

URBAN FORESTRY COMMISSION
AGENDA-REGULAR MEETING
MARCH 24, 2026, AT 6:00 PM.
BY ZOOM VIRTUAL MEETING

To allow public access, anyone may access a meeting by telephone, Zoom, and/or the City of Norwalk YouTube channel. Specific instructions and links can be found at :

norwalkct.org/meetings



Members of the public can call in and listen to a meeting. They will not be able to speak or see any of the meeting participants. Each meeting will use a unique Meeting/Webinar ID. Please find the information using the link above.



Members of the public who wish to provide "live comments" will need to register in advance and use the Zoom meeting platform. All participants will be muted upon entering the meeting. To speak, click the "raise your hand indicator" and you will be called on by the host of the meeting during the public comment section. Please find the information using the link above.



Members of the public who wish to view the meeting but are not participating can view a live stream on the City of Norwalk YouTube channel. This stream is delayed by approximately 20 seconds. Please find the information using the link above. The meeting recording and minutes will be posted on the City of Norwalk website within seven (7) days after the meeting.



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: Gay MacLeod
 Sonja Oliver
 Amy Verel
 David McGoldrick

Staff: Sarah Cruz, Arborist/ Horticulturalist

1. CALL TO ORDER

Ms. McLeod called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

II. ROLL CALL

Ms. MacLeod called the roll, and all those listed were present. There was a quorum present.

III. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Diane Lauricella- 21 Little Fox Lane

Ms. Lauricella said she is a member of the Norwalk Tree Alliance, but she is not speaking on their behalf. She said she is also a longtime environmental advocate and follows budgets, land-use planning, and the tree canopy situation. The time has come for this city to stop using artificial Christmas trees in both the Wall Street and Washington Street areas and to set aside funds to plant a fast-growing live tree, so that artificial trees are never again used for holiday gatherings. She also suggested a bio-blitz for trees to engage the community, either online or in person, throughout the year, making it exciting and offering prizes, and also engaging high school science students to help put this together.

IV. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE URBAN FORESTRY COMMISSION ON MARCH 3, 2026.

- ** MR. MCGOLDRICK MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS SUBMITTED.
- ** MS. VEREL SECONDED THE MOTION.
- ** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

V. REPORTS

A. Tree Planting Updates: FY 25/26

Ms. Cruz provided an overview of the tree-planting budgets and said there are two capital accounts used for the city's tree-planting program, Public Works and Recreation and Parks. There are currently three grant accounts: the MLK coordinator improvement grants; the GPP account, which began when the SONO Collection was developed as well as a grant from the US Forest Service under the Inflation Reduction Act; and the contract for this grant funding will begin this spring. The MLK corridor grant account has a balance of \$14,000 which needs to be spent by the end of this year, and she thanked Ms. Oliver and Mr. Viteretto for helping to spend a lot of that funding by installing a lot of trees directly on MLK Blvd, and eight tree pits and eight corresponding new trees in the were installed in the spring of 2025, and in the fall installed five new tree pits and trees on Ely Avenue. Those are 13 locations that could not accommodate trees in the past. She

said that with the \$14,000 that is still available, they should be able to plant 15-20 trees in the spring. In the GGP account, which is only to be spent in the SONO area, there is a remaining balance of \$8,000, and the average cost per tree is \$1,100, so eight to 10 trees could be planted. The DPW capital budget has a remaining balance of \$30,000 and can be spent citywide, and can plant 30-50 trees this spring. The contract value for the US Forest Service grant is \$455,000, to be spent by 2029, but only within certain census tracks. She will share a map of the locations at the next meeting.

Ms. MacLeod requested that Ms. Cruz share the budget updates with the committee members via e-mail.

Ms. Cruz said she shared a flyer with the committee about the Green Workforce Development Program and that 100 trees will be planted this spring as part of it. She said that the total tree count for each year will begin to reflect these additional plantings.

B. Spring 2025 Tree Planting

1. Capital City-Wide Streetscape Planting

Ms. Cruz said that the remaining \$30,000 will allow for the planting of 30-50 trees this spring, and she is prioritizing tree requests.

2. Grant-Funded Tree Planting: MLK Corridor, USFS IRA Planting Contract

This was discussed under the tree planting updates.

3. Adopt-a- Tree Requests

Ms. Cruz and Ms. MacLeod provided an overview of the adopt-a-tree program and said the trees can be planted on private property, but must be street-facing to increase the number of trees on private property in areas where there is no place in the right-of-way to plant. Ms. MacLeod said she will give a tutorial for addressing tree requests through the adopt-a-tree program to Ms. Verel and Mr. McGoldrick.

Ms. Cruz said the tree-count goal for the year is 400 to 500 trees and suggested discussing cost-saving ideas at the April meeting, as the contractual plantings average \$1,000 per tree. Ms. MacLeod asked who the new contractor for tree plantings would be. Ms. Cruz said that for the US Forest Service, under the Inflation Reduction Act grant, it was awarded to Oman's Nursery and that Almstead is still the contractor for the capital funding.

