



**CITY OF NORWALK
TREE ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

Norwalk City Hall
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**TREE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
October 24, 2023**

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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.gov to provide written public comment prior to the meeting.

Attendance: Richard Whitehead, Vice Chair
Peter Viteretto
Sonja Oliver

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

Others: Jeff Scherr, President, Norwalk Tree Alliance
Gay MacLeod, Tree Liaison
Edith Romanello, Tree Liaison

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Whitehead called the meeting to order at 6:05 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 SEPTEMBER 26, 2023

**** MR. VITERETTO MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS SUBMITTED.**

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

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

4. APPROVE SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS FOR CALENDAR YEAR 2024

**** MR. WHITEHEAD MOVED TO APPROVE THE SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS FOR CALENDAR YEAR 2024.**

**** MR. VITERETTO SECONDED THE MOTION.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

5. CAPITAL TREE PLANTING PROGRAM - FALL 2023 UPDATE

New Plantings:

- a. Development of Potential Planting Locations
 - i. Spring Hill Avenue.
 - ii. Senga Road.
 - iii. Morton Street.
 - iv. Richards Avenue.
 - v. West Rocks Road.
 - vi. Coloniell Village Complex- Scribner Avenue-Suncrest Road.
 - vii. Mulvoy Street.
 - viii. Lexington Avenue.
 - iv. Lincoln Avenue.
 - x. Tarone Drive.
 - xi. Knorr Street.
 - xii. Ely Avenue.
 - xiii. Trinity Place.
 - xiv. Flax Hill Road-North side from Taylor Avenue to Clay Street.
 - xv. Arbor Drive.

- xvi. 10 Pond Ridge Lane.
- xvii. 12 Tulip Tree Lane.
- xviii. 6 Carlisle Street.
- xix. Tree Management Plan Locations.
- xx. Covewood Drive.
- xxi. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Drive Initiative – DECD Grant – Program Continuation.
- xxii. Norwalk River Valley Trail – Riverside Avenue to Belden Avenue – CUFC Grant.
- xxiii. Norwalk River Valley Trail – Union Park South to Arch Street.

Mr. Sotnik provided an update and said there have been requests for tree plantings at over 23 locations, totaling greater than 250 trees on the list. He stated that he has staked 162 locations to date, so with the additional locations, there will be well over 200 trees planted during the Fall 2023 planting cycle.

Mr. Viteretto asked if the plantings can be done at the Norwalk River Valley Trail (NRVT). Mr. Sotnik said “Yes” and that the locations were staked last week and Almstead Tree was there today and will be doing the plantings tomorrow from Riverside Avenue to Belden Avenue. Mr. Viteretto asked what the primary species will be, and if they were chosen based on a site walk or if a site plan was developed. Mr. Sotnik said there will be a wide variety of species planted and a site plan was developed with the NRVT Board. He stated that prior to Mr. Yeosock leaving the City, he had worked with the NRVT Board and they had applied for the grant. Mr. Viteretto said that Mr. Yeosock had sent him the plans for the project before he left, but that they did not include any tree plantings. Mr. Sotnik said the plan developed by the NRVT Board since then, currently does include planting species. The plan was developed with input from the NRVT Board members and the Norwalk River Watershed Association. Mr. Whitehead asked if Almstead Tree is able to get all of the species. Mr. Sotnik said “Yes” and that Almstead Tree had said they are able to get all of the species, but if there was an issue, they would let him know, but they do not see any major issues at this point. Mr. Viteretto asked if there is a watering plan in place for the spring. Mr. Sotnik said that was one of the reasons they had requested using Almstead Tree to do the plantings so that the watering would be included at least for the first two years.

