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TREE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING May 25, 2021

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

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

1. CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Kipp called the meeting to order at 6:03 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 public comment this evening.

3. APPROVE MINUTES OF THE TREE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING ON APRIL 27, 2021.

Replace "She" with "Ms. Kipp" in Item 9, Line 1.

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

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

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

4. CAPITAL TREE PLANTING PROGRAM - SPRING 2021 PLANTING LOCATION LIST.

New Plantings:

- a. 21 First Street- 1 Rosa Rugosa
- b. 26 First Street- 1 Pink Flowering Dogwood
- c. 35 First Street- 1 Princeton Sentry Gingko
- d. 38 First Steet- 1 Constellation Flowering Dogwood
- e. 44 First Street- 1 Pink Flowering Dogwood
- f. 122 Partrick Avenue - 1 Kwanzan Cherry
- g. 38 Calf Pasture Beach Road – 1 Pin Oak
- i. Ludlow Park- 3 Red Maples
- j. 4 Cavray Road – 2 Kousa Dogwoods

Replacements:

- a. 172 Main Street - 1 Kwanzan Cherry in Planter
- b. 69 Wilton Avenue - 2 Kwanzan Cherry in Planter

Mr. Sotnik reported and said that they have received requests for seven (7) total trees that will be planted on First Street to date, but that they are still looking for additional locations, and that a tree cannot be planted at 21 First Street, but will be planting a

shrub in its place. He said there will be a total of twenty-five (25) trees planted at various locations this Spring including the ten (10) planted for Arbor Day. Ms. Kipp asked Mr. Sotnik to explain why a tree cannot be planted at 21 First Street. Mr. Sotnik said that area has a 3' snow shelf, and there are also several business with advertising for their businesses at that location and if a tree is planted, it would end up blocking the signage, and in addition, there are also wires in that area directly over the snow shelf. He said rather than trying to plant a tree in the small snow shelf that would not do well it was decided in consultation with the property owner that a shrub would be planted to give them some type of vegetation in that area.

Mr. Viteretto asked if the business owners will take on the watering of the trees on Main Street and Wilton Avenue. Ms. Kipp said that she and Mr. Sotnik went to Wilton Avenue and spoke to the business owner and he was very happy to have a new tree and that the planters help to define his space. He also has a customer who is a landscaper and will be putting plants around the base of the two trees, so based on the conversation with him, he will be taking care of the trees on Wilton Avenue. Mr. Sotnik said that there are four planters in the area of 172 Main Street and that three are doing well, but the fourth one will need to be replanted and he has already spoken with Almstead Tree, but they said they have had a difficult time getting some Cherry trees this year. Mr. Viteretto suggested that a Kwanzan Cherry Tree is planted on Main Street so it matches the other three planters. Mr. Sotnik stated that is the type of tree that was ordered.

5. DISCUSSION - FINALIZE TREE LIST FOR 2021 TREE PLANTING CONTRACT RFP

Mr. Sotnik said he is just waiting on the input for the final list of native or non-native species from the Committee members and that he has all of the rest of the species list prepared and requested the list as soon as possible. Mr. Whitehead said that he will send Mr. Sotnik the information tomorrow. Ms. Kipp said if the Norwalk Tree Alliance had specific native species that they would like to see on the list that this is the perfect opportunity to get the species list to Mr. Sotnik.

6. UPDATE - TREE SUMMIT PLANNING MEETING

Ms. Kipp said that she, Mr. Sotnik, Mr. Whitehead and Mr. Broadbent had attended the meeting on Friday, May 21, 2021, and the meeting gathered together over 15 people that represented the Common Council, various departments at the City such as D.P.W. and P&Z and selected representatives from the Environmental Organizations in Norwalk that included the Norwalk Tree Alliance, the Norwalk River Watershed Association and the Norwalk Land Trust. She said they discussed tree planting programs and how we can facilitate communication amongst all of these different entities so that no one is operating in a silo and don't reinvent the wheel and assure that we are all working collaboratively and understand what the other organizations are working on so that efforts are not duplicated.

Mr. Sotnik said that everything went well and it will be helpful if we can keep everyone informed about projects that are being done and make sure that they are coordinated properly.

Ms. Kipp asked if anyone was taking minutes at the meeting. Mr. Sotnik stated that he believed that Ms. Shanahan was taking minutes because he saw her writing notes on the agenda as she was also introducing the agenda topics. He also stated that he was taking notes, but he was not sure if there was an official minute taker. He stated that he felt that Ms. Shanahan would be distributing something in the future, but had not talked with her about it and was his belief only. Ms. Kipp requested that any minutes be shared with the rest of the Tree Advisory Committee members when they are available.

Mr. Sotnik also stated that he liked the idea of trying to get some additional new volunteers for the Tree Liaison Program as the Committee has previously discussed and potentially utilize the Coalition of Norwalk Neighborhood Associations as a resource. CNNA is one of the organizations that we did have a group of Tree Liaisons from previously and since they have 26 neighborhood groups, if we could recruit five or ten of them it would be a big help. Ms. Kipp said she has already reached out to the Friends of Cranbury and that Ms. Washer has a pool of volunteers and Mr. Sotnik would like to have volunteer's particularly over the summer to continue some of the GIS mapping of the trees that have been planted and that 2018 was the last time that program was updated.

Mr. Whitehead stated that he was very happy to see such interest and concern in Norwalk's Tree Canopy and thought the meeting was a great first step.

