



TREE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

April 26, 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
Cindy Cossuto

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

Others: Jeff Scheer, President, Norwalk Tree Alliance
Danielle Tanzer, UCONN
Michelle Matthews Woods, Director of Communications

1. CALL TO ORDER

Professor Kipp called the meeting to order at 6:02 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 were no public comments this evening.

3. APPROVE MINUTES OF THE TREE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING OF MARCH 22, 2022

On page 2, Item 2, line add "said"

**** PROFESSOR KIPP MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS AMENDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

4. DANIELLE N. TANZER - UCONN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENTAL GRADUATE STUDENT

Professor Kipp said a few months ago she applied for a DEEP grant and it was an Urban Forestry grant that was addressing equity and climate change and she had come across two websites when she was working on that grant, and one was an EPA site that discussed environmental justice by region and the other was a tree equity score and that it was helpful in framing the issues going on in the City, particularly in South Norwalk as compared to Northern Norwalk and that it was evident in this site.

Ms. Tanzer said she is a master's student at UCONN and is working with the DEEP on Urban Forestry Grant programs and one of the products they looked at and considered doing some work with is the tree equity score product that is provided by American Forests which is a non-profit group. She provided an overview of the product and said it assesses whether there are enough trees in a given neighborhood for everyone there to

experience the benefit of trees and looks at how equitable the distribution of the tree canopy cover is within a given city. She said the tree equity score calculates each neighborhood and gives a score that considers the current existing canopy cover for a given neighborhood, as well as priority indicators and applies a baseline goal and compares the goal with the existing canopy cover. She presented the website and said it gives a snapshot of what the tree equity score looks like for a given neighborhood and the information about the priority indicators and in Norwalk 18 of the 70 neighborhoods have a tree equity score of below 75 and estimates how many trees would need to be planted to get all of the neighborhoods up to a tree equity score of 75.

5. MICHELLE WOODS MATTHEWS - CITY OF NORWALK DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

Professor Kipp said that Ms. Woods Matthews has taken over for Mr. Morgan and is the new Director of Communication's for the City of Norwalk and in the past that the Tree Advisory Committee had worked very closely with the Mr. Morgan in the communications capacity and he was very instrumental in promoting a lot of things the Committee did and we are hoping to work with Ms. Woods Matthews in a similar capacity and are excited that she is on board. Mr. Sotnik said he has been working with Ms. Woods Matthews on promoting the Arbor Day Clean Up Event, the Arbor Day celebration and Earth Day so she has been in close contact with the Committee related to trees already.

Ms. Woods Matthews introduced herself and asked that the Committee members continue to work through Mr. Sotnik on anything they would like her to post, and she is happy to promote all the great work the Committee is doing.

6. CAPITAL TREE PLANTING PROGRAM - SPRING 2022 PLANTINGS

Mr. Sotnik said that trees have already begun to be planted and there was approximately \$30,000 remaining in the budget, but after the tree plantings for Arbor Day, the seedlings and the seven trees related to the East Avenue, Park Street plantings, there will be approximately \$25,000 remaining in the budget for this Fiscal Year and we are in the process of going through all the 65-70 tree planting requests. Professor Kipp said due to the budget they are prioritizing the requests as best as they can and the requests that will not make the Spring 2022 planting cycle will be pushed back to the Fall 2022 planting cycle and are hoping to have some budget increases that will allow them to accommodate all the tree planting requests.

7. UPDATE - EARTH DAY EVENT - APRIL 23, 2022

Professor Kipp said one of the trees was planted on Saturday, April 23, 2022, and was planted adjacent to the Norwalk Green in honor of Earth Day. She said the event was

city wide and that it gave us an opportunity to connect to the public and that it was well attended and had even more people signed up to sponsor trees.

8. UPDATE - PLANNING FOR 2022 ARBOR DAY CLEAN UP EVENT – APRIL 28, 2022

Mr. Whitehead said the Arbor Day Clean Up Event will take place on Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Drive on Thursday and will have several tree companies involved and we will be pruning and cleaning up the London Plane Trees that were planted along Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Drive and removing some saplings and decayed trees to clean up the area in the anticipation of planting more trees in the area. He said that Mr. Sotnik has been a huge help with the planning, and they did a site walk of the area and will be doing a traffic lane closure so that the volunteers can work safely along the edge of the road. He said he also contacted Norwalk Community College and the students have made great graphic signs for the event with very short notice. He said following the Clean Up Event, there will be a thank you ceremony with the Mayor at the Webster Street Parking Lot and the volunteers will be served lunch.

9. UPDATE - PLANNING FOR 2022 ARBOR DAY CELEBRATION

Professor Kipp said there are two events scheduled for Arbor Day this year. The first is the Arbor Day Clean Up Event which Mr. Whitehead just spoke about, and the other is an Arbor Day tree planting. Mr. Sotnik said the planning for the tree planting is going well and is the second time the event has taken place and Naramake Elementary School and that they are very excited about it. He said the final planning meeting was held yesterday morning and the winners of the poster contest will be announced at the ceremony and on Friday, two Red Maple trees will be planted on King Street and an Eastern Red Bud tree will be planted in front of the school as part of the ceremony.

10. NORWALK BEAUTIFICATION PROJECTS

Professor Kipp shared a photo of the island on East Avenue coming off I-95 at Exit 16 and suggested planting some flowering bushes that are on the tree planting list and she would be willing to volunteer to help prepare the area. Mr. Whitehead agreed, but asked if that area is part of the East Avenue bridge project. Mr. Sotnik said “no” he does not believe it goes that far up to the north, but we would need to develop a planting plan and submit it to the State for approval because it is in the State Right-of-Way. Professor Kipp said there are other areas within the City that could also use some plantings and said if anyone on the Committee sees a location to send her an email. Mr. Scheer said to be mindful of not impeding the site line for cars and pedestrians at the intersections and that perineal grasses may be a better option as a pollinator pathway.

11. REPORT - NTA ACTIVITIES

a. Program Updates

i. Arbor Day - Ponus Ridge Middle School

Mr. Scheer reported and said they have been in contact with the science teacher at Ponus Ridge Middle School and he and the staff at the school are in favor of creating a plan for a native arboretum look and he drew up a plan that included nine (9) trees, but they have not yet responded to the plan, but are hoping to have at least one (1) tree planted on Friday for Arbor Day. He said he also gave them a planting plan for underneath the trees to create pollinator boxes that would help the trees to survive and would become a school project.

ii. NRVT Environmental Hike

Mr. Scheer said the Tree Alliance had a Zoom meeting with the NRVT this week and have put together an outline of objectives to speak about and Mr. Viteretto will be representing the Tree Advisory Committee on the walk which is scheduled for May 21, 2022, and he will also be representing the Tree Alliance throughout the planning process of this.

iii. Queens Tea for Trees

Mr. Scheer said the Queens Tea for Trees is a fundraising event, and a member of the Tree Alliance has offered her home and will be looking to create a guest list and fundraising goal.

12. OTHER BUSINESS

Professor Kipp shared a program that the environmental science club at Norwalk Community College has put together and said it will be held tomorrow from 3:00 P.M. - 5:00 P.M. and is a roundtable discussion.

Mr. Whitehead said when looking at the Norwalk Beautification target areas we should also look at also doing the north and southbound islands at Exit 16.

13. ADJOURNMENT

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

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

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 6:47 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Dilene Byrd