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Minutes
TREE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
November 24, 2020

Attendance: Erica Kipp, Chair
Richard Whitehead, Vice Chair
Andrew Strauss

Absent: Cindy Cossuto
Peter Viteretto

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

Others: Allan Broadbent, Norwalk Tree Alliance
Lisa Shanahan, Common Council Member

1. CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Kipp called the meeting to order at 6:06 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. INTRODUCTION OF NEW TREE LIAISONS

Ms. Kipp said that she had sent an email to five (5) people who had expressed interest in becoming a Tree Liaison and that two of them said they could not make the commitment, and three (3) had said they could, but she has not yet heard from them, so she will follow up with them again for next month.

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

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

**** MR. WHITEHEAD SECONDED THE MOTION.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

5. REPORT - NO NEW INCIDENTS OF ILLEGAL CUTTINGS TO REPORT

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

6. UPDATE - TREE PLANTING PROGRAM

a. Planting Locations – Spring/Fall 2020

Ms. Kipp said that she and Mr. Sotnik had put together a chart for the tree plantings which will be updated and reported on twice a year (once in the Spring

and once in the Fall) so that there is a running total. She said that the committee should all be congratulated that there will be 73 trees planted in CY 2020.

Mr. Sotnik said that he has spoken with Mr. Norman from Almstead Tree and he has provided an update and said that 39 of the 56 trees for the Fall Planting, and 12 of the 17 trees from the Spring planting have been planted as of this date. He said that there are a few issues with the Redmond American Linden Trees because they are having trouble getting them and they will not be available until the Spring of 2021. He said that Mr. Norman has asked if there are any substitutions that can be planted with the exception of the Washington Street tree. Mr. Strauss pointed out that if any of the locations are on private property, the property owner will need to be contacted. Mr. Sotnik said the planting could also be held over until the Spring of 2021.

Ms. Kipp asked if the 73 trees on the chart is reflective of what has actually been planted. Mr. Sotnik said "no" it would then be 70. Ms. Kipp requested that the chart only reflect the trees that have actually been planted, because that is what will make the most impact. Mr. Sotnik said that four should then be removed from the chart making a total of 69 trees that have been actually planted. Ms. Kipp said that she agrees with Mr. Strauss about the trees that are on private property, and the property owner should be given an opportunity to pick another tree from the species that are on the list, and move forward with the plantings. Mr. Strauss said it is late in the season to make the change and asked if there is still time. Mr. Sotnik said that Mr. Norman said that there is still time.

Ms. Kipp said she is fine with whichever species Mr. Whitehead suggests for Calf Pasture Beach Road. Mr. Whitehead said there are three variety of trees on Calf Pasture Beach Road (Oak, Linden and Maple trees) and suggested replacing the Redmond American Linden trees with Red Maple trees. Mr. Sotnik said then the total trees planted for 2020 will be 72 and the Redmond Linden Tree for Washington Street will be planted in the Spring of 2021.

Mr. Sotnik said that the property owners at 149 Gregory Blvd. had requested an Augusta Pine Tree which is not on the planting list, and Mr. Norman of Almstead said that he is not aware of the species, and asked Mr. Whitehead if he is aware of the species. Mr. Whitehead said "no," but a lot of trees have multiple names and that is most likely not the technical name of the tree. Ms. Kipp said that a certain number of trees are offered and we don't want to make a precedence of allowing people to dictate which trees are planted. Mr. Sotnik agreed, but was seeing if there is a species on the list that is close. Ms. Kipp suggested giving the property owners the option of another Evergreen tree that is on the approved planting list.

b. Expended Budget

Mr. Sotnik reported on the budget and said the current remaining balance for the Spring 2021 plantings is \$14,951.23. He stated that \$65,000 has been requested

for the FY 2021 - 22 Capital Budget. Mr. Whitehead asked what the average cost for planting a tree is. Mr. Sotnik said approximately \$800. He also said that the RFQ will need to be put out in the Spring because the current contract with Almstead Tree will expire on June 30, 2021. Mr. Whitehead suggested requesting more than \$65,000 because generally people would like to see more trees planted and the only way to do that is to increase the budget. Mr. Sotnik said he will bring the request to Mr. Carr and asked the Committee what they would like the request to be increased to. Mr. Whitehead suggested \$80,000. Ms. Kipp said the Committee will discuss it and asked if there is typically a percentage that the budget should be increased by on a regular basis, but she agrees with Mr. Whitehead and said that \$80,000 is a reasonable request. She stated that she would like to present a request to the Common Council so that they are aware and understand how the money is being used. Mr. Strauss asked when a rational and budget request would need to be submitted. Mr. Sotnik said as soon as possible because technically the cutoff date to submit the Capital Budget request was last Friday.

