



**CITY OF NORWALK
TREE ADVISORY COMMITTEE**
Norwalk City Hall
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TREE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING March 26, 2024

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

Staff: Paul Sotnik, Deputy Tree Warden
Robert Stowers, Director, Recreation & Parks
Sarah Cruz, Arborist/Horticulturalist
Dilene Byrd, Secretary

Others: Jeff Scherr, President, Norwalk Tree Alliance
Bret Holzwarth, P.E., Redniss & Mead
Matthew Helman, Eversource
Christopher Farrell, Eversource
Kathleen Ferrier, Eversource
Jim Hollyday, Chair, Oak Hills Park Authority
Jim Schell, Superintendent, Oak Hills Park

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Kipp called the meeting to order at 6:04 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 FEBRUARY 27, 2024

**** MS. OLIVER MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS SUBMITTED.**

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

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

4. REFERRAL FROM P&Z COMMISSION - APPROVAL OF REVISED STREET TREE SPECIFIED FOR USE ON THE WALL STREET PLACE NORTH LANDSCAPE PLAN L1 DATED DECEMBER 1, 2023, LAST REVISED JANUARY 31, 2024 - PRESENTED BY BRET HOLZARTH, P.E. - REDNISS & MEAD

Mr. Sotnik said last November Planning & Zoning had referred the plan for Wall Street Place for the review of the tree species and discussion by the Tree Advisory Committee, and comments were provided, but there have been changes related to the project itself since then, and Mr. Holzwarth will be presenting the changes for review as well as the species that have been selected.

Mr. Holzwarth presented the site plan and said the project consists of two buildings which include Wall Street North located at 61 Wall Street which will consist of both residential and commercial space, and Wall Street Place East located at 177 Isaacs Street which will consist of only residential units and garage space. He said there is now a fully coordinated plan with DPW and they have revised the planting plan, and one of the key components that has changed was the street frontage on Wall Street where there are two existing Ginko trees that will now remain, and the DPW and Traffic Department is working on a new streetscape for Wall Street that is independent of this project, but have suggested that there not be any plantings along Wall Street at this time, so there will be no plantings done on Wall Street. He said they are proposing several American Linden Trees on Isaacs

Street that are aligned with the parallel parking spaces and the streetscape and will continue down to the corner along their frontage. He said along the other side of the street, there is not as much frontage on Isaacs Street, but are able to install two street trees and have chosen Ginko Trees that are like the Wall Street frontage, and along the back of the property there are a number of Green Giant Arborvitae trees and American Arborvitae trees to provide screening from the railroad which was part of the original plan. He said the last time he presented to the Committee there was a question regarding the tree pits so as part of the plans that they had submitted there is a City of Norwalk standard streetscape/planting detail which consists of a 5' x 5' box so that is the area where the trees will be placed, and after it is backfilled flex-pave material will be placed, but the streetscape will not be done until towards the end of the construction project and are projecting the Fall of 2025 for the installation of the trees.

Mr. Whitehead asked what size tree the plan calls for. Mr. Holzwarth said the deciduous trees are 2 1/2" to 3" calipers. Mr. Whitehead said the last time that size caliper tree was used for sidewalk trees the canopies were not high enough for pedestrian traffic and found that a larger size tree offers adequate height on the canopy. Mr. Holzwarth asked if there is a suggested caliper to achieve that height. Mr. Whitehead said they have found a 3" to 3 1/2" caliper trees would be sufficient.

Mr. Viteretto suggested specifying the species Redmond on the Tilia Americana and specifying a single liter to be sure the quality is good. Mr. Viteretto asked who is responsible for the right of refusal or to accept the trees specified on the plan. Mr. Holzarth said the design team, but if it is in the City Right-of-Way the City would have the right to review it and refuse if it is not sufficient. Ms. Cruz said when A.A.N. standards are put into the project specifications it covers the City for approval on whether we want to inspect the material on site or during the procurement process, is another question, but she is not sure that is currently the normal process. Mr. Sotnik said they have not currently, but if they will be in the City Right-of-Way, that should be an option. Mr. Viteretto requested that be implemented because the trees in front of the SONO Collection should have never been planted as they are poor quality trees.

Mr. Viteretto asked if there is a water supply for the project. Mr. Holzwarth said there will be water along the building in the garage area, but the trees are intended to have gator bags and will be filled periodically. Mr. Viteretto said a project like this should have water available at the street level for the maintenance of vegetation and gator bags are only a temporary supply. Mr. Sotnik said because they are in the City Right-of-Way, when they come in for their encroachment permit, they will request the water maintenance plan and warranty for the two-year period like is done for the City Tree Planting contract and if they don't survive, they would need to be replaced.

Chairperson Kipp said if there are any further questions to email Mr. Sotnik as he is the point person.

Ms. Cassuto joined the meeting at 6:15 P.M.

