



TREE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

January 25, 2022

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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 Erica Kipp, Chair
Richard Whitehead, Vice Chair
Peter Viteretto
Cindy Cossuto
Sonja Oliver

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

Others: Jeff Scherr, President, Norwalk Tree Alliance
Audrey Cozzarin

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.)

Ms. Cozzarin said that she is so happy that the Tree Advisory Committee is doing such a great job protecting the health and beauty of our Norwalk environment, as well as the staff for supporting this Committee. She said she is looking forward to seeing the plans for the remediation at Oak Hills Park where she is the Chair of the Nature Advisory Committee.

3. APPROVE MINUTES OF THE TREE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING OF OCTOBER 26, 2021.

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

4. APPROVE MINUTES OF THE TREE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING OF NOVEMBER 23, 2021.

On page 4, in the first sentence of item ii, change "we" to "they".
On page 5, in the fifth sentence of paragraph 1, change "things" to "criteria".

**** MR. WHITEHEAD MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS AMENDED.**
**** MR. COSSATO SECONDED THE MOTION**
**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

5. UPDATE - CAPITAL TREE PLANTING PROGRAM

a. List of Planting Locations for Spring 2022

b. Budget for Spring 2022

Mr. Sotnik reported and said that 75 trees were planted in the Fall 2021 at a total cost of \$57,384.25. There was an available budget of \$76,389.50 leaving a balance of \$19,005.25, but the account also received a reimbursement of \$15,000 for the plantings done as part of the West Rocks School Soccer Field project, so there is a total available budget of \$34,005.25 for Spring 2022 plantings. He also stated that there are 31 trees projected for planting for the Spring for an estimated amount of \$30,537.50. He requested that if anyone on the Committee has any other possible Spring planting locations to please send them to him so that he can add them to the list and then we can prioritize the list at the February meeting.

Ms. Cossato said that she will be tracking the orders on a spreadsheet. Professor Kipp said she will be working on collating all the formal requests for trees so that the Committee can track the requests and the trees that are planted which is an important component especially when doing the budget request, as well as the grants that the Committee applies for.

c. Trees Planted at 15 Madison Street (SONO Gardens)

Ms. Oliver reported on the tree planting on Madison Street and said everyone is ecstatic with the Arborvitaes trees that were planted and read a letter from the Board of Directors into the record as follows:

On behalf of the Board of Directors and owners of SONO Garden Condominiums we would like to take this opportunity to thank the Norwalk Tree Advisory Committee for the Red Maple and Sugar Maple Trees that were planted on the Madison Street side, and the Redmond American Linden Trees that were planted on the Monroe Street side. In addition, the Arborvitaes Trees have added the much-needed touch of providing privacy to the complex and beauty to the community. For over 53 years SONO Garden Condominiums formally Townhouse Gardens Coop. has diligently continued to focus on providing our owners a safe place to live with piece of mind and to enjoy the community and its amenities and even with the challenges we are proud of our accomplishments and will continue to identify innovative ideas to further our mission and to better the complex and the community. A special thanks to the outstanding crew that planted the trees as this has meant so much to the SONO Gardens and we are looking forward to the spring when the trees begin to blossom. We are excited to be a part of the project and applaud the Committee for the work that they are doing in Norwalk and believe that through a movement of gratitude it brings the

formation of beautiful and healthy communities. Thank you and SONO Gardens is looking forward to continuing our relationship.

Kindness Regards,

SONO Gardens Condominium Board of Directors and owners.

6. OAK HILLS PARK PLANTING RESTORATION PLAN

Mr. Sotnik said that Eversource had done some aggressive tree trimming on Charles Marshall Drive and as a result, the community members and the Committee have requested that they do some planting work at Oak Hills Park. As a result, they have submitted a plan and although not a bad plan, think it could be better, so as a result we had requested that Mr. Viteretto put together a landscaping plan and if approved by the Committee he will present it to Eversource to bring it to fruition for a Spring planting.

Mr. Viteretto presented the landscaping plan and said the purpose of the plan is to remediate the landscaping with new plantings to replace the loss and removal of six mature White Pine Trees which were in a significant area under the power lines and extending beyond. The gap needs to be enclosed and the vegetative boarder that goes from Fillow Street to the parking lot along Charles Marshal Drive needs to be repaired. The context is that the landscape on either side of Charles Marshall Drive is one that has primarily mature Oak Trees along either border. One of the design considerations for this project is to replant and screen the drive from the fairway, and to screen the fairway from the drive and this is an opportunity to improve the visitor experience along Charles Marshal Drive, and to the entrance into the park overall by screening the area. This is an opportunity to mirror the planting and extend the boarder along not only the west, but also the east of Charles Marshall Drive and begin to block the maintenance facility. He said he believes there is a misconception that nothing can be planted in those areas because of the utility lines, but this supports opportunity to start thinking about the whole sequence and entrance to the park and use this Eversource initiated project as a catalyst to start improving how Eversource presents itself with support of a more positive landscape. He said in part we need to accommodate the clearance of the overhead wires as well as consider the abilities of the Oak Hills Park staff for the management, maintenance and care, and if they will need support from the community, can groups in the community step in and help. The goal is to select materials that will achieve those goals, while trying to increase the ecological diversity of the plantings in the park, and improve the native species collections and improve habitat to the degree that we can. He said the selections for materials have not yet been chosen and there will be continued discussions with the Committee.