Mr. Sotnik noted that the 56 trees that were ordered was the largest ever for a Spring or Fall planting session. Ms. Kipp asked how many trees were planted in 2019. Mr. Sotnik said that approximately 30 to 40 trees were planted last year so there was a dramatic increase. Mr. Strauss said that Mr. Torre had reported on the number of trees that were lost during the storm and suggested using that as part of the rationale for the increased budget request.

7. NEEF GRANTS

Ms. Kipp reported and said the National Environmental Education Foundation (NEEF) has a grant and we are eligible to apply and she would like it to be a collaboration between Norwalk Community College and the Tree Advisory Committee. The members of the Committee agreed. She said they have a few different rotations throughout the year and she has selected the March 15th rotation, which would be in line with the Spring planting. She said the application for the grant will need to be submitted by February 1, 2021 to be considered. She said that she will send out the link with the different categories that can be applied for and that more than one category can be applied for. Mr. Whitehead asked how much the grant is for. Ms. Kipp said there is a range, and that it starts at \$2,500 and increases from there. It is a restoration and resiliency COVID-19 recovery fund, so the money was earmarked to bolster outdoor spaces so people can socialize safely.

8. CITY OF NORWALK - TREE ADVISORY COMMITTEE WEBSITE UPDATE

Ms. Kipp said she would like to update the City website for the Tree Advisory Committee and requested that the Committee members submit a picture of themselves along with a short biography. She said it would help people understand that the Committee does this on a voluntary basis. Mr. Strauss asked if Mr. Torre should be

included on the website since he is the Tree Warden. Mr. Sotnik said yes and that he has spoken to the IT Dept. and they are willing to help.

Ms. Shanahan said that she is excited about the number of trees that will be planted and she thanked the Committee for all that they do to bring trees into Norwalk.

Ms. Kipp said she would also like to include the GIS map of where the trees that have been planted are located.

9. TREE CITY USA RECERTIFICATION APPLICATION PREPARATION

Mr. Sotnik said he is starting to gather the information for the Tree City USA recertification application and he is also looking at the Growth Awards and what we may apply for and that a great candidate this year may be the Capital Tree Planting program and possibly the Tree School and Outdoor Classroom. He said he will pick the others as we get closer to submitting the application, and if anyone has any information to send it to him and he will begin putting the package together. It will need to be submitted by January 13, 2021. He said he will also need the financials for the Tree Alliance because it is included in the overall tree program. Ms. Kipp asked what the possibilities are as a third candidate for the application. Mr. Sotnik said possibly events. Ms. Kipp suggested including the lesson plan that she wrote for the Lorax for the Arbor Day Celebration. Mr. Strauss said another thing that would be notable is that Norwalk now has another Tree Advisory Committee at Norwalk Community College. Mr. Whitehead agreed and said that Norwalk is only one of two communities that has a Tree City Campus. Ms. Kipp agreed and said that it bears mentioning, but suggested using caution because the City of Norwalk did not institute or do anything on the campus to make that happen. Mr. Sotnik agreed.

Ms. Kipp said that if anyone on the Committee has any photographs to send them to Mr. Sotnik so that he can include them in his report.

10. TREE CAMPUS U.S.A. RECERTIFICATION APPLICATION PREPARATION

Ms. Kipp said she is applying for recertification as a Tree Campus USA at Norwalk Community College and that last year was the first year that we had applied and were honored with the Tree Campus USA status. She said the deadline to apply has been extended to July 15, 2021, due to COVID-19 and they are relaxing some of the requirements and are a little more forgiving with the dollar amount that is being spent. She said that she should have the application completed by the first week in January. She also said that Norwalk Community College is the only Community College in all of Connecticut that is honored as a Tree Campus USA and is the second school in all of Connecticut with UCONN being the first.

11. REPORT - NTA ACTIVITIES

a. Update:

i. Sixth Taxing District Tree Planting

Mr. Broadbent said the Board elections were held and they are moving forward with a great Board.

