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## **TREE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING June 22, 2021**

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Attendance: Professor Kipp, Chair  
Richard Whitehead, Vice Chair  
Andrew Strauss  
Cindy Cossuto

Peter Viteretto

Staff: Anthony Carr, Chief of Operations and Public Works  
Chris Torre, Superintendent of Operations/Tree Warden  
Paul Sotnik, Senior Civil Engineer/Deputy Tree Warden  
Dilene Byrd, Secretary

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

### **1. CALL TO ORDER**

Professor Kipp called the meeting to order at 6:01 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.)**

Audrey Cozzarin

Ms. Cozzarin thanked the Tree Advisory Committee for their part regarding the Norway Spruce Trees that were removed at Oak Hills Park by Eversource, and she hopes the Committee will look to see that a mix of native trees, shrubs and pollinator plants are implemented by Eversource at Oak Hills Park.

### **3. APPROVE MINUTES OF THE TREE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING OF MAY 25, 2021.**

**\*\* MR. STRAUSS MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF MAY 25, 2021 AS SUBMITTED.**

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

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

### **4. CAPITAL TREE PLANTING PROGRAM - FINAL SPRING 2021 UPDATE**

a. Final Count - Spring 2021 and Fiscal year.

Mr. Sotnik reported and said that 26 trees were planted in the Spring of 2021 and that a total of 82 trees were planted in Fiscal Year 2020/21.

b. Thank You Letters

Mr. Sotnik said a thank you letter was received from Susan Anderson stating that on June 14, 2021 she had received a Red Maple Tree planted and would like to put another tree on the list for next year. Mr. Sotnik said the second tree was also planted because one of the residents on First Street decided that they did not want a tree after they had initially said they wanted one, so it was planted at 21 Naramake Avenue.

Mr. Sotnik said the resident at 4 Baxter Drive also sent a letter of thanks for the tree planting program and that the tree makes such a huge difference in their front yard.

#### **5. UPDATE - CAPITAL TREE PLANTING BUDGET BALANCES**

Mr. Sotnik said that \$65,000 was approved for the tree planting budget beginning on July 1, 2021, and will have a total tree planting budget of approximately \$74,000 with the remaining funds that will be left over at the end of the this current Fiscal Year.

#### **6. DEVELOPMENT OF FALL 2021 - SPRING 2022 TREE PLANTING LOCATION LIST**

Mr. Sotnik said that are 10 potential locations for tree plantings at various locations and will build that list between and the beginning of September for the fall planting order.

Professor Kipp said that Ms. Cossuto, Mr. Whitehead, Mr. Sotnik and herself have been working with Ms. Young regarding additional planting locations and had submitted a grant for a housing area in SONO, but unfortunately did not get the grant, but are still targeting that area because it does fit the criteria for street and canopy trees with the exception of the trees that were going to be planted on the interior, but will certainly still plant the street canopy trees with the TAC budget. She said that she will be speaking with Ms. Young and report back to the Committee at the July meeting with the details.

Ms. Shanahan said that she and Ms. Washer were able to get \$50,000 in grants and have sent a proposal to Mr. Carr and Mr. Hughes and are targeting that area already so if there are areas that the Committee would like to have trees planted they would work with the Committee. Professor said they are targeting a particular area and would love to work with her and Ms. Washer to get additional funds to complete the project as it was envisioned.

Mr. Whitehead said that Aiken Street was previously on the list based on public feedback and he had met with Mr. Hughes during the construction in the Spring and now that the construction for the field Project is almost complete, it would be a good location to target for Fall 2021 and Spring 2022 tree plantings. Mr. Sotnik said that some tree plantings are included as part of the project but the TAC could add more trees to the area.

## **7. UPDATE - ALMSTEAD TREE WATERING/MAINTENANCE SCHEDULE**

Mr. Sotnik reported on the watering schedule and said that Almstead Tree will continue to provide an update report throughout the summer. Mr. Viteretto asked if the trees on Belden Avenue have been watered. Mr. Sotnik said they have not yet done anything this year, but those trees were planted in November, 2020 and are still under warranty. Mr. Viteretto said that gator bags are no longer on the trees. Mr. Sotnik said that he would report that to them.

Mr. Strauss said that there is a dead Little Leaf Linden Tree on Gregory Boulevard and should be removed because he does not think it is still under warranty because it is a fairly mature tree. Mr. Sotnik requested that he send him the address and he will forward it to Almstead Tree.

Professor Kipp asked Mr. Sotnik how often a watering report is provided from Almstead Tree. Mr. Sotnik said they are required to provide a report on a monthly bases. Mr. Strauss asked Mr. Sotnik what his assessment was for the Trees at Fodor Farm. Mr. Sotnik said it looks like the trees are coming around from the treatments that Mr. Norman had done. Mr. Strauss agreed, but said he had noticed a street tree the east is dead, but is not one of the Oak Trees that were planted for Fodor Farm.

