

TREE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MINUTES

TREE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

FEBRUARY 26, 2008

ATTENDANCE: Don Nelson, Chairman
Maribeth Becker
David Tracy

ABSENT: Peter Viteretto
Richard Whitehead

STAFF: Hal Alvord, Tree Warden
Paul Sotnik, Deputy Tree Warden
Dilene Byrd, Secretary

Norwalk Tree Alliance: Dick Aime

NEIGHBORHOOD TREE LIAISONS: Dianne Witkowsky, Spring Hill/Hospital

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Nelson called the meeting order at 6:00 P.M.

2. APPROVE MINUTES OF TREE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING OF JANUARY 22, 2008

Mr. Aime said on Page 2, Item 5b, Line 12 to change "in the some" to "be in the same"
Mr. Aime said on Page 6, Item 12, Paragraph 3, Line 7, to change "threes" to "trees"
Mr. Sotnik said on Page 3, Item 5, Line 8, to replace "Chairman Nelson said now that the grant has been obtained asked if this can be used to reiterate to the public the tree program on a positive basis and asked Mr. Moss to work with Mr. Alvord on a press release" to "Chairman Nelson asked Mr. Moss to work with Mr. Alvord on a press release and see if there was any way to present the tree program in a positive manner to the public now that the grant has been obtained"

**** MR. TRACY MOVED TO APPROVE THE ITEM WITH CORRECTIONS
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

3. REPORT- INCIDENTS OF ILLEGAL CUTTING

Mr. Sotnik said that a Contractor had contacted him to report an illegal cutting of a 16" oak tree at 5 Possum Lane. He said the tree contractor did not get a permit for the removal and said that the general site contractor said that he would be putting a planting

plan together and submitting it for approval. Mr. Aime said that there were numerous trees removed at 5 Possum Lane. Mr. Sotnik said that only one of them was a City tree. Mr. Sotnik said that there were also two trees that were illegally removed at 394 Rowayton Avenue. They removed a 24” and 26” maple and he is now in the process of notifying the property owner.

4. TREE PLANTING PROGRAM

a. Spring Hill

Mr. Alvord said he would be attempting to meet with Mr. Hiscock within the next two weeks to discuss the trees that may be planted on SNEW property. He said the types of trees to be planted still need to be chosen. Ms. Witkowsky said they were included in the forms that she had submitted. Mr. Sotnik said there was nothing found in the files regarding the types of trees to be planted. Ms. Witkowsky said that each of the property owners had submitted an ownership agreement along with the types of trees to be planted. Mr. Sotnik said he would recheck the file. Chairman Nelson asked if there were three property owners that had submitted. Mr. Sotnik said “yes” and included one tree at 84 Truman, four on Maple Street and possibly two on SNEW property along Maple Street. He said that he had performed an approximate cost estimate and it would be approximately \$6,000, depending on the types of trees that are chosen. He said he padded the estimate slightly and that this number should be on the high side.

b. Sheridan Street

Chairman Nelson said there is nothing new to report since last month’s meeting. Chairman Nelson asked Mr. Tracy if he had been contacted by the property owner. Mr. Tracy said he has not.

c. Proposed vs. Available Funds

Mr. Alvord said he had been concerned when he received the list of properties that Mr. Overall had planned to send letters to for tree planting on East Avenue, and he wanted to be sure there were sufficient funds in the tree planting account. He said that there is over \$73,000 in the account and said that he had made a couple of suggestions to Mr. Overall on the letters but told him to move forward. Chairman Nelson asked how many letters Mr. Overall would be sending out. Mr. Alvord said approximately 15 or 16. Ms. Becker asked what part of East Avenue this includes. Mr. Alvord said across from City Hall down towards the I-95 Exit 16 entrance ramp.

Mr. Alvord said this was another concern he had before locking in a meeting date with the Charles Cove Condominium Association and said, as previously discussed, the planting would be done in phases based upon the availability of funds. Since funds are available, all 29 trees could be planted at one time. He said that he would schedule a meeting with them. Chairman Nelson said that Mr. Viteretto and Mr. Whitehead should

attend that meeting. Mr. Alvord agreed, but said he will accept whatever date they give him, and whoever is available can participate.

