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TREE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING October 27, 2020

Attendance: Erica Kipp, Chair
Richard Whitehead, Vice Chair
Andrew Strauss
Peter Viteretto
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 6:09 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. REPORT - 2020 LETTER OF RECOGNITION FROM SENATOR BLUMENTHAL

Mr. Sotnik said that Senator Blumenthal had sent a letter to Mayor Rilling dated September 10, 2020, congratulating the City for earning the Tree City USA recognition for 2019, and he stated that Norwalk was one of the 16 communities in Connecticut to Merritt the accomplishment and he respected the fact that we were the longest active Growth Award winner in the State of Connecticut.

Ms. Kipp requested that the letter be framed.

Mr. Strauss requested a copy of the letter to also be sent to him for the Norwalk Tree Alliance as the City's partner on this program.

4. APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE TREE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING OF SEPTEMBER 22, 2020.

On page 1, paragraph 4, change "Belden Avenue to "Riverside Avenue"

On page 4, change "suggested" to "corrected"

On page 7, change "prune" to "liming up"

**** MR. VITERETTO APPROVED THE MINUTES AS AMENDED.**

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

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

5. APPROVE SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS FOR CALENDAR YEAR 2021

**** MR. VITERETTO MOVED TO APPROVE THE SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS FOR CALENDAR YEAR 2021.**

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

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

6. REPORT - INCIDENTS OF ILLEGAL CUTTING

Mr. Sotnik said there were no reports of illegal cuttings.

7. UPDATE - TREE PLANTING PROGRAM

a. Planting Locations - Spring/Fall 2020.

Mr. Sotnik said that there are a variety of locations and this year with the outstanding orders that remain to be filled from the Spring, along with the 49 new orders placed this Fall, which is the largest order we have ever placed in one season, there is a lot of planting to be done this Fall.

i. 151 Woodward Avenue - 6 trees - Fall 2020

Mr. Whitehead said that he and Mr. Sotnik had staked the locations and identified the utilities, but the property is owned by a partnership of people and they could not come to an agreement for establishing a tree planting program for along the frontage of the property. He said he told them that we can't plant on private property without the Ownership Agreement and he has followed up with them twice, but has not received any response back, so he does not think they are interested in planting trees. He said if the property owners change their minds and contracts him, he will tell them we will be happy to stake the area again for a Spring 2021 planting.

Mr. Sotnik said there were two other lots along Woodward Avenue in that area, and between the three lots there was a total of twenty-four (24) trees based on the plan that Mr. Viteretto had done. He said without the tree planting at 151 Woodward Avenue, there are only seven (7) other locations and that the rest of the plan can be executed, but the other portion cannot be done without the ownership agreements. Mr. Viteretto asked if the plan should be changed. Mr. Whitehead said "yes" if it is not time consuming. Mr. Viteretto said it would be good moving forward to know which species of trees do the best in that environment.

ii. Belden Avenue and West Avenue -10 trees - Spring 2020

Mr. Sotnik said that ten (10) trees were ordered in the spring and six trees were planted to date and the rest will be planted within the next couple of weeks.

iii. Monroe Street - 2 trees

Mr. Sotnik said the trees have been ordered and the DPW highway department will remove the two (2) existing dead trees.

- iv. East Norwalk - 9 trees
Mr. Sotnik said that a total of eleven (11) trees were to be planted in various locations.
- v. Marvin Beach - 18 trees
Mr. Sotnik said that eighteen (18) locations were staked and the order has been placed for the trees. Mr. Strauss asked if the locations on River Road have been staked. Mr. Sotnik said some of them, but there is one that will not be able to be done this fall.
- vi. West Norwalk
Ms. Cossuto said she unfortunately has not heard back from anyone, but she will follow up this week. Mr. Sotnik said he will be placing the order for the trees in the next week or so.

Mr. Viteretto said there were several trees removed in front of Fox Run School and suggested a planting be done at that location.

Ms. Kipp said that two people had messaged her from the West Norwalk area on the Next Door Neighborhood site stating that they are interested in having trees planted and would care for them and she will share their information with Ms. Cossuto.

