

**TREE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
AGENDA
MAY 27, 2025, AT 6:00 PM.
BY ZOOM VIRTUAL MEETING**

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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: Richard Whitehead, Vice Chair
 Gay MacLeod

Staff: Paul Sotnik, Deputy Tree Warden
 Sarah Cruz, Arborist/ Horticulturalist

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Whitehead called the meeting to order at 6:04 PM.

II. ROLL CALL

Mr. Whitehead called the roll, and all those listed in the attendance were present. There was not a quorum 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 April 22, 2025, Tree Advisory Committee meetings.**

The approval of the minutes was tabled due to a lack of a quorum.

V. OLD BUSINESS

- A. **– Arbor Day Events- Recap**

Mr. Whitehead said that on the Wednesday before Arbor Day, they did a cleanup at 40 Cross Street and got a lot done as usual. The area now looks much better. Mr. Sotnik thanked Mr. Whitehead and all the tree companies that participated in organizing the cleanup. It is a significant financial help to the city and the tree canopy.

Mr. Sotnik said the Arbor Day event at Cranbury Elementary School was a huge success. Ms. Cruz said she received a lot of positive feedback. Another tree was planted, and we are ready to begin planning next year's event.

Mr. Sotnik said the Earth Day event was also held, and the Tree Advisory Committee had a table which Ms. MacLeod staffed. Ms. MacLeod said five people had shown interest in tree plantings in the fall, and she has their contact information. She has already told them she would contact them in the fall to stake the locations. Many Douglas Fir trees were given out, and it was a good event. Mr. Sotnik said he agreed it was a good event considering the weather, and approximately 500 people attended.

– Tree Master Plan- Approved by the Common Council

Mr. Sotnik said the capital budget has been approved. Within that capital budget, \$200,000 was approved for tree plantings, the most we have ever received in one year.

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

Ms. Cruz said the Common Council has fully adopted the Master Plan and will begin the implementation phase over the next year. Through a grant still active by the US Forest Service, we can continue the city’s tree inventory for up to \$25,000 for publicly owned trees, which will begin this June. As long as that funding stays available, we will be able to continue inventorying on top of just over 4,400 trees that were inventoried in 2022-2023 and will serve as an addendum to the Master Plan to provide the type of species and maturity that we have in the urban forest.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

A. Update on the Tree Pits on South Main Street

Mr. Sotnik said he and Ms. Cruz had looked at nine good locations to install tree pits and believed all utilities would be avoided. They also met with TMP staff to be sure they were on board regarding complete streets with the remaining space on the sidewalks. Almstead Tree will be doing the work under their contract and have started it today; two have been completed. Mr. Whitehead asked if flexi-pave would eventually be used instead of mulch. Mr. Sotnik said “Yes” and left space for the mulch that will be removed when the flexi-pave is installed in approximately one year, once they are sure the trees will survive. Mr. Whitehead asked if the flex-pave would be installed back from the root flare to allow growth and diameter. Mr. Sotnik said, “Yes.” Eventually, when it outgrows the flexi-pave, it can be cut back further.

B. Tree Planting Updates- Spring 2025

Ms. MacLeod said she and Ms. Cruz visited Marvin, Ponus, and Kendall School and planted approximately 15 trees between the three schools. She and Ms. Oliver will meet to review the staking locations for the tree planted near her condominium.

Ms. MacLeod said she and Mr. Scheer presented it to the West Norwalk Neighborhood Association and gave an overview of the role of the Tree Advisory Committee. Mr. Scheer provided an overview of what the Norwalk Tree Alliance does, gave the value of trees, and we distributed seedlings.

Ms. Cruz provided updates on the tree planting program and said she would speak to Ms. MacLeod and Ms. Oliver offline to schedule a time to stake the locations for the tree plantings at Madison Gardens and MLK Blvd. The funding for the tree plantings for the spring is tied to the MLK grant, and we are continuing to look for other locations. Two interns and one seasonal worker have joined her team just last week. Even though we are getting to the end of the planting season, there are some locations at Calf Pasture Beach, the Marvin Beach area, and we believe with the budget requirements we should be able to plant the two trees on Flax Hill Road, so she will have an interim confirmation of the locations have been staked. She will send it over to the contractor ASAP.