Mr. Sotnik said there is also approximately \$27,600 left on the current Almstead Tree contract. Chairman Nelson asked if the cost of the plantings at Matthews Park will come out of the Almstead Tree Contract. Mr. Alvord said the trees and shrubs for Mathews Park are going to be purchased from Almstead Tree using the contract prices, but the amount will not count against the contract value because the Common Council had approved a change order to the contract for the Mathews Park plantings. Chairman Nelson asked when the planting at Matthews Park would begin. Mr. Sotnik said that he will be scheduling a meeting with Mr. Bociek on Friday February 29, 2008 and would be giving him the map along with the list of plantings to be purchased. Ms. Becker asked if Mr. Yeosock had done the staking yet. Mr. Alvord said the staking will be done as close to the planting date as possible because the stakes have a tendency to disappear. He said they will be sure that when it is time to stake, there is a communication with the Director of Lockwood Matthews Mansion to make him aware of what is going on. Mr. Alvord said that there will be 87 total plantings which will include 26 trees and 61 shrubs. Ms. Becker asked if there would be a press release announcing the planting project. Chairman Nelson said that he would contact Mr. Moss and ask him to coordinate with Mr. Alvord and Mr. Sotnik regarding this.

5. INFORMATION COPIES

- a. Tree City USA Bulletin No. 16

Mr. Alvord distributed.

6. UPDATE- TREE REPLACEMENTS ON CALF PASTURE BEACH ROAD

Mr. Alvord said there have been no changes to the plan since Mr. Whitehead and Mr. Viteretto shared it, and it is his expectation that it will be used as the principal visual presentation at the meeting with the Charles Cove Condominium Association. He said there are other things that he would like to accomplish at the meeting, such as suggesting that they adopt one of the many available adopt-a-spots and also discuss the black pines that are inside the wall on their property. Mr. Tracy asked if there was an issue with the ground water level in that area. Mr. Alvord said that no planting will be done near the Gardella Marina area at this time because there is a drainage pipe that runs across Calf Pasture Beach Road between Taylor Farm and the Gardella Marina and failures in that pipe have been discovered that require repair. He said they have arrived at what the engineering solution is going to be and is now a matter of getting the funds secured to get the work done. He said that he clearly does not want to plant trees and then have to dig them up for the repair, and that could potentially effect approximately 4 to 6 trees that would be planted at this end of Calf Pasture Beach Road and for that reason this will be done as a two phase planting project and will probably not be completed before the spring of 2009.

7. REPORT- TREE AND SHRUB LISTS FOR UPCOMING TREE PLANTING RFP

Mr. Alvord distributed the final list that will go in the request for proposal for the new contract and said it includes all of the changes that Mr. Viterotto, Mr. Whitehead and Mr. Overall had suggested. Mr. Landau had also suggested a tree come off the list because of some particular insect issues it has in this area and said that Mr. Viterotto, Mr. Whitehead and Mr. Overall had agreed with that, and he has taken it off the list. He said the list has been shared with Mr. Mocciae who has agreed with the list for his purposes. He said the RFP will now be developed and put out to bid. He said when the proposals are received that he would like to have some Committee Members participate in the interview process. Chairman Nelson said he would participate. Mr. Sotnik said he would also like a straight cost for labor for installing donated trees to be included in the RFP. Mr. Tracy asked if that would include maintenance for the trees. Mr. Alvord said that the current contractor had some issues with that because it was not their product being installed. He suggested just including a price for planting the trees in the RFP, and having no discussion regarding warranties. Chairman Nelson asked about including the water bags. Mr. Alvord said he will be adding a suggestion for the use of those in the RFP.

Mr. Alvord said that thanks to the work of Dave Tracy and some long distance communication with Alan Kingsbury, that the new pages for the four new species that are going into the guidebook are completed. The only thing remaining to be done is to remove the pages that had the trees that have been removed from the list and some other minor editing.

8. LOOK-AHEAD

a. Arbor Day 2008

Chairman Nelson said the first meeting will be held at Rowayton School on February 29, 2008, at 12:30 P.M. Mr. Alvord suggested inviting Terri Almond of the DoubleTree Hotel to the meeting. Chairman Nelson agreed and said he would contact her. Ms. Becker asked what the date of Arbor Day is. Mr. Alvord said that Arbor Day is April 25, 2008 and a time will be determined at the meeting.

b. Second Annual Tree Festival

Chairman Nelson said the next meeting will be held on March 4, 2008, at 3:00 P.M. at Shady Beach and that they would be walking the area to determine the layout of the festival. Mr. Alvord said that Mr. Mocciae would also be attending the meeting. He said there also needs to be a volunteer to coordinate the kids activities and said not so much as to having to organize the actual activity but more to come up with some ideas for additional activities and have other people scheduled to take on the activity. Chairman Nelson suggested getting the Stepping Stones Museum involved and asked Ms. Becker if she would attend the meeting. Ms. Becker said she would.