- vii. Highland Avenue - 9 trees
Mr. Sotnik said Mr. Frazier had requested he look at a few possible planting locations because there had been some issues with some of the trees that died and were removed at the Community Center, as well as a few other locations. He said he has placed an order for a total of nine (9) locations.
- viii. Echo Lane - 8 trees
Mr. Sotnik said that Mr. Broadbent had requested some trees on Echo Lane and that eight (8) trees will be planted. He stated that the order has been placed and the locations have been staked.
- ix. Murray Street - 2 trees
Mr. Sotnik said there were two locations on Murray Street, as well as one location on Fordam Drive for a total of three (3) trees.

Mr. Sotnik said we have planted six (6) of the 17 trees that were ordered in the Spring and have just ordered forty-nine (49) trees for a total of sixty-six (66) trees that we will have planted this year.

Mr. Sotnik reported on the budget and said after the cost of the trees for the Fall planting and with the remaining balance from last fiscal year, there will be a balance of \$21,863 for the Spring 2021.

b. Replacements

There was no discussion.

8. UPDATE - TREE MAINTENANCE BY SECTION OF THE CITY

Mr. Sotnik said that Mr. Norman had contacted him and said he has gone to 16 of the locations where trees were planted and has also replaced the mulch. He said he is satisfied with the work he has done in those locations.

Mr. Sotnik said he received an e-mail from Mr. Norman related to Fodor Farm including the proposal for amending the soil for the two Oak Trees and said he would amend the soil and provide food for the trees through the Spring of 2021. He said the cost for the Fall for the vertical mulching would be \$1,485 and \$250 for the Spring application. Mr. Viteretto asked what the issue is with the trees. Mr. Sotnik said that Mr. Norman had conducted tests and found there were issues with the quality of the soil. He said if the Committee agrees to move forward with the proposal it would be paid for out of the balance of the tree planting budget. Mr. Strauss asked if some of the cost could be paid for through Recreation and Parks because Fodor Farm is part of the park system. Mr. Sotnik said he would have to speak with Mr. Roberts. Mr. Whitehead said it first needs to be decided if we want to move forward with this project and his recommendation is to replace the tree and it should be communicated to Mr. Norman that the Committee has reviewed his recommendations, but opted not to take that course of action, and request that the tree be replaced in the Spring of 2021. Mr. Sotnik said the soil is bad in that location and Mr. Norman is recommending that the soil be amended so that when he puts the new tree in it will survive. After further discussion it was decided that Mr. Sotnik would contact Mr. Norman and tell him that the Committee has decided to have the tree replaced in the early Spring of 2021, and to have the soil amended at the same time and the Committee will work with him on the change in the cost for the material.

9. PROMOTION OF TREE PLANTING PROGRAM

Ms. Kipp clarified that this item is the promotion of the Committee as a whole and she has started an email exchange with the City's IT Department requesting that the Tree Advisory Committee's website be updated to include some photos of tree plantings, a short biography of each of the Committee members and some general information.

Mr. Strauss said that Mr. Sotnik has been working for some time on a map with locations of where trees have been planted over the years and suggested that be made into a comprehensive map which he has done for the Norwalk Tree Alliance for the Third Taxing District plantings. Mr. Sotnik said the information is on the City GIS and a

link can be created. Mr. Strauss suggested also including the plantings from all of the Arbor Day celebrations.

Ms. Kipp said she has also worked with Mr. Morgan and requested he increase the Committee's presence on social media and suggested including the number of trees that are planted because it would be nice for the public so that more people know about the Committee and what we do.

Mr. Viteretto said in Chicago when a tree is planted there is a tag attached to them stating who sponsored them and what trees do and suggested doing something like and asked if there is anyone who can create that graphic.

Mr. Strauss suggested that when the trees get planted this Fall that photographs are taken along with the homeowner and he volunteered to do it part of the time. Mr. Sotnik said he will send Mr. Strauss the information on the locations, but there are currently not any interns and D.P.W. is extremely short staffed at this time. Mr. Whitehead suggested asking Mr. Norman to take some of the photos.