## **8. DISCUSSION - FINAL TREE LIST FOR 2021 TREE PLANTING CONTRACT RFP**

Professor Kipp said over the last month, the members of the Tree Advisory Committee had some input for the tree planting list for the RFP and one of the things that she had sent over was a list from her colleagues at the Audubon Society that highly recommend not only native species, but native species that support both insect and bird pollinators. Mr. Sotnik presented the list and said they have all been added to the list. Professor Kipp said that the list is robust and that Mr. Sotnik will be doing some research regarding pricing and on how readily available these trees are and in the caliper size we plant. Professor Kipp asked Mr. Sotnik about how long it will take him to work on that. Mr. Sotnik said that he has been in contact with the Purchasing Department and they have put together the RFP and it is ready to be advertised with the exception of this final list. Mr. Viteretto requested that Mr. Sotnik forward him a list and he will notate what species are commercially available.

Mr. Strauss suggested moving forward to include what species of trees the Tree Advisory Committee recommends as most appropriate in the tree planting guide and determine what its utility is. Professor Kipp agreed, but said the goal of the Tree Advisory Committee is to include more pollinator friendly native species, but is also not to give people an overwhelming choice of trees to choose from.

Mr. Sotnik asked if the Tree Advisory Committee would like to see the list in another month or if it can be done offline and have the final product sent to Purchasing so it can be advertised. The Committee members agreed it can be done off line.

## **9. UPDATE - TREE SUMMIT PLANNING MEETING**

Ms. Shanahan reported on the notes that she had taken from the Tree Summit Planning Meeting that was held a few weeks ago and said the takeaways included adding the GIS to the dashboard that Mr. Sotnik has been working on, and that Ms. Washer and Mr. Sotnik have been working together and that with the funds from one of the grants they had received, they were able convince the Nature Conservancy to use \$2,500 for an intern to do GIS tracking for the City and this student is working with Mr. Sotnik mapping the trees that the Tree Advisory Committee has planted to date, making the GIS map even more robust than it currently is. She also said that Mr. Torre has graciously agreed to make either a monthly or quarterly report to the Tree Advisory Committee that would include the number of trees that were planted, the size and caliper of the tree etc. She said there was a large discussion regarding native versus non-native trees and the conservationists at the meeting made the point that the ideal ratio between native and non-native is 70% native to 30% non-native. She said that Mr. Torre will also be reporting on how many trees were removed, the size and age of those trees and how many were replanted on a quarterly basis and when she had done some research one of the interesting things that came out was that 50% of the canopy in Hartford is supplied by 10% of the trees so what came out of the planning meeting is that we want to get a sense of how many trees are being removed and how many are being replaced. She went on to say that maybe one of the reasons why our canopy is lower is because we may have not had as strong and robust replacement program as we could have.

Ms. Shanahan said that the Common Council members who had attended were in general agreement to begin to work on the Tree ordinance and have asked Mr. Torre and Ms. Cherichetti to help with that and that Mr. Torre had some really good ideas about potentially adding some additional bonding for the people that are doing development projects.

Ms. Shanahan said the conservation groups had also agreed to help the TAC to reestablish the Tree Liaison program so that if there are misunderstandings when trees get posted for removal they can be addressed prior to a contentious situation. She said they would also like to start a robust education program so that the residents are aware on how important trees are and what the benefits are. She said they would also like to do more extensive tree inventories as well as pilot programs for "Friends of Parks" and will be started on a small basis and establish a partnership with the City and volunteers.

Ms. Shanahan discussed some of the higher level goals that include discussion with the Mayor's office on tree canopy goals and determine what the tree canopy is currently as well as commitments from DPW and the Tree Advisory Committee on the native and

non-native spit on new trees being planted. She said the goals also including getting an extensive tree list developed, the City possibly having a climate change office, include more green initiatives in the Planning & Zoning regulations and pilot watering programs.

## **10. UPDATE - GIS MAPPING OF NEWLY PLANTED TREES AND INTERN**

Professor Kipp asked Mr. Sotnik what information the intern is putting into the GIS system. Mr. Sotnik said to date they have entered 107 trees in the new system and are having the interns collect all of the information related to the type of tree planted, the date it was planted and the diameter at breast height of the tree, and just in the TAC trees alone there were 915 trees planted from 2005 to today. Ms. Shanahan requested to include information on if the tree is a native or non-native tree. Mr. Sotnik stated that that information can be coded from the species of tree entered from the tree list so that the person does not have to enter that information in the field.

Mr. Torre said that Cityworks captures any maintenance that DPW has done on a tree prior to it being removed and a lot of the times we look at the tree each year after, so the history is available, because the goal is not to remove trees. Mr. Sotnik said the mapping for the GIS and Cityworks will have the ability to be linked. Mr. Viteretto requested that Mr. Torre provide criteria that is needed for the mapping. Mr. Torre said the data is captured for all of the trees that are looked, at as well as all of the trees that are removed every month and suggested to expand upon that to help the TAC and that more trees are removed than are planted, so there needs to be an even better tree planting budget than we already have if we are going to restore our tree canopy. Mr. Viteretto suggested that the trees for the new developments also be added to the list.

