



TREE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

September 28, 2021

To allow public access, anyone may access a meeting by telephone, Zoom, and/or the City of Norwalk YouTube channel. Specific instructions and links can be found at: norwalkct.org/meetings



Members of the public can call in and listen to a meeting. They will not be able to speak or see any of the meeting participants. Each meeting will use a unique Meeting/Webinar ID. Please find the information using the link above.



Members of the public who wish to provide "live comments" will need to register in advance and use the Zoom meeting platform. All participants will be muted upon entering the meeting. To speak, click the "raise your hand indicator" and you will be called on by the host of the meeting during the public comment section. Please find the information using the link above.



Members of the public who wish to view the meeting, but are not participating, can view a live stream on the City of Norwalk YouTube channel. This stream is delayed by approximately 20 seconds. Please find the information using the link above. The meeting recording and minutes will be posted on the City of Norwalk website within seven (7) days after the meeting.



Members of the public who wish to provide public comment are encouraged to submit those via email in advance of the meeting. For these comments to be read into the record, they should be submitted at least three hours in advance of the meeting start time. Please email Dilene Byrd at dbyrd@norwalkct.org to provide written public comment prior to the meeting.

Attendance: Professor Kipp, Chair
Richard Whitehead, Vice Chair
Peter Viteretto
Cindy Cossuto
Sonja Oliver

Staff: Paul Sotnik, Deputy Tree Warden
Dilene Byrd, Secretary
James Travers, Director, TMP

Others: Lisa Shanahan, Common Council Member

1. CALL TO ORDER

Professor Erica Kipp called the meeting to order at 6:02 P.M.

2. INTRODUCTION - SONJA OLIVER

Professor Kipp welcomed Ms. Oliver as the newest Tree Advisory Committee member and said the members of the Committee are happy to have her and will help her to concentrate on some additional planting efforts in the South Norwalk area.

3. 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.

4. REPORT - 2021 LETTER OF RECOGNITION FROM SENATOR BLUMENTHAL

Professor Kipp said that each year Senator Blumenthal recognizes Tree City USA's and Tree Campus USA's, and it is a nice way to be recognized by not only the Arbor Day Foundation but by our State as well.

Mr. Sotnik presented the letter and said that Senator Blumenthal sent the City a letter of recognition for being a Tree City USA for 2020, and it is the 17th year in a row that Norwalk has been a Tree City USA.

Ms. Cossuto said that she had noticed in Southport there is a Tree City USA road sign and asked if there are any in Norwalk. Mr. Sotnik said "Yes" and they are installed at the City lines on Rt. 53, on the Rt.1 coming from Darien and also on Westport Avenue. Mr. Louis Estrella said that there is also a Tree City USA sign on Rt. 123 on the New Canaan border as well.

Professor Kipp said that she and Mr. Sotnik worked together to get the Tree City USA flag flown at City Hall. Mr. Sotnik said that Ms. Donna King said that the flag was flown for the month of August and it will be in April also in celebration of Arbor Day. Professor

Kipp said she would love to have the flag up on a more regular basis, but this is a good start.

5. APPROVE MINUTES OF THE TREE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING ON JULY 27, 2021.

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

6. UPDATE - NEIGHBORHOOD TREE LIAISON PROGRAM

Professor Kipp said the Tree Liaison program is robust and has over 20 Norwalk residents that are very excited to be part of this program, and a few weeks ago there was a training session held and it was well attended and is already receiving some positive feedback for some locations where greenery is needed. She said if anyone on the Committee knows of anyone else who would like to be a part of program, they can send an email on the link that is on the Tree Advisory Committee website.

7. DISCUSSION - EAST AVENUE TREE REMOVAL/PLANTING PLAN - TRAFFIC SIGNAL UPGRADE

Mr. Travers said that several years ago the City received an emissions mitigation grant which are largely used for opportunities to reduce vehicle emissions and are largely transportation related. He said the City submitted a project for the installation of 6 new traffic controllers as a way to modernize the aging infrastructure, and over the past year we have been working to execute that grant and starting the process of installing the traffic signals and will began on the East Avenue at Wall Street intersection. He said in the process of installing the mast arm it was found that there were utilities underground which forced us to install the mast arm in another location and unfortunately the only location that was feasible would require the removal of a tree that is currently in the traffic island. He said in recognizing the City's desire to increase the tree canopy we looked at the immediate vicinity so while one tree would be removed 22 additional trees will be installed at multiple locations and the cost will be shared with DPW and TMP. Mr. Sotnik and Mr. Travers presented the locations on the potential tree plantings and said it is all using existing funds so that we can work to have them installed this season. Professor Kipp asked what size caliper trees will be planted. Mr. Sotnik said that the planting would be done through the Almstead Tree Planting contract, so they will be 2 ½" to 3" caliper trees.