10. TREE CITY USA PREPARATION

Mr. Sotnik said he is starting to prepare the package of information for the Tree City USA and that it is due by January 15, 2021. He said one of the projects he is looking at for the Growth Award this year is the tree planting program because it has expanded due to the extra money that was approved by the Common Council for this fiscal year. He said he would also like to include the Tree School and the information related to that. He said if anyone else on the Committee has anything else they would like to use to send him the information so he can include it in the application. Mr. Strauss said he will send him things from the Tree Alliance including the memorial tree for Covid-19.

Mr. Strauss said they have also been photographing recipients of trees for the Tree Alliance and suggested the same thing be done for the Tree Advisory Committee.

Mr. Whitehead suggested including Norwalk Community College as being accredited as a Tree Campus USA. Ms. Kipp said that Norwalk Community College will again this year be applying for Tree Campus USA and that Mr. Whitehead had sent her some pictures of the trees that were planted for Arbor Day even though there was not a celebration held, to show that we still did something to recognize it.

11. UPDATE - 2021 ARBOR DAY CELEBRATION/LOCATION - CRANBURY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Mr. Sotnik said we can speak to the Principal at Cranbury Elementary School to see if they are still interested in participating in whatever platform we decided to use for the

Arbor Day celebration since they were selected for 2020 and began planning, but the event had to be cancelled due to the pandemic.

Ms. Kipp suggested even if the celebration cannot be done in person that trees are still planted to show the Arbor Day Foundation that we are still committed to planting trees even though we can't have the program surrounding the tree planting. Mr. Sotnik said that he had asked if that could have been done earlier this year, but at that time the Principal was against it, but he will make the request again this year.

12. REPORT - NTA ACTIVITIES

a. Update:

- i. Third Taxing District Fall 2020 tree planting
Mr. Strauss said even though he is no longer on the Board, he will continue to manage the program.

- ii. Board of Directors Meeting
Mr. Strauss said that last Thursday, the Norwalk Tree Alliance held the Annual Meeting and elected a new board and that he and Mr. Whitehead are no longer on the Board, but he feels good about the people who are there in terms of their enthusiasm and experience. He said a majority of the meeting focused on process and procedures and in the years ahead will focus on program development and expanding the tree planting programs with trees that are specific to New England.

Mr. Sotnik said it has been a goal of the Tree Advisory Committee and the Norwalk Tree Alliance for many years to try and get more people, including younger people involved and it has finally come to fruition with the guidance of Mr. Strauss when he was the President.

- iii. Revising bylaws
Mr. Strauss said that the Norwalk Tree Alliance has revised and passed updates and changes to the bylaws.

13. OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Viteretto requested that the trees on Wall Street, West Avenue and Washington Street are put on the schedule to be limbed up in the Spring. Mr. Torre said that D.P.W. will help out any way we can. Mr. Viteretto said because if not, some of the tree planting funds will need to be reallocated to make the program work. Mr. Sotnik said there are a few projects that will be happening over the next year in the Wall Street area. Mr. Whitehead volunteered again to limb up the trees on Washington Street if no one on the Committee minds.

Mr. Torre said he does not anticipate getting any funding from Recreation and Parks.

Mr. Strauss asked for an update on the Tree Liaisons. Ms. Kipp provided an update and said there is a woman that Mr. Strauss had recruited, Mr. Sotnik had sent Ms. Kipp a couple of names and she would also like to include Fran Hoyt as well as a few people who had expressed interest on the Next Door site, which in total, are approximately eight people. She said she would like to draft an e-mail to all the potential Tree Liaisons explaining what the expectations are. Mr. Sotnik said approximately 12 years ago there were training sessions held for the Tree Liaisons and suggested doing that again to show what the roles and responsibilities of a Tree Liaison are.

Mr. Strauss said he had put together an outline of the roles and responsibilities of for the Tree Advisory Committee. Ms. Kipp suggested that is something that should be included on the website. Mr. Strauss requested that Mr. Sotnik send the outline to Ms. Kipp. Mr. Whitehead said they will need to be reviewed to ensure that we are an Advisory Committee. Mr. Viteretto suggested that the responsibilities are simple. Ms. Kipp agreed because she does not want people to think that we are expecting them to know specific things such as setbacks, utility information, etc.

14. ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting adjourned at 7:10 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Dilene Byrd