Mr. Torre said one of the areas that we need to do better on is to have a solid agreement or contract with private residence as well as enforcement so when a tree is planted on their property it cannot be removed. Professor Kipp agreed and said there needs to be accountability.

Mr. Strauss said the contribution of trees that the Norwalk Tree Alliance made will also need be added. Mr. Sotnik asked Ms. Shanahan if the Land Trust has a list of trees that have been planted. Ms. Shanahan said “Yes” and she will have it forwarded to Mr. Sotnik.

## **11. UPDATE - GRANT APPLICATIONS**

### **a. Ludlow Park- June 1, 2021 Ceremony**

Professor Kipp said that on June 1, 2021, a group had gone to Ludlow Park and had planted four trees and have received some very positive feedback. She said it was not a matching grant, but the National Environmental Education Foundation provided funds to put something in a park and we worked closely

with Recreation & Parks so four trees were planted and two maintenance free benches are currently on order.

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

Professor Kipp said as she mentioned earlier we did not receive the grant for 15 Madison Street, but will continue to work with the Tree Advisory Committee and Ms. Shanahan on trying to get some of the trees planted.

## **12. OAK HILLS PLANTING PLAN - EVERSOURCE**

Mr. Sotnik said the planting plans from Eversource have been received for the trees that were removed at Oak Hills Park and he had sent the members of the Tree Advisory Committee the proposed plan. Mr. Sotnik presented the plan and said that it will be on the agenda next month for comment and input. Mr. Viteretto asked what the height limitation is that they are requesting that we adhere to. Mr. Sotnik said 15' and the staff recommendation is we would like to see some trees planted as well, but he would like to hear what the Committee's recommendations are. He said he will also be meeting with Ms. Cozzarin of the Oak Hills Park Authority to review the plan and she is welcome to make comments at the next meeting. Professor Kipp asked Mr. Sotnik when he would like the comments received by and requested that he send the Committee members an email. Mr. Sotnik said July 20, 2021.

## **13. REPORT - NTA ACTIVITIES**

- a. Eversource Grant

Mr. Broadbent said the NTA had applied for a grant as Mr. Sotnik suggested and have received the check from Eversource. He said they have also received renewals on the grants from the Sixth Taxing District and the Third Taxing District for previous grants that they had awarded to the NTA for tree plantings in their districts.

- b. Bonsai Tree Event- June 19, 2021.

Mr. Broadbent said the event team had put together the first Bonsai Tree Event that was held on June 19, 2021, at Fodor Farm and was very successful and ten (10) people had signed up. He said it is part of the education program to bring trees to people that may not think or be interested in talking about trees, and from that event had two (2) people express interest in joining the NTA board.

- c. Tree Planting Events Recap for 2021.

Mr. Broadbent said that not as much planting was done last year due to the pandemic so we have dialed things up this year and two trees will be planted on Belden Avenue tomorrow for a total of 78 trees planted in which 19 of them were planted by volunteers. He said the excellent fundraising activities allowed us to do this, but it was also a huge portion of the budget and is the most the NTA has ever spent on tree plantings and will need to continue with the fundraising as we come into the Fall and Spring of next year.

d. Planning for Fall Plantings.

Mr. Broadbent said the NTA is working of the list of planting locations for the Fall and would like to coordinate with the Tree Advisory Committee. He said one opportunity that has come from the Norwalk Land Trust is they have a field on one of their properties that has a number of native saplings that will need to be removed for a pollinator meadow that they will be installing, so he will be having a conversation with them to potentially move the saplings and growing them to be trees of a reasonable size and plant them throughout Norwalk.

Mr. Torre said if there are ever meetings that the NTA need him to attend he would be happy to talk with the group on tree planting locations and said he thinks the schools would be a great place to start. He went on to say that when people begin to see the trees planted they would want their neighborhood to have tree lined streets because it raises the property value by 15% to 20% which is the message we need to be sending. He also said clear guidance is needed from the Common Council and the Mayor's office on where we stand regarding liability. Ms. Shanahan also suggested inviting representatives from other municipalities to see how they are handling the risk.

#### **14. OTHER BUSINESS**

Professor Kipp thanked Mr. Viteretto for agreeing to remain on the Tree Advisory Committee and that his expertise has been instrumental. She also thanked Mr. Strauss for all of the tireless work that he has done and wished him well. Mr. Sotnik added that Mr. Strauss is responsible for the planting of approximately 150 - 200 trees over the last several years.

#### **15. ADJOURNMENT**

- \*\* PROFESSOR KIPP MOVED TO ADJOURN.**
- \*\* MR. STRAUSS SECONDED THE MOTION.**
- \*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:06 P.M.  
Respectfully submitted,

Dilene Byrd