Professor Kipp said one of the things the Committee could help with is to market the plan and let people know that the tree is being removed for a particular reason, but that 22 trees will be installed throughout the area and asked how we could do that. Mr.

Travers said pending the Committee's approval he will work with Mr. Morgan. He also invited the members of the Committee to a ceremonial planting that is scheduled for tomorrow at 11:00 A.M. on Wilton Avenue where 18 trees will be planted in partnership with the Health Department. Professor Kipp requested that Mr. Morgan send the Committee the press release that he puts out so we could forward it to the tree liaisons and the neighborhood groups.

Mr. Viteretto suggested that Tree City USA signs be installed on tree lined streets such as East Avenue. Mr. Sotnik said they are normally posted at the City borders as you drive into the City, but he will request additional signs from the Arbor Day Foundation.

Mr. Sotnik said we would like the Committee's input on the species to be planted and that the plan has not yet been finalized and would like to order them as soon as possible. Mr. Whitehead suggested that Sophora japonica trees be mixed in with the chosen species.

Mr. Broadbent asked if it is possible to change the way the tree postings for removals are configured to include the trees that will be planted in replacement of the removal. Mr. Sotnik said that is a good idea and it may also reduce a lot of the Customer Service divisions receives concerning a posted tree and that he will discuss it with Mr. Torre.

8. CAPITAL TREE PLANTING PROGRAM - FALL 2021 PLANTING LOCATION LIST

New Plantings:

a. Aiken Street

Mr. Sotnik said that due to some of the critical infrastructure in the area that he and Mr. Hughes will walk the area to be sure that none of the trees will be too close to the infrastructure, and the 15 Arborvitae trees were already installed as part of the project and we will also be working with the Condominium Association on some other trees so there will be a variety of plantings in the area. Mr. Whitehead suggested responding to the comments on the Next-Door site thanking them for their input and provide them with an update on the Fall plantings that will be done. Professor Kipp said that she will do that because they had reached out to her.

b. 15 Madison Street

Mr. Whitehead said that he would like to do a site visit with Ms. Oliver to mark the locations. Ms. Oliver agreed and said in addition the Arborvitae Trees we had discussed planting, there will be two (2) trees on the Monroe Street side and four (4) on the Madison Street side.

c. 133 Murray street

Mr. Sotnik said this was a replacement for a tree that was removed.

- d. 31 Cannon Street
Mr. Sotnik said this was also a replacement of four (4) hazardous trees that were removed.
- e. 3 Driftwood Lane
Mr. Whitehead said the location is staked for one (1) tree where the homeowner needed to remove a diseased tree and it will be a medium sized Cherry tree because it is under the power lines.
- f. 23 Calvin Murphy Drive
Professor Kipp said that two (2) trees will be planted at the entrance and the faculty members that she works with will get the students involved and have a ceremonial tree planting. Mr. Sotnik said he will just need the location and the species so that he can place the order.
- g. 32 Kossuth Street
Mr. Sotnik said this is to replace a tree that was removed because it had been diseased and dying.
- h. County Street at Strawberry Hill Avenue
This is the same location that was discussed under Item 8f of the agenda.
- i. 15 Merrill Road
Mr. Sotnik said the planting at 15 Merrill Street was a request for a new tree to be installed.
- j. East Avenue
Mr. Sotnik said this is related to the 11 trees that were previously discussed by Mr. Travers under Item 7 of the agenda and the cost will be shared equally between the Tree Advisory Committee/DPW and TMP.
- k. Elmwood Avenue
Mr. Sotnik said this is in preparation for a Spring 2022 replanting project due to the concrete curb and sidewalk project. There are 11 trees that are proposed to be planted.

Replacements:

- a. First Street - 1 Rosa Rugosa
Mr. Sotnik said this is a replacement for the tree that was stolen in July.

9. UPDATE - ALMSTEAD TREE WATERING/MAINTENANCE SCHEDULE

Mr. Sotnik presented the watering schedule. Professor Kipp asked if there are any concerns or issues with the schedule. Mr. Sotnik said not that he is aware of.