Mr. Whitehead suggested using the NRVT trail for future Arbor Day cleanup events for the tree companies. Mr. Sotnik said they also made sure that none of the planting is being done on the highway side of the trail so that any additional cleanup work that will need to be done on the existing trees can still be done without damaging any of the new trees. Mr. Whitehead asked if the area near the overpass on this portion of the NRVT that is on state property is included in the tree plantings. Mr. Sotnik said “no” and that area all still needs to be done and that he will work with Mr. Viteretto on the planting plan so that it can be submitted to the State D.O.T. for the permit.

Mr. Scherr said that he had sent the diagram to Mr. Sotnik for the Van Dyke property at 360 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Drive and that stretch of road, and that he

had spoken to him about there being an opportunity to plant approximately 17 trees. Mr. Sotnik said if the species are included with the diagram, he will place the order next week.

Replacements:

b. Various Locations - Working with Almstead and Minutemen.

Mr. Sotnik said that Almstead Tree and Minutemen Landscaping are working on the replacement trees.

Mr. Whitehead asked if there are any delays with sourcing some of the replacement trees, or are they just waiting until the Fall planting cycle to replace them. Mr. Sotnik said he has not heard of any issues and that they are waiting for the Fall planting cycle, and he has spoken with both companies, and they are aware of what needs to be done and are working on it. He said that some of the reason that they have not been done yet is that both companies have been very busy. Mr. Whitehead said now may be a good time to put a little pressure on them for the replacement trees if new purchase orders are going to be issued for the Fall planting cycle.

Mr. Scherr asked for the status of the replacement tree at Woodward Park. Mr. Whitehead said the tree is well out of the warranty period and will be considered a new tree planting. Mr. Sotnik said it is on the list for new tree plantings.

6. ON-LINE TREE PLANTING REQUEST E-FORM FOR RESIDENTS

Mr. Sotnik said that a form is now available online at the City's website for tree planting requests.

7. UPDATE - ALMSTEAD TREE WATERING/MAINTENANCE SCHEULE

Mr. Sotnik reported on the watering schedule and said it has been a very wet month so there was not lot of need for supplemental watering.

8. UPDATE – MINUTEMEN LAND SERVICES TREE WATERING/MAINTENANCE SCHEULE

Mr. Sotnik stated that as was the case with the previous Agenda Item, it has been a very wet month so there was not lot of need for supplemental watering.

9. TREE LIAISON(S) UPDATES

Ms. MacLeod said that she has secured tree plantings for three (3) Jewish cemeteries that are located along Richards Avenue, as well as at the United Congregational Church. Mr.

Sotnik has staked the locations at the cemeteries and will stake the locations at the United Congregational Church tomorrow. She stated that the planting will consist of Oak Tree, Tulip Trees, and Maple Trees. She said certain exceptions have been made based on the requests at that the United Congregational Church as they have requested Apple trees and there was also a request for a Cedar tree at the Jewish Cemetery that is across from Norwalk Community College. She said in addition to those, she had also requested that a few trees be planted along that area, but Eversource has been clearing trees under the powerlines so she will wait until that project is completed to plant more trees close to the street and away from the powerlines. Mr. Sotnik said he and Mr. Torre have had several conversations with Eversource and have expressed their displeasure concerning several of the areas, but some of the work they are doing is located on their own parcels of property, which is different than just having an easement through properties, or doing it within the City Right-of-Way.

Mr. Sotnik said that sidewalks will be installed on the southern end of Richards Avenue, and he is working with TMP on locations related to the planting plan so the trees will be planted back near the fence to allow for the sidewalk installation, and he will space the trees accordingly.

Ms. MacLeod suggested tree plantings at the public library on Belden Avenue and said there are two trees that can be planted in the front of the library as well as in the divider near the parking lot where there is ample room for trees to be planted. She said she also suggested tree plantings along the perimeter at Fox Run School.

Mr. Sotnik said the trees will all be staked and ordered this week.