**5. 2024 EVERSOURCE TRANSMISSION TREE TRIMMING PERMIT
(MATTHEW HELMAN)**

Mr. Helman said he is a Transmission Arborist with Eversource and has reviewed the vegetation management work in the transmission corridor that will be occurring in the City of Norwalk. He said he had met with Mr. Sotnik, Mr. Torre, and Mr. Ortiz and reviewed the work on City parcels which only included the Oak Hills Golf Course. He provided an overview of the scope of work in that area and a lot of it is just pruning new growth and saplings that have grown since their last cycle a few years ago, so there will be no large removals. He said there are a few Ailanthus trees that are dead and have a potential to strike the transmission lines, so they are seeking to remove those. Chairperson Kipp asked if a Transmission Arborist is specifically concerned with transmission line vegetation management. Mr. Helman said "Yes" and that he is a Connecticut licensed arborist, but Eversource concentrates on the transmission lines for southwest Connecticut.

**6. UPDATE - POTENTIAL INPUT FOR NEWLY AWARDED U.S. FOREST SERVICE
GRANT**

Ms. Cruz said they are getting closer to the contract period and are just waiting on a few things to check off the list for approval.

7. UPDATE - CAPITAL/GRANT FUNDED TREE PLANTING PROGRAM

- a. Continued Development of Planting Locations List for Spring 2024
Mr. Sotnik asked if any of the members of the Committee have any requested and suggested planting locations for Spring 2024. Chairperson Kipp asked when they need to have the locations submitted by. Mr. Sotnik said that 35 trees have already been staked on Spring Hill Avenue and there are also some other locations, so he would like them by April 15, 2024.

**8. UPDATE - 2024 EARTH DAY EVENT ON THE NORWALK GREEN –
APRIL 27, 2024, 12:00 P.M. - 4:00 P.M.**

Chairperson Kipp said the event has been growing each year and will be held on April 27, 2024, from 12:00 P.M. to 4:00 P.M. and is a family fun-based event that is well attended, but the parking is challenging. Mr. Sotnik said he has been working with the Event Planning Committee and has discussed parking and the goal of the Earth Day event is to get people to walk or ride bikes as much as possible to the event, so there are several places to park such as City Hall. He said the group has decided not to provide tables or chairs due to the cost of rental, so everyone will be responsible for bringing their own tables and chairs.

**9. UPDATE - PLANNING FOR 2024 ARBOR DAY CLEAN-UP EVENT –
APRIL 24, 2024**

Mr. Whitehead provided an update and said they will be targeting the new section of the

bike/walk trail along Riverside Avenue of the Norwalk River Valley Trail and he and Mr. Sotnik met at the site to review, and Mr. Sotnik has spoken with Ms. Cherichetti from Conservation and will be getting the approval from her for the work related to the Event. He said that all of the tree companies have been contacted and are scheduled for Wednesday, April 24, 2024, from 8:00 A.M. to 12:00 P.M. and Mr. Sotnik will be sure the trail is closed for a half a day while the work is being done. Chairperson Kipp reminded everyone that this is a professional event and professionals in the industry have generously donated their time and services and are not encouraging the public to attend the cleanup as it could be dangerous and is being run as a service for Norwalk as opposed to a public event.

Mr. Sotnik said there are 10-12 locations inside the trail where new trees can be planted and are also looking at doing some plantings in the snow shelf along that area that would be compatible with that type of location. Mr. Whitehead said his one concern when planting in the snow shelf is the snowplows and that is a State maintained road and has a narrow snow shelf so inside the wires would be far more preferable than the narrow snow shelf at the edge of the road. Ms. Cruz said they have worked out a plan with specific species and using some shrubs instead of trees in some spaces and will also be amending the soil as they are planting.

10. UPDATE - PLANNING FOR 2024 ARBOR DAY - SILVERMINE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - APRIL 26, 2024, 1:00 P.M.

Mr. Sotnik said that he and Ms. Cruz attended the planning meeting which was held last Friday at the school and the school has chosen the two trees that they would like to have planted and the locations are all set and they are getting ready to order the trees. He said they are also working with Almstead Tree to pick out seedlings and that the students and Principal are excited. He said it is a Magnet School that teaches in Spanish as well as English, so he will have the Mayor's Proclamation done in both languages, and they have also spoken with them about teaching component and Ms. Cruz has volunteered to do the teaching component. In addition, Recreation & Parks has donated some gifts for the kids to replace the stay at the Double Tree Hotel. They will be offering some summer programs to the families to choose from for the Poster Contest winners.

Ms. Cruz said that either Mr. Viteretto or Mr. Whitehead had mentioned labeling the trees that are planted and she found a source to make custom tags and will attach them with a thin wire which will have Arbor Day with the year on them in both English and Spanish. Chairperson Kipp asked what kind of longevity the wire has. Ms. Cruz said five to ten years and that she has used it in the past in botanical gardens.