Ms. Kipp stated that at the end of the day we all have the common goal of increasing the tree canopy in Norwalk and decreasing the impervious surface areas as well as trying to utilize native trees when and where it makes sense and working collaboratively towards that goal.

Mr. Broadbent stated that it was outstanding and showcased and highlighted the work that the Tree Advisory Committee has already been doing forever and it helps the other organizations gain better visibility into where they fit. He stated that it will allow the Environmental Non-Profits see where they fit and put the onus back on D.P.W. to become the overarching connection between all of these various entities. He stated that he thought that it was outstanding. He thought the dialogue was healthy and everyone was free to speak their mind, it was excellent.

Joan MacDonald said she would like to have a tree planted at 35 First Street and said that she could work on getting additional locations and asked what the deadline is to have the list submitted to Mr. Sotnik. Ms. Kipp suggested that Joan contact Mr. Sotnik directly to discuss the details.

7. UPDATE - 2021 ARBOR DAY CELEBRATION - OAK HILLS PARK, KENDALL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, BROOKSIDE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AND NCC

Ms. Kipp said there was a fantastic celebration held at Oak Hills Park that included two elementary schools. Mr. Sotnik said that 45 people had attended and that trees were planted at Kendall Elementary School and Brookside Elementary School and that Eversource was a “Big Partner” in the celebration this year and gave a \$1,500 grant to the City and the Tree Alliance to plant two more trees, as well as the five trees that they had donated and they will also be donating an additional five trees to replace the ones they had to previously remove at Oak Hills Park. He said that Almstead Tree also bagged the 300 seedlings as well as all of the gifts donated by Eversource that went to the children at no cost to the City. He said that a total of ten (10) trees were planted this year for Arbor Day. Ms. Kipp said that Mr. Morgan will be doing a press release of the event and that photos of the event will be included in the Tree Advisory Committee newsletter.

8. UPDATE - GRANT APPLICATIONS

a. NEEF - Ludlow Park

Ms. Kipp provided an update and said the Tree Advisory Committee was awarded the National Environmental and Education Foundation grant and are now working with Recreation and Parks to put in additional trees that the grant does not cover and they matched the grant so a total of four trees will be planted at Ludlow Park and two maintenance free all weather benches will also be installed. She said once a date of the plantings is determined that the Committee members will be notified and she would like to have a small community event held so that people can see how instrumental the City of Norwalk is at helping to keep these public spaces beautiful and tree lined. Mr. Viteretto asked what species of trees will be planted. Mr. Sotnik said three Red Maple trees and a Pin Oak tree will be planted.

b. Bank of America - Arbor Day Foundation - 15 Madison Street and Learning Center at Roodner Court

Ms. Kipp said the second grant was a Bank of America Arbor Day Foundation grant and applicants were eligible only if they had earned a Tree City USA status so Norwalk was eligible to apply for the grant and the grant will be for Madison Street and Roodner Court and Mr. Sotnik will be following up on the status of the grant award. Mr. Viteretto asked how many of the trees survived from the planting that was done in Roodner Court three years ago. Ms. Kipp said all of them and unlike the last grant this grant does not target trees within the complex and is looking specifically at the Children’s Learning Center and has built in money for an educational garden for them as well as trees to line the perimeter of that area so that there is a barrier between where the children play and the road, as well as maintenance free picnic tables.

Ms. Kipp said that Ms. Washer had also received some grant funding for trees to help to increase the overall tree canopy and she requested the details of the grant so that she can report on them, but she has not yet heard back from her, but while at the Tree Summit Planning Meeting she and Mrs. Shanahan had mentioned earning two grants and that one was for Oyster Shell Park. Mr. Sotnik said the other location is Woodward Park.

9. REPORT - TAC NEWSLETTER

Ms. Kipp asked Mr. Sotnik if he had spoken with the IT Dept. regarding the online email for the newsletter. Mr. Sotnik said “yes,” but they will need all of the information as to the specifics. Ms. Kipp said that she will contact Ms. Liu to discuss the details. Mr. Strauss suggested adding the residents who received free trees to the distribution list. Mr. Viteretto suggested contact the neighborhood association to discuss having a link to the newsletter added to their website.

10. REPORT - NTA ACTIVITIES

a. Program Updates

Mr. Broadbent reported the highlights and said they have had a banner year for tree plantings and they just had the first ever tree planting activity at the Norwalk Hospital in honor of Nurses Week and planted three trees (3) and fifteen (15) native shrubs in their courtyard garden and the nurses did the plantings.

Mr. Broadbent said that all of the Third Taxing District trees have been planted and there were twenty-eight (28) trees planted and the Norwalk Tree Alliance has doubled their grant money. In addition to that they have supplied trees to two homeowner associations and have planted over fifty (50) trees this year.

Mr. Broadbent said the Norwalk Tree Alliance will be holding a Bonsai Tree Trimming event at Fodor Farm in June.

Mr. Broadbent said they will be building a native arboretum to show people what native trees look like and they look forward to a lot of upcoming activities and events that they have planned for the Fall as well as for next year. He said their big push now is to engage corporate sponsors and continue with Fairfield County Gives fundraising activity which has given proceeds over \$4,500 over the past two years. Mr. Sotnik requested a list of where the trees have been planted so they can be geo-located and put onto the GIS mapping system for the city.

11. OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business discussed this evening.

12. ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting adjourned at 7:53 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Dilene Byrd