9. DISCUSSION- NEIGHBORHOOD ACTIVITIES

Ms. Becker said there was a CNNA meeting held on February 21, 2008, and that they had gone through the accomplishments from last year as well as to set some goals for this year. She said they asked everyone to reach out to their associations to find out what issues people would like to focus on and said they would be focusing on some additional departments within the City of Norwalk such as the Board of Education and the Police Department. Mr. Alvord asked if there was a topic established for next month's meeting. Ms. Becker said she believes representatives from the West Avenue project would be attending to give an update. Mr. Alvord said he would like to attend that meeting along with Chairman Nelson to try to recruit tree liaisons from the neighborhood associations. Ms. Becker said the next CNNA meeting will be held on March 24, 2008, at 7:30 P.M. and said that Julie Burton of Rowayton is now the new CNNA Coordinator and she is responsible for getting the agenda together. Mr. Alvord and Chairman Nelson asked Ms. Becker if she could forward Ms. Burton's information to them. Ms. Becker said she would do that.

10. DISCUSSION-NTA ACTIVITIES

Mr. Aime said that they had a meeting last week. Chairman Nelson said that Mr. Moss is making a lot of progress in getting in touch with the maple syrup makers and will have more to report at next months meeting. He said there will be a meeting to be held on March 1, 2008 at 9:30 A.M. for the tree counting session to identify would needs to be done and what kind of talent is needed so people can be recruited to help. Mr. Tracy said not a lot has happened regarding the tree scout machine for approximately six months and will now need to get an extension, which has more or less been verbally approved by the Government.

Mr. Tracy said that the 501C3 status has been permently approved after a probationary period of five years.

11. NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Alvord said that Mr. Sotnik had spoken with Chris Donnelly and he had said that Norwalk would be receiving the Tree City USA award again. Chairman Nelson asked how many years in a row that Norwalk has received the award. Mr. Alvord said that Norwalk has received the Tree City USA award for four consecutive years and have received the growth award for two consecutive years. Mr. Alvord said next year the growth award is probably going to be a challenge because the basis for the award last year was for 2006 and a lot of money was spent that year because that was the same year that the Home Depot award was received. Alot of trees were planted that year as well as numerous removals of dead trees. He said that there were even more removals last year because there was a huge back log of hazardous trees around the city and that a tree maintenance crew was formed within the Highway section of Department of Public Works, and all that cost was counted in the budget. Now that list is down to a modest level and will not have that elevated cost next year. He said that one of the requirements

to earn the Growth Award is you have to at least match the previous year's expenditures. Chairman Nelson asked if bringing in an intern that had been previously discussed would help in receiving the award. Mr. Alvord said that it would help and that may be worth resurrecting because within the next thirty days would be the time that it should be posted at the Universities. He said there is already a job description in place and would just need to work out the mechanics of how the money transfer would be done, because the Finance Director will not sign off on a job posting until the funds are secured. Mr. Alvord suggested scheduling a meeting to discuss the specific jobs and responsibilities of the intern.

Ms. Witkowsky asked if there was a time frame for the plantings on Spring Hill. Mr. Alvord said that he would be scheduling a meeting with Mr. Hiscock within the next week or two to discuss the water department property but said he does not anticipate a problem with the planting unless for some reason they had a purpose when they had cleared all the trees out that used to be on that property. He said after that meeting the next step would be to schedule a site visit and he asked Ms. Witkowsky if she would be available to participate in that. Ms. Witkowsky said she would as long as it was scheduled late in the day. Mr. Sotnik said once the site visit is completed he would then issue a purchase order to Almstead Tree and the trees would then be planted within two to three weeks after they receive the purchase order.

Ms. Witkowsky asked about the status regarding the wires in the trees on Armstrong Court. Mr. Sotnik said he had spoken with the utility company and they had promised to remove them. Ms. Witkowsky said that the wires are still there. Mr. Alvord said that Mr. Sotnik has followed up with them a couple of times and they understand that they need to remove the wires but said we also need to understand that it is not their top priority. Ms. Witkowsky asked what the time frame would be that they have to remove the wires and asked what she should report back to the residents. Mr. Alvord said that digging in the winter would destroy more property and soil that would not be able to be repaired properly and said he would prefer that they wait until the spring thaw to remove the wires.

Ms. Becker asked if anything had been done with the pear trees on Washington Street that were discussed at last months meeting. Mr. Alvord said nothing has been done at this time and what he probably will do is ask Mr. Bociek to look at those trees. He also said he is not as concerned about the actual trimmings that need to be done as the educational process with the merchants on Washington Street because the trees need to be trimmed so drastically.

12. ADJOURNMENT

**** CHAIRMAN NELSON MOVED TO ADJOURN**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

The meeting adjourned at 7:10 P.M.