REGULAR MEETING- BIKE/WALK COMMISSION
AGENDA
JANUARY 28, 2025, AT 6:00PM.
BY ZOOM VIRTUAL MEETING

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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:	Peter Viteretto Sonja Oliver
Staff:	Paul Sotnik, Deputy Tree Warden Sarah Cruz, Arborist/ Horticulturalist Chris Torre, Tree Warden
Others:	Gay MacLeod, Tree Laison

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:08PM.

II. ROLL CALL

Ms. Cruz called the roll, and all listed on the attendance were present.

III. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

A. 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.

IV. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

A. Approve the minutes of the November 26, 2024, Tree Advisory Committee meeting.

The minutes were tabled due to a lack of a quorum.

V. REPORTS

A. Capital and grant-funded tree planting program:

1. Summary of the fall 2024 planting season.

Ms. Cruz said that 221 trees were planted in the spring, and 233 trees were planted in the fall, so a total of 454 trees were planted in the calendar year 2024.

2. Overview of funding spent in 2024.

Ms. Cruz provided a summary of the funding and said the cost to plant the 221 trees in the spring was $180,000, and the cost to plant the 233 trees in the fall was $193,000, so for calendar 2024 a total of $374,000 was spent on tree plantings, and all of the remaining APRA funding was expended.

3. Overview of funding available for spring 2024 planting season.

Mr. Sotnik said the overall total funding for 2024 was approximately $750,000 including the ARPA funding. Ms. Cruz said for 2024 the average cost per tree increased slightly because they had entered an option period in one of the planting contracts. Mr. Sotnik said the estimated average price to plant a tree through the contracts is $900.

Ms. Oliver joined the meeting at 6:10PM.

Ms. Cruz said for the fall season, only 43% of what has been planted were shade trees which she thinks is low and is something to try and improve on. Mr. Viteretto said he has observed that on the streets. Ms. Cruz said there are several factors such as the availability of space that limit how large a tree can be planted. Ms. Cruz said that 70% of the trees that were planted in the fall were native species to Connecticut, and 42 of the trees planted were through Ms. MacLeod's effort as a tree liaison. She said they also reached out to 22 adopt-a tree farms for the fall planting season as well.

VI. OLD BUSINESS

Ms. Cruz noted that she worked with the TMP Department on the NRVT to coordinate a planting in the area and in December planted 26 trees in the amenity zone to provide a visual barrier from the road to the path, and in the background planted a number of shade trees which will look very nice in the spring. Mr. Viteretto said they may need to work on the pruning as they grow. Ms. Cruz agreed. Mr Viteretto also said that the location is great for a Hornbeam Tree on the land side.

Ms. Cruz said she has been working on a new tree planting RFP that is based on the $1 million dollar grant that was received from the US Forest Service through the Inflation Reduction Act and is $500,00 for different types of tree plantings, and the funding will be available once the RFP is out to bid, and she thanked Mr. Viteretto for his help with the language. She said she is now going through the species list to see if it can be improved as is listed in the contracts.

Ms. Cruz said for the fall planting there is approximately $12,000 left from the capital budget for tree planting, but there is still a lot of funding through the MLK corridor which she would like to focus on and get the committee's input for and she and Mr. Sotnik have discussed new tree pits within certain areas of SONO where there is no planting space that currently exists. Ms. Oliver said she would like to work with Ms. Cruz on that. Ms. Cruz said they are limited to certain areas for the spring plantings so she will need to correlate the public tree requests to be sure they fall within these areas where there is funding available but, in the fall of 2025, there will be plenty of funding available to do tree plantings citywide.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

A. Update- Tree City USA and Growth Award Recertification Applications.

Mr. Sotnik said they have gone through the normal Tree City USA recertification process, and it was signed by the mayor and submitted on January 9, 2025. He said the total expenditure throughout all the categories was $1,151,694.08 for 2024, which equates to $12.46 per capita, and in 2022 strictly using capital budget funding and Tree Alliance funding was $9.74 per capita. He said the state Forester has already approved the application for the recertification and has now gone to the Arbor Day Foundation for their approval for the 21st year in a row.

Mr Sotnik said they had just applied for the Growth Award for the 19th year because they had to be a Tree City USA for two years before being able to apply for the Growth Award. He said they applied for several different categories as has been done in the past and should receive a response soon on the recertification.

B. Planning for 2025 Arbor Day Events

- **Annual Arbor Day Celebration-Schools**

  Mr. Sotnik said they have been in contact with the Principal of Cranbury Elementary School and the Arbor Day celebration will be held there on April 25, 2025, and Ms. Cruz will be working with the school on the planning.

- **Arbor Day Clean Up**

  Mr. Sotnik said he spoke with Mr. Whitehead regarding the Arbor Day clean-up, and it will be held on April 23, 2025, and Mr. Whitehead suggested doing another section of the NRVT that they had not gotten to in the previous cleanup. He said that Mr. Whitehead will begin to contact the various tree companies, and will be working with Mr. Cruz on the planning of the clean-up.

C. Update-Tree Master Plan draft phase

Ms. Cruz said the Tree Master Plan is in the draft phase and will become publicly available in the next few weeks and are in the process of scheduling two to three public presentations and one of them will be held in person at the library. She said once the dates are confirmed they will be posted on the website, and she hopes the members of the committee to join. She said the plan had a lot of substances and Plant Geo did a really good job of giving hard data and communicating it in a way that is digestible for all different stakeholders within the community and the city.

D. Report-Norwalk Tree Alliance updates and activities

Mr. Viteretto said he attended the holiday party for the Norwalk Tree Alliance. He said there is a plan moving forward for the tree farm and Mr. Scherr will provide further details.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting was adjourned at 6:30PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Dilene Byrd