Mr. Broadbent said we are working on a more holistic program for the Sixth Taxing District as opposed to what was previously suggested which was to plant individual trees on private property with the goal of them being canopy trees. He said they are working on a master plan that can be rolled out over a few years with targeted areas in Rowayton and the Sixth Taxing District. The funds from the first round of the grant that was given will be planted in the Spring of 2021.

ii. Woodward Avenue Park Planting Project with NRWA

Mr. Broadbent said the NTA is partnering with Ms. Washer of the NRWA and is working on a program for Woodward Park and there were a number of trees that were planted and the park is looking tremendously better than it was five years ago and there have been a lot of improvements made. He said Ms. Washer has some ideas and she is looking for a partner to help with some design thought and strategizing what species to put where so the NTA will also be working with her on the Woodward Avenue Park.

Mr. Broadbent said that one of the goals that the NTA has set for 2021 is to have their planting activities be planted by volunteers and in years past it has been more of hiring someone to plant the trees similar to how the Tree Advisory Committee works, but they will now have planting activities that volunteers can sign up to plant the trees alongside the members of the Board. He said the first trees were planted a few weeks ago by members of the Board and it was an interesting activity.

iii. NRVT Planting Project

Mr. Broadbent said they are partnering with Ms. Washer on the Norwalk River Valley Trail (NRVT) and there is a segment of the trail that will soon be connected to the rest of the trail from the Union Park area to the old YMCA. There were a number of trees planted along that stretch about eight years ago, but there are still many gaps that need to be filled so the NTA is working with her to develop a program that the NTA will spearhead and put together to plant trees along that area.

Mr. Broadbent said that Mr. Strauss has sent him a map that he has been keeping for the Third Taxing District with a pinpoint of every tree that has been planted and suggested a "Norwalk" chart of trees that were planted in Norwalk either by the Norwalk Tree Alliance or the Norwalk Tree Advisory Committee, Norwalk River Valley Trail (NRVT), Norwalk Green etc. and said it

may even add a little competition to see who can plant the most trees and increase the publicity of what everyone is doing. Mr. Sotnik said they have been mapping the trees that the Tree Advisory Committee and the Norwalk Tree Alliance has planted. On the GIS based map, you can hover over each tree location to find out when it was planted, who is was planted by and what the species of the tree is. He said so if the information of tree plantings by the other entities comes into DPW he can have a Summer Intern do the geo-locating in the field in the Spring and Fall to keep the map updated. Ms. Kipp said she would like to have a link on the Tree Advisory Committee website to that so other people can see it as well.

Mr. Sotnik said that NRV Phase II bid opening was last Friday and Deering Construction was the low bidder and the Contract will go before the Public Works Committee in early December for approval. Mr. Broadbent asked if the project includes tree plantings. Mr. Sotnik said he would have to speak with Mr. Yeosock since he was handling that project.

Ms. Kipp said that on December 1, 2020, at 6:30 P.M. there is a Conservation Mapping Zoom meeting and that she will forward the registration link to the Committee.

Ms. Kipp suggested adding the grants received to the website and even though the Tree Advisory Committee does operate with funds from the City Capital Budget, but the grants that she writes supplements those funds and are 100% based in educational programming and volunteer activities. Mr. Strauss suggested also including the letter from Senator Blumenthal on the website.

Mr. Broadbent said that Woodward Park has not been very developed and has lost numerous trees over substituent storms so there is a significant need for replanting and the City has supported Ms. Washer along with a number of people on planting trees. There have been a number of trees that have been planted, but there are still a lot of spaces where trees need to be planted. Mr. Sotnik said that Mr. Whitehead and Mr. Strauss were involved in that and that Recreation and Parks did a lot of the plantings. Mr. Whitehead said the park was completely baron of trees and that there have been a few plantings with Recreation and Parks based on Mr. Viteretto' s planting plan, as well as four (4) volunteer planting programs so far this year that he has attended and there may even have been more than that. It is good to see the transformation and that is a great park and there is a lot more to be done there.

12. OTHER BUSINESS

Ms. Kipp said the next Tree Advisory Committee meeting is scheduled for December 22, 2020, but unless there is something that needs to be reported the meeting may be

cancelled being that it is so close to the Holiday, but will let the Committee members know in advance.

Ms. Shanahan requested that a layer be added to the Norwalk Conservation map that was worked on with the Norwalk Land Trust. Ms. Kipp said the Norwalk Land Trust is actually one of the big collaborators on the conservation mapping that will be taking place on December 1, 2020, and she will forward the link to the Committee members and encouraged them to attend.

13. ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting adjourned at 7:12 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Dilene Byrd