10. UPDATE - 2021 TREE PLANTING CONTRACT RFP

Mr. Sotnik said the RFP process is complete and Almstead Tree is the selected vendor.

11. DISUCSSION - WOODWARD PARK PLANTING PLAN - COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS

Mr. Sotnik said that Ms. Washer had contacted him and he said that the Norwalk River Watershed Association will be doing a planting at Woodward Park and he presented the plan and said that 10 trees will be installed that are in 15 gallon pots, as well as some shrubs and grasses. Professor Kipp asked if there is a date for the planting. Mr. Shanahan said it will be on October 9, 2022 from 10:00 A.M. to 1:00 P.M.

Mr. Sotnik said that he and Mr. Broadbent had a meeting last Thursday with the Norwalk Tree Alliance and he is working on the plan for the replacement planting around the Pump Station in the Park and that they will be meeting again this week to finalize the plan. He said once he receives the plan, the plantings will be scheduled for the Fall if possible and the WPCA will be funding these plantings.

12. NORWALK RIVER WATERSHED ASSOCIATION - GRANT FROM THE NATURE CONSERVANCY

This was discussed under Item 11 of the agenda.

13. UPDATE - GRANT APPLICATIONS

Professor Kipp said there are two grants that she is looking at to apply for and one is an Urban Forestry Grant and the other is a grant through a prominent botanical garden that would allow us to do a pollinator pathway over the children's learning center at Roodner Court.

Mr. Sotnik said the Chief of Economic and Community Development has been putting together a list of potential locations for a Dr. Martin Luther King Boulevard initiative and DPW has requested funding for additional trees to be installed within the interior of the Roodner Court complex (rather than along the street) through the grant if they are successful at securing the grant.

14. UPDATE - GIS MAPPING ON NEWLY PLANTED TREES

Professor Kipp asked what the estimated number of trees that have been entered into the program at this point. Mr. Sotnik said 317 trees that have been entered to date. Professor Kipp asked if the scientific name has now been included. Mr. Sotnik said that the IT Department is working on that and will be programming it so that both the scientific and common names will be listed. Professor Kipp asked if the student that was doing the inputting is still working on the mapping. Mr. Sotnik said he has now gone back to school and will continue as he gets settled, but suggested recruiting another volunteer and that Ms. Washer has indicated that there are still funds available through the grant to pay the volunteers as of this date.

15. CHARTER OAK NEWS LETTER

Professor Kipp said the next installment will be coming out shortly and said that if anyone on the Committee had anything they would like to include to email it to her. She said she would also like to include Mr. Morgan's press release for the new plantings that will be done. Ms. Cossuto suggested announcing that Ms. Oliver has joined the Committee. Ms. Shanahan said she would write something up regarding the revised Tree Ordinance. Mr. Sotnik said that we are on target from what TMP will be doing and what the Tree Advisory Committee will be planting to plant between 65 and 70 trees this Fall, which will be a record for any single cycle of plantings (Spring or Fall), breaking the record from Fall 2020 of 56 trees planted, so the trend of increased tree planting is continuing.

16. REPORT - NTA ACTIVITIES

Mr. Broadbent said the Norwalk Tree Alliance has been meeting steadily and he reported on the upcoming projects. He said they are working on the Woodward Avenue Park Pump Station planting plan that Mr. Sotnik had previously discussed, they just completed the first ever coordinated program with LUSH and received a grant and did a small contest and will be planting three (3) trees for the three (3) winners of the contest. He said they will also be going to the Piedmont property which was recently given to the Norwalk Land Trust and will be digging out the seedlings on October 9, 2021 and will pot them in 5" pots and be giving them away on the following Saturday to anyone in Norwalk who wants a free native tree.

Mr. Broadbent said the Norwalk Tree Alliance is in the process of narrowing down 10 applicants for our part time Administrative Assistant position and are down to three (3) applicants and will be interviewing them this week. He said the annual election is coming up in October and they are putting the slate of candidates forward and with the exception of one, all of the board will be returning and are working towards our Spring projects, one of which will be a jubilee in honor of the Queen.

Professor Kipp said if there are any flyers for the events to please send them to her so that she can post them.

17. OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business discussed this evening.

18. ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting adjourned at 7:11 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Dilene Byrd