Mr. Sotnik introduced Ms. Romanello to the Committee and said she is a new Tree Liaison from the East Norwalk/Westport Avenue area of the City. The Committee members introduced themselves and welcomed Ms. Romanello. Mr. Sotnik thanked Ms. Romanello for getting involved. Ms. Romanello said she is looking forward to working with the team and said she has reached out to her neighbors on Tarone Drive to let them know she has been working with the Committee on the tree program that the city offers, and they are looking forward to getting the trees planted. She asked, in addition to the planting request for the cul-de-sac on her street, what her role would be. Mr. Sotnik said if she sees areas within Norwalk where trees need to be planted to let the Committee know and work with the property or business owners to get the information on what species they would like to have in front of their property. Ms. MacLeod said that she can work with Ms. Romanello offline and provide her with a background of what the tree liaisons do.

Mr. Scherr said that he has been in Norwalk for about four (4) years and the number of trees that have been planted recently is encouraging and awesome to see and hopes that it will continue. Ms. Romanello asked how long the tree planting program has been going for and if there funding to continue. Mr. Sotnik said this program was reconstituted in 2003-2004 and has been going on ever since and the key thing is funding and they have been getting a lot more funding due to the current administration and grants for trees. They have gone from an annual Capital Budget of \$50,000 to \$65,000 per year for planting two (2) cycles (Spring and Fall plantings) of trees to having received over \$1 million dollars in money in the form of various grants over the last few years for tree plantings. Mr. Scheer

said the Norwalk Tree Alliance and the Tree Advisory Committee work hand-in-hand. Ms. Romanello requested that Mr. Scheer share his contact information with her.

Mr. Sotnik said that Chairperson Kipp wanted to reinstitute the tree liaison program and it is important to rebuild the program in various neighborhoods. He said there is also an additional person that has expressed interest in being a tree liaison for the Westport Avenue area, but that he could not attend tonight's meeting, but plans on attending in the future.

10. TREE CITY USA PREPARATION

Mr. Sotnik said he will be starting to put the application for the recertification for Tree City USA and the Growth Award, which will be the 20th year, and the 18th year for the Growth Award. He requested that Mr. Scheer send him the information on the financials and the number of trees planted from the Tree Alliance. Mr. Viteretto said this year's tree planting has been a bonus due to grant funding and asked how that will be included and not make it difficult to up it next year. Mr. Sotnik said they realize there are different funding mechanisms than normal and may not be consistent from year to year, but growth can be shown in a variety of different categories, not just financial budget.

11. UPDATE - NORWALK OPEN HOUSE/TOUCH A TRUCK – OCTOBER 21, 2023

Mr. Sotnik provided an update and said the event was exceptional and had over 1,000 attendees and that there were a variety of activities for the kids. He thanked Mr. Viteretto for volunteering his time to staff the Tree Advisory Committee table and Mr. Scheer for volunteering his time for the Norwalk Tree Alliance, and explaining the various Tree Programs. He said that Almstead Tree and Minutemen Landscaping also volunteered, and both brought a tree and handed out give-a-ways.

12. REPORT - NTA ACTIVITIES

Mr. Scheer reported and said that they are continuing to plant trees and just planted four (4) on Bell Island and they are focusing on the coastal areas to help with coastal erosion, as well as in paved areas to reduce the heat island effect and are trying to contact local businesses to get trees planted in their parking lots. He said they will be planting trees at the VanDyke Recycling plant on Martin Luther King Jr. Drive and there is ample space to plant a significant number of trees along the street.

Mr. Scheer said the elections for the Norwalk Tree Alliance will be held on Thursday, October 26, 2023.

Mr. Scheer said the Open House will be held in December at Fodor Farm and he extended the invitation to the Tree Advisory Committee and said that he will follow up with the date.

13. OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Viteretto said the Elm Trees were cropped yet again at the Norwalk Inn and Conference Center. Mr. Sotnik said those trees are on private property.

14. ADJOURNMENT

**** MR. VITERETTO MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

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

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 6:56 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,
Dilene Byrd