C. Green Workforce Training Program

Ms. Cruz said last April, in conjunction with Keep America Beautiful, the city had applied for a grant through the Connecticut DEEP with pass-through funding from the federal government. An application was submitted to begin a program called the Green Workforce Training program, not just to try and interest people in tree care, but also green jobs, as getting people to enter this workforce is becoming more challenging. One of the options for eligibility was to create some workforce readiness program, so the city's application proposed to develop an eight-week apprenticeship program for green jobs in urban forestry, tree care, and landscaping. The reason is that those three sectors are not difficult for the average person to enter and don't require high-level certifications or education. However, there are still folks who face a lot of barriers to employment. This program is meant to be an accessible way for anyone to begin paid hands-on training and provide the technical knowledge and some soft skills training. The program is kicking off later this week, and eight trainees will begin this spring for an eight-week program. They hope the community can come together to offer other opportunities for these folks once they complete the program. Mr. Whitehead suggested sharing the program with the Board of Education. Ms. Cruz agreed and said this program is open to anyone 18 years and older, and had 50 people apply in just two weeks, but the mayor's summer youth program is also an excellent pathway for school youth to receive hands-on experience in a paid way. Through this grant from the CTDEEP, the pilot program will be able to go on for two seasons, and we hope this program can continue over the years to come. This Thursday, there will be a community event to kick off the program, although it is not open to the public, and will plant the first trees of many through this program. We will plant up to 120 native trees through this program between this spring and next, and invite anyone from the Tree Advisory Committee or the Tree Alliance to attend the community event to kick off the program.

VII. TREE ALLIANCE REPORT

Mr. Sotnik said that Mr. Scheer had contacted him for possible tree planting locations, and he is working on giving him some locations.

Ms. Cruz said that now two interns are primarily dedicated to this grant, but they will also assist Recreation and Parks in other ways and volunteer. She has started a guide to Tree ID to show folks which trees are available through the Adopt-A-Tree Program, which they will work on over the summer to prepare for the fall.

Ms. MacLeod asked if, when Almstead was watering, they let either Mr. Sotnik or Ms. Cruz know if a tree was dead. Mr. Sotnik said they are supposed to be following up and providing a report, and as part of their current contract, they have to submit a report in the spring and fall. When they find the trees, they are supposed to replace them, but if there are any known locations, he can contact them and strongly recommend replacing them. Ms. MacLeod said there is a tulip tree on Richards Avenue that is dead in the Jewish Memorial Cemetery. She said there are other trees and will send the locations to Ms. Cruz.

Ms. Cruz said that through a grant, the Recreation and Parks Department has finally secured the rental of a watering truck, so if a tree is past the warranty period, we will now have the option to supplemental water. Ms. MacLeod asked if it is only applicable for the water truck to visit those newly planted or if it can help trees planted a few years ago, but in desperate need of water. Ms. Cruz said it will address the gap after the two-year warranty period and do supplemental watering as needed to address the severe drought we have been experiencing over the last few years. Mr. Whitehead asked when the truck would be on the road to start watering so that the committee could target areas where there was a need for supplemental watering. Ms. Cruz said she has a map of every tree that has been planted since 2022, so now that we are past the warranty period, the crew will go out and visit those plantings and, if they are alive, provide the additional watering. She said that 200-gallon bags have also been purchased. Mr. Whitehead, once the truck is mobilized, it would be helpful for the committee to know how many gallons of water can be applied in a day.

Ms. Cruz said young tree training will be performed because of a large gap in the tree maintenance plan. We are reactive to service calls but lack the staffing or resources to do proactive maintenance.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 6:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Dilene Byrd