4. West Ave.- Medians Adjacent to SONO Collections

Ms. Cruz said that Mr. Viteretto suggested including this item for further discussion at the last meeting. The Tree Advisory Committee had previously discussed adding shrubs or trees to provide additional coverage in the medians adjacent to the SONO Collection. There is funding available through the GGP funds, and if the commission would like to develop a plan for plantings, the engineering and urban forestry team can review it. She said she will add this to next month's agenda for further discussion.

VI. OLD BUSINESS

A. Election of Vice Chair to the Urban Forestry Commission

There was no discussion.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

A. City Projects:

1. Richards Ave. Roundabout: [https://www.norwalkct.gov/3724/Richards-Avenue-West-Cedar-Street -Roundabout](https://www.norwalkct.gov/3724/Richards-Avenue-West-Cedar-Street-Roundabout)

Ms. MacLeod said her concern is the planting plan and its maintenance, and she has the same concern for the roundabout at the SONO School. She said that installing them is a powerful statement and that they should be as attractive and as green as possible. She suggested Mr. Travers be invited to attend the next meeting to address the committee. Ms. Cruz said she has been in contact with TMP, and there is nothing new beyond the design and the information that is on the website. All of the comments regarding the Richards Avenue roundabout have been relayed, and suggested waiting until the landscape plan was released.

2. SONO School Roundabout: <https://www.norwalkct.gov/3776/South-Norwalk-School-Roundabout>

Ms. Cruz said there is now an urban forestry team that is part of the review process for city projects. She has checked with Mr. Sotnik in the engineering department regarding the permitting for any tree work on the SONO School roundabout. Phase I of the project is the berm removal, and TMP is going through the permitting requirements. They have a tree removal and restoration plan in

accordance with the permit. Berm removal is the only part of phase I; phase II will consist of the rest of the project which include plantings.

Mr. McGoldrick asked what the project timetable is. Ms. Cruz said she is not sure when construction will begin, as she believes the project was just awarded. Ms. MacLeod said the selection of the greenery for the Richards Avenue roundabout will be in the spring of 2026.

B. April Events:

1. Arbor Day Celebration at Fox Run Elementary School, Friday, April 24th

Ms. MacLeod provided an overview of the Arbor Day celebrations, noting that they are held on a rotating basis: a tree is selected and planted, and the planting is celebrated.

Ms. Cruz said the tree will be planted in the courtyard at Fox Run Elementary School. She invited all of the committee members to attend.

2. Earth Day on the Green, Saturday, April 25th

Ms. Cruz asked if the commission would like to table at the event. Ms. MacLeod said, “Yes,” volunteered, and asked if any other commission members would like to join her. Mr. Goldrick and Ms. Verel said they would also attend. Ms. Cruz requested that they let her know what materials they would like and what species of seedlings to purchase to giveaway.

3. Discuss Potential Arbor Day Cleanup Event

Ms. Cruz said this would be the third annual Arbory Day Cleanup Event that Richard Whitehead, the previous member of the Tree Advisory Committee, put together, where local tree companies would donate their time and equipment, and volunteer to do some stewardship and maintenance in an area of the city that we normally could not get to. The past few years, it has been along the NRVT. She said she can arrange with DPW and Eversource, but asked whether the commission is still interested in the clean-up event, as the commission would need to reach out to some local tree companies and coordinate. Mr. Goldrick said that he and Ms. Verel will discuss it to determine whether it is feasible this year.

C. Public Outreach and Education:

1. Tree Selection Guide for Adopt-a- Tree Requests

Ms. Cruz shared a draft of the Tree Selection Guide and said the final copy and species list are to be determined.

Ms. MacLeod said she uses the Morton Arboretum and the Stamford Arboretum as reference tools, and the Golden rain tree has been determined to be invasive and is no longer recommended for planting in city schools or parks because it self-seeds. Ms. Verel said she will need to research that, but she does believe she has heard that, and New York City is leaning away from planting it. Ms. Oliver confirmed that it is an invasive tree and that it should be removed.

Ms. Cruz requested that the commission review the Tree Selection Guide and provide any feedback they may have. Ms. MacLeod requested that the cost per tree be included. Ms. Cruz said she will categorize the trees by cost in a separate document.

2. Information Booklet for events

Ms. Cruz said there is currently no formal information booklet, but she thinks it would be great for this commission if they would like to develop one, and she can have them printed and help distribute them. Mr. McGoldrick said there are probably many organizations that have issued booklets like this and suggested coordinating with them so we can disseminate the same kind of information that they would like to disseminate. Ms. Verel said the ISA also has a lot of information, and she is a member, so she will see what they have available.

3. Ideas for Community Engagement

Mr. Goldrick suggested a tree ID program where public trees have a plaque or other identifier, such as a QR code, to raise awareness of the trees around us. Ms. Cruz said she hopes to make the tree inventory publicly available, and the QR code could link to a map in the inventory software to view information about the tree.

V. ADJOURNMENT

**** MS. OLIVER MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**** MS. VEREL SECONDED THE MOTION.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting was unanimously adjourned at 7:02 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Dilene Byrd

