested planting either Red Oak or Pin Oak trees.
 - iii. Monroe Street - 2 trees
Mr. Sotnik said that two Pin Oak Trees will be planted in front of the Police Station, which will also be done as a Fall 2020 planting.
 - iv. East Norwalk - 12 trees
Mr. Sotnik said there is a potential of fourteen (14) tree plantings, but are still making contact with some of the property owners and to date he has nine (9) confirmed orders and has staked the locations. Mr. Strauss said he has not received the signed ownership agreements and due to the Covid-19 restrictions suggested mailing them the forms. Mr. Sotnik agreed and said he will have staff send out the letters.
 - v. West Norwalk
Ms. Cossuto said that she and Mr. Sotnik spoke with and or left flyers to thirteen locations and are waiting for the ownership agreement for one location, and she is waiting on a response from one location. Mr. Sotnik requested that Ms. Cossuto follow up because he would like to place the orders within the next two weeks.
 - vi. Highland Avenue
Mr. Sotnik said that Mr. Frazier had sent him a few locations that included replacement trees at the Community Center, one Red Maple tree at 84 Highland Avenue; one native tree at 96 Witch Lane and the replacement of two (2) storm damaged trees at 86 Highland Avenue. He said in total he has requested eight (8) trees. Mr. Whitehead asked Mr. Sotnik to verify that the damaged trees that are on private property have been removed. Mr. Sotnik said that he will do a site visit and stake the locations prior to placing the order.
 - vi. Echo Lane
Mr. Sotnik said that Mr. Broadbent has requested a possible planting at several locations on Echo Lane.

vii. Murray Street

Mr. Sotnik said he has received a request for three (3) possible locations at 133 Murray Street.

b. Replacements

Mr. Sotnik said that he mentioned to Mr. Norman the replacement tree for Washington Street still needs to be planted again and it needs to be a top priority.

Mr. Strauss asked how many trees will be planted this fall and how it compares with the targets for this year. Mr. Sotnik said approximately 31 trees will be planted, but were hoping for 40 so we are just below the target, but said if anyone has any other locations to send them to him.

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

Mr. Whitehead said the Committee should be looking at possible tree planting locations and encouraging the tree liaisons to work with their neighborhoods throughout the entire year so there is a backlog of locations to plant trees because we were successful in getting the budget increased from \$50,000 to \$65,000 and he would like to see it continue in that direction.

Mr. Viteretto said that three (3) to four (4) trees can be planted on the south perimeter of Silvermine School. Mr. Sotnik requested that he send him the locations along with the species and he will add them to the planting list. He also said if anyone had any other locations to send them to him along with the species selections and the ownership agreements.

Mr. Viteretto asked if we should consider the four (4) locations in front of the Broad River Fire Department because they are not associated with the Dunbar School rehabilitation project. Mr. Sotnik suggested he send him the layout and he will contact the Fire Chief.

9. UPDATE - TREE MAINTENANCE BY SECTION OF THE CITY

Mr. Sotnik said that Mr. Norman had sent him a spreadsheet with the updated watering locations that were done. He said that he had also sent him some pictures showing the gator bags that continue to get damaged by lawn mowers, as well as garbage being dumped in the protective collars of the trees. He also said that Mr. Norman has noticed a severe salt spray due to Tropical Storm Isaias. Mr. Whitehead said he looked at the spreadsheet and noticed trees that were planted in 2019 were watered a few times, but nothing in 2020 and asked if the trees were just doing well or if they had fallen off of the

watering list. Mr. Sotnik said from what Mr. Norman has told him if the trees are not on the list then they are doing well or the homeowner has been caring for them.

Mr. Sotnik said he is still waiting on the proposal from Mr. Norman for the test results and recommendation for Fodor Farm for the soil amendments, and once he receives it he will contact Mr. Whitehead and Ms. Kipp to approve the expenditure.

10. UPDATE - GRANT APPLICATIONS

Ms. Kipp said that she found five (5) grants that look really interesting and are targeting environment, conservation, beautification, tree plantings and education, but the only negative is that they are due in October and November. She said she will be putting together a chart so the Committee can choose one (1) or two (2) that the Committee thinks makes the most sense.

11. RECRUITMENT OF NEIGHBORHOOD TREE LIAISONS

Ms. Kipp suggested that by having liaisons that have “boots on the ground” would help to pinpoint some of the areas and suggested over time to figure out how to invite more people so they can represent their neighborhood and work with the Tree Advisory Committee. Mr. Strauss said Nancy Lovas is the new tree liaison for East Norwalk.

Mr. Sotnik said he has sent out the document that was used to recruit liaisons for updating. He said once it is updated that Mr. Morgan can put it on the City’s website. Mr. Viteretto suggested targeting the neighborhood groups. Ms. Kipp also suggested getting some younger people involved to take ownership in their neighborhood.

12. REPORT - NTA ACTIVITIES

a. Update:

i. Tree Planting Efforts for Taxing Districts

Mr. Strauss said that the program with the Third Taxing District has been completed for this year and it was difficult due to the pandemic. He said there were twenty-two (22) lottery contestants and they normally choose the top twelve (12), but most of the locations that were on the list were unsuitable. He said there is a grant from last year for twelve (12) trees, but can only provide spaces for eight (8) trees so based upon the agreement with the Third Taxing District, the other four (4) will be deferred until next Spring.

ii. Board of Directors Realignment & Nominations

Mr. Strauss said the Board of Directors are in recruitment and nominations phase and will post the nominations two weeks prior to the annual meeting which will be held at the end of October.

- iii. Mr. Strauss stated that the NTA is also revising their bylaws.
 - iv. Mr. Strauss said they are also relaunching the NTA website and it is terrific. He said at some point the Tree Advisory Committee should also think about being more active in terms of outreach and suggested that a social media presence would be helpful while trying to recruit liaisons. Mr. Sotnik said that he will speak with Mr. Morgan. Mr. Strauss also requested a small budget to help create the social media if possible.
- Mr. Strauss said the NTA meeting will be held this Thursday and will be held in the pavilion at Fodor Farm.

13. OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Viteretto said that he received a call this week from a landscape architect who during a presentation to Planning & Zoning was requested to have larger caliper trees installed as part of the Project because they will recover faster and also be more impactful, which we know is incorrect. He said there is a disconnect of the things the Tree Advisory Committee is trying to achieve and the things they are approving and suggested working together to be more effective.

Mr. Strauss asked if the City has any responsibility in terms of selective pruning on City street trees, particularly on the trees that are high visibility. Mr. Whitehead said the City does the maintenance of trees in the City Right-of-Way, but there is a free tree agreement for any tree that was planted on private property and they agree to maintain the trees. Mr. Strauss said he would like an arborist to look at all of the trees that were planted in front of the Synagogue on East Avenue. Mr. Whitehead said if they do not have anyone to take care of the trees they can contact the City because they have a list of qualified arborists.

Mr. Viteretto suggested that the trees in front of Waypointe also be looked at for limbing up.

Mr. Whitehead said that he has enjoyed being the Chairperson of the Tree Advisory Committee for the past eight (8) years and is very proud of the accomplishments the Committee has made, but he is looking forward to Ms. Kipp taking over as the Chairperson.

14. ADJOURNMENT

**** MR. WHITEHEAD MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

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

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:30 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Dilene Byrd