Professor Kipp asked what the time frame for the project is. Mr. Viteretto said it depends on the funding as well as an agreement that will need to be negotiated with Eversource.

Mr. Sotnik requested that the final list of trees and shrubs be established so that he can begin to have a conversation with Eversource to come up with a final agreement and planting done in the Spring of 2022.

Ms. Cozzarin said this is a very valiant effort and is not only with keeping with the spirit of the park, but will also be beautiful to have the shrubs fill in the space between the trees, and it would make for a wonderful ecosystem, but said that Norway Spruce trees were originally planted in this location and said they would not want them planted again because they had to be removed due to the power lines. She said there are other native shrubs that are being used in the nature center area that they have had very good luck with, but her main concern is that the golf course uses pesticides so in the nature center area there are no pesticides being used so there may need be a conversation with the grounds supervisor at Oak Hills Park about the use of pesticides because if we plant this wonderful habitat for wildlife and pollinators and there are pesticides used, they will be harmed and possibly killed. She said she has been trying to convince the course to be an Autobahn Course where pesticides are not used.

Professor Kipp thanked Mr. Viteretto for putting the landscaping plan together and asked the Committee members and Ms. Cozzarin if they have any ideas for the plantings to email them to Mr. Viteretto. Mr. Sotnik said he would like to have the final planting list by the next meeting so that he can begin working with Eversource to have it finalized by the coming planting season.

7. UPDATE - GRANT APPLICATIONS

Professor Kipp said she has put together a list of some grants that are available that include the dollar amounts and when they are due and a lot of the DEEP and CT Urban grants are due between December and February however, there are plenty of grants that are either rolling submissions or have submission dates in the summer or fall. She said whenever she sees a grant that will fit into our prevue, she will add it to the list, and she will email the list to the Committee members once she completes it.

8. 2022 ARBOR DAY CELEBRATION OPTIONS AND LOCATION

Mr. Whitehead said many years back we had done an Arbor Day workshop on Martin Luther King Drive and had recruited some local tree care companies and provided some pro-bono pruning along Martin Luther King Drive from Washington Street to Lowe Street, and the area needs some more maintenance and suggested performing that operation again as an Arbor Day project for this year. He said if the Committee agrees he will start contacting some of the tree care companies to coordinate some dates and times. Mr. Sotnik said the City is doing a Martin Luther King Drive initiative and as part of that will be planting trees so the workshop would be a great prelude to the trees being planted. The Committee members agreed to move the Arbor Day workshop forward.

Ms. White asked that she be kept posted so that she can report to the board at SONO Gardens for volunteers for the workshop. Mr. Torre said he would like the two City Tree Crews to participate.

9. UPDATE - TREE CITY USA AND GROWTH AWARD RECERTIFICATION APPLICATIONS

Mr. Sotnik reported on the details of the application and said the application was submitted in January and the total expenditures for the criteria between all the organizations totaled \$803,455.14, which equates to \$9.10 per capita and \$2.00 per capital is what is required to be a Tree City USA. He also said between the City departments and the Tree Alliance, 171 trees were planted, 290 trees were pruned, and 110 trees were removed. He said if awarded, this will be the 18th consecutive year of receiving the award and he expects to receive confirmation in April.

Mr. Sotnik said for the Growth Award this year the application required that the City earn 10 points to be eligible, and it consists of 87 potential categories and activities to earn those points. We chose five which totaled 13 points and if awarded, this will be the 16th consecutive year of receiving that award.

10. UPDATE - TREE CAMPUS U.S.A. RECERTIFICATION APPLICATION

Professor Kipp said that Norwalk Community College is the only institute of higher learning that has earned this certification and the only other school that has Tree Campus certification is UCONN. She said it has been earned twice in a row and she submitted it in January for year three and she expects to be recertified again, but will not receive confirmation until at least March.

Professor Kipp said she worked with the NCC library to create a link to tout the efforts of the Tree Campus USA and the Tree Committee that has been created for the campus and is in the very preliminary stages, but will be populating the link as the year goes on.

11. REPORT - NTA ACTIVITIES

Mr. Scherr reported and said the NTA annual meeting was held last week and there is a board meeting scheduled for this Thursday, where a list of the of the ideas that came from the meeting will be discussed and the big push this year is to do a five-year planning session for the activities that will be held annually.

Mr. Scherr said the NTA will continue with the grants from the Third and Sixth Taxing Districts this year which is a recurring tree planting program, and will also be developing educational hikes in different areas around town to educate the community on the importance of trees. He said the NTA has also discussed measuring and taking an

inventory of the special trees in Norwalk and working with the City on the GIS mapping on the trees which will help to determine what areas in the City are in need of trees and

where the healthy trees are that need to be maintained. He said the NTA is also looking into planning some educational events for adults such as tree pruning classes.

12. OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Whitehead said that some trees were planted at 133 Murray Street and there is at least one damaged tree from deer rubs and needs to be evaluated by Almstead Tree and will probably need to be added to the replacement list for a Spring planting. Professor Kipp said that she and Mr. Sotnik received an email from Ms. Cozzarin regarding a tree with the same issue at Oak Hills Park and requested that Mr. Sotnik contact Almstead Tree and have them look at the trees at both locations. Mr. Sotnik agreed and said that options will need to be looked at to prevent this since this work is not part of the base contract with Almstead Tree.

13. ADJOURNMENT

**** PROFESSOR KIPP MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**** MS. OLIVER SECONDED THE MOTION.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:03 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Dilene Byrd