11. TREE LIAISON PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Ms. Cruz said her role is to manage and develop any tree related programs in the City and that she is still trying to get an understanding of all the initiatives and programs there are across the different Departments and asked for a brief overview of the program. She said it is her understanding that the Tree Advisory Committee takes the lead on that, and the other part to this is that a big component of the new grant funding is public outreach/ community engagement, and she could see that funding bolstering this program.

Chairperson Kipp said the program was developed and is maintained by the Tree Advisory Committee/volunteers and originally the goal was to have a volunteer from each of the sections of Norwalk, but the reality is that it was difficult to get someone from each of the sections, but basically just want people that live/work in Norwalk who have a vested interest and can be the “Boots on the ground” in locations where they frequent and see where there are locations voided of trees. She said the reality is that the Committee is made up of very dedicated volunteers that all have full-time jobs, so the more people there are, the more eyes there are looking for possible planting locations. She said the Tree Liaisons are also instrumental in buffering some of the decisions when a tree needs to be removed.

Ms. Cruz asked if there are ways that the program can be improved or better advertised for folks to get involved. Mr. Sotnik said that DPW now has an interim that will be helping with social media information and can advertise for tree liaisons. Chairperson Kipp said that is a great idea, but should also be used to get the word out about the Tree Advisory Committee and highlight some of the things they do. Chairperson Kipp shared the tree planting program site and said she loves that the on-line form has been at the site, but the problem is when the paper page is selected that is an archaic form with a new heading and asks for three different types of trees that they would like to see, but most people don't know the names of trees and don't have access to the tree planting list and suggested it be deleted. She also said instead of saying “Free Tree Request form,” it is important to say that it is the Tree Advisory Committee request form or something that links it back to the Committee. Mr. Whitehead agreed that it should definitely not say “Free” and suggested the form be renamed The Tree Advisory Committee Tree Installation Request Form. Ms. Cruz said she had sent a couple of updates to this specific form to the Committee members last week and after the Committee reviews it, she would like to update it ahead of getting requests for the Fall planting season. She said she has already made some of the suggested edits, but she thinks it's important that people have some input on the type of tree they are getting, but suggested to include categories such as native trees, shade trees, etc. Chairperson Kipp said she appreciates what Ms. Cruz is saying, but this form is a conversation starter, and it is not for someone to make a decision. Mr. Sotnik said it is sometimes hard to get residents to meet on site so it would be helpful if they could at least choose a category of tree. Mr. Stowers said he thinks the option/suggestion should be given, but the Committee would still make the final decision on what species is planted and can't just assume that everyone doesn't know about trees. Mr. Viteretto asked if there is a locational suggestion. Ms. Cruz said that she had added the location classification as one of the edits and requested that the Committee members review her edits and have the final update done for the Fall plantings.

12. REPORT - NTA ACTIVITIES

Mr. Scheer reported and said they had received three (3) new tree replacement requests today. He said the big change was that the concert will be pushed out until the Fall to allow for proper ticket sales and when they have the date finalized, he will update the Committee.

Mr. Sotnik said he saw the request for trees on Covewood Drive, but DPW is doing a drainage project there so they will need to be careful where any trees get planted until the

design is totally completed. Mr. Scheer said he knows there are City projects going on so it will just take some coordination between the City and the residents.

Mr. Scheer said the next NTA is meeting is next Thursday at 6:00 P.M. and invited Ms. Cruz to attend.

Mr. Scheer said he was in contact with Ms. MacLeod, and he gave her the form to look over because she had a number of private tree placement requests, and he informed her that they use the same native tree list as the Tree Advisory Committee.

13. OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Viteretto said in looking at the tree detail for the City the first thing that comes to his mind is that it is inadequate and suggested that the City look at tree planting detail and have them updated. Mr. Scheer suggested including suggested species as well as notes about the quality. Mr. Sotnik asked if there are specific ideas or dimensions to send them to him and Ms. Cruz and that once the details are updated it would go on their standard details for DPW and all the other departments in the entire City would use them. Ms. Cruz said she is in the process of putting together a couple of different standard details including one for critical root zones and what tree protection needs to be in place for construction and once that passes the engineering approvals, she will share it with the Committee for their input. She said she would also like to discuss bollards and fencing for the downtown areas, and she would be happy to take any suggestions that Committee members may have. Mr. Viteretto said he would like to see good tree protective measures in place in the City, and his point about the watering was not about the maintenance, but was about getting spickets on the building and that is another long-term issue that needs to get moved through Planning & Zoning.

Chairperson Kipp said that on Monday, April 8, 2024, at 3:30 P.M. there will be a solar eclipse.

14. ADJOURNMENT

****CHAIRPERSON KIPP MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

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

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,
Dilene Byrd