



TREE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

May 23, 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
Cindy Cossuto

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

Others: Anthony Cossuto
Gay MacLeod

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Whitehead 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 APRIL 25, 2023.

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

**** MS. COSSUTO SECONDED THE MOTION.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

4. UPDATE – CAPITAL TREE PLANTING PROGRAM.

- a. Continued Development and Implementation of planting locations list for spring 2023.
 - i. State of Connecticut DEEP Urban Forestry Equity through Capacity Building Grant – 31 trees at the Children’s Learning Center at Roodner Court.
 - ii. Norwalk Community College - Arbor Day – 1 tree.
 - iii. Norwalk Community College - 24 trees along West Cedar Street property line.
 - iv. First Street - Fourth Street area - 43 trees.
 - v. Soundview Avenue and Cliff Street area - 17 trees.
 - vi. East Avenue - 6 trees.
 - vii. Gregory Boulevard and Ludlow Manor area - 7 trees.
 - viii. Woodchuck Lane and Woodchuck Court area - 78 trees.
 - ix. Various other locations.
 - o Arbor Day – Rowayton Elementary School – 3 trees.
 - o Merrill Road – 4 trees.
 - o 10 Hillandale Manor – 3 trees.

Mr. Sotnik provided an update and said the tree planting program is moving along very well and to date they have either planted or ordered 217 trees, which has surpassed to goal of planting 200 trees and will end up having planted approximately 220-230 trees in the Spring 2023 planting cycle. Mr. Whitehead asked if the contractors have indicated when they would like to stop the Spring plantings. Mr. Sotnik said not yet, but he will be in contact with them almost daily on what that date will be so the last orders can be placed two weeks before they will want to complete the planting so that they will honor the two (2) year warranty.

5. UPDATE - ALMSTEAD TREE WATERING/MAINTENANCE SCHEDULE

Mr. Sotnik provided an update on the watering schedule and said that Almstead Tree has continued watering in a variety of areas for the trees that were planted last year and the ones that have been planted so far, this year.

6. UPDATE - MINUTEMEN LAND SERVICES TREE WATERING/MAINTENANCE SCHEDULE

Mr. Sotnik stated that Minutemen Land Services has also been watering the trees that they have planted this year, as well as the trees they planted last year.

7. UPDATE - 2023 ARBOR DAY CLEAN UP EVENT - APRIL 26, 2023

Mr. Whitehead provided an update on the Arbor Day Clean Up Event and said it was well attended and had approximately 10 trucks and crews and that Mayor Rilling attended and thanked everyone for volunteering their time and equipment. He said the next step is that trees will be planted, and Mr. Viteretto is going to put together a planting plan for the corners of Connecticut Avenue. Mr. Sotnik said that Common Council President Burnett also attended the Clean Up Event and at the May 9th Common Council meeting thanked each one of the tree companies for volunteering their time. He also said that even with all of the work that has been done on the trail, there is still far more to be done, as well as on New Canaan Avenue so they can probably hold these Clean Up events for the next couple of years. Ms. MacLeod suggested adding another Clean Up in or around the summer to expand on the cleanup efforts rather than just doing them once a year since there is so much work to be done. Mr. Viteretto suggested including a variety of volunteer groups because if the objective is the same, there is a lot that can get done. Mr. Sotnik said there is a grant that was awarded for the area to have the NRVF do some plantings, so there is also an opportunity to hold a tree planting event.

8. UPDATE - 2023 ARBOR DAY CELEBRATION - ROWAYTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - APRIL 28, 2023

Mr. Sotnik provided an update on the Arbor Day celebration and said it went very well and that a lot of the parents had also attended. Due to the potential rain that day, it was decided that morning to move the event into the school gym, and Minutemen Landscaping brought a tree into the gym so even though there was not a planting done outside for all of the kids to join with due to the weather, they could still see a live tree and the root ball. Ms. MacLeod asked if seedlings were still given out. Mr. Sotnik said "Yes," and that Eversource had donated them specifically for the Arbor Day celebration. Mr. Sotnik also stated that the Norwalk Tree Alliance paid for one age-appropriate book for each of the classrooms at the school.

9. OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Sotnik presented information related to tree hydration mats that were sent to him from Minutemen Land Services, and they said they were found to be not as unsightly as gator bags and work great in places that lack irrigation, and offer another layer of protection in addition to the watering. Ms. MacLeod asked if there is anything toxic in the mats that are being released into the soil. Mr. Whitehead said the hydro gel that is used stays in the mat, and they hold moisture, but he is not sure if the moisture is released into the soil.

Mr. Viteretto said the mats will provide irrigation on top of the root ball, but does not necessarily promote water going beyond the outside soil which is where you would want to get it for the roots to grow and want to keep the water outside the root ball, so the tree roots seep water and that is the key objective about irrigation. He said this is also why when we water trees, we actually provide a lot of water quickly so that it goes down into the soil, so the tree roots go down into the soil to get it, versus irrigation for lawn systems which only hydrate the first inch to inch and a half of soil, which is not helpful for trees. There was further discussion that ensued and Mr. Sotnik suggested inviting Mr. Grant of Minuteman Land Services to attend a Tree Advisory Committee meeting to present and explain the tree hydration mats because although they look nicer than the gator bags, he wants to be sure they are just as effective if they are approved to be used.

Mr. Sotnik asked at what point the tree guards should be removed from a tree. Mr. Viteretto said when a tree gets big enough it starts to push on the tree guards anyway and can restrict the growth of the crown, but that he doesn't have a good answer, but they may be leaving them on to a point where they might start restricting the growth. Mr. Sotnik asked the Committee to think about when a good time would be to remove tree guards because he can have a DPW Operations crew have them removed from the base of trees. Mr. Whitehead suggested that he also ask Almstead Tree and Minutemen Land Services for their opinion.

Mr. Sotnik said that he has been in contact with Almstead Tree regarding having them work on planting the necessary replacement trees. He stated that some of the trees on Martin Luther King Drive need to be replaced, as well as some others that he has received feedback that they had died, so he requested that they began to plant those replacement trees as soon as possible. Mr. Whitehead said they will need to be planted before it gets too hot.

Mr. Viteretto said the trees in front of the SONO Collection are being completely girdled by the guidewires. Mr. Sotnik said that he will contact representatives from the SONO Collection to have them removed.

Mr. Whitehead said he has been looking at one of the Redmond American Linden Trees on Washington Street and said it will need to be replaced also. Mr. Sotnik said he will add it to the list to be replanted this year. Mr. Viteretto said that he has had trouble finding American Redmond Linden Trees and his fear is the contractor is going to say that they can't get them and use a Littleleaf Linden tree and that should not be allowed.

Mr. Whitehead agreed and said and that the trees must match and probably need to be a 3 1/2" – 4" caliper tree to get the proper canopy height for sidewalks at this time.

10. ADJOURNMENT

- ** MS. COSSUTO MOVED TO ADJOURN.**
- ** MR. VITERETTO SECONDED THE MOTION.**
- ** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 6:43 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Dilene Byrd