

**TREE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
AGENDA
OCTOBER 28, 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: Erica Kipp, Chair
Richard Whitehead, Vice Chair
Peter Viteretto
Gay MacLeod
Sonja Oliver

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

Others: Jeff Scherr, Norwalk Tree Alliance

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Whitehead called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

II. ROLL CALL

Mr. Whitehead called the roll, and all those listed were present. There was 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 was no public participation this evening.

IV. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

- A. **Approve the minutes of the September 23, 2025, Tree Advisory Committee meeting.**

**** MS. KIPP MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS AMENDED.**

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

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

V. REPORTS

- A. **Fall 2025/ CY 2025 Tree Planting Program**

Ms. Cruz reported on the fall tree plantings for 2025 and said there are currently 250 locations with a few more pending that Ms. MacLeod is working on. To date, 250 trees have been ordered. In the spring, eight tree pits were installed on South Main Street, and this fall, five tree pits will be installed in the MLK corridor, along on Ely Avenue. There are overhead utilities in the area, so the trees to be planted will be of smaller stature.

Ms. Cruz said there are over 20 tree-planting locations this season, thanks to Ms. MacLeod's hard work, and they are mostly private requests. They have been finding

many barren cul-de-sacs to plant in and are usually able to get large shade trees in them, which is great.

Ms. Cruz said this is the first year they have had seasonal staff available to do some of the fieldwork. Three staff members worked this fall, surveyed over 450 potential tree-planting sites from the inventory and tree requests, and planted 250 locations, so having the additional resources was very helpful. Ms. Kipp asked if any help is needed for the trees that have already been planted. Ms. Cruz said they completed the tree inventory this fall, funded by the Inflation Reduction Act. Seasonal staff had inventoried what was planted last spring, but if we could get any type of internship to inventory what will be planted in the fall, it would be great.

Ms. Cruz reported on the budget update and said that with the MLK corridor grant, there is a balance of \$20,000 to \$30,000, depending on how many of the tree pits work out. The DPW tree-planting capital account was approved for \$200,000, the highest amount ever secured. Out of the \$200,000, there will be a balance of approximately \$30,000 after the fall tree plantings, and she would like to keep that in reserve for spring tree plantings. The Recreation and Parks tree planting account will have a balance of approximately \$20,000 for spring plantings. There is also a GGP account from the SONO Collection with a balance of approximately \$15,000, which should be spent on tree plantings near the SONO Collection. She said funds could be allocated for the tree plantings on the medians that Mr. Viteretto. Mr Viteretto suggested beginning by discussing how to target that, as it is a high-profile area and needs attention. Ms. Oliver agreed and said she would also suggest planting in the medians around the SONO Collection. Mr. Viteretto suggested that Mr. Sotnik send him the aerial photos of the location. Mr. Scherr suggested exploring planting something other than the columnar sweet gum trees, and considering a more canopy-like form for shade. Ms. Cruz suggested larger caliper trees that could accommodate the required clearance.

Ms. Cruz said that for the calendar year 2025, 300 trees will have been planted.

VI. OLD BUSINESS

A. Marvin Beach: Tree Planting

Ms. Cruz said she has been speaking with the neighborhood association in the Marvin Beach area and shared the concerns she heard from them regarding tree planting, especially in that area. The major concerns were waterfront views and how that would affect property values. The primary tree-planting locations have been significantly reduced to address that concern. In addition, power lines were a concern, and we select

smaller-stature trees to ensure safe clearance around the utility wires. A lot of folks also voiced concerns about future root damage to the sidewalks, so smaller-stature trees will be planted, and we'll take great care to match the species to the planting space. A common concern she has received this fall, in particular, is about leaves clogging the storm drains and contributing to flooding, so in her response to the neighborhood association and other residents that DPW does perform street sweeping on a regular basis and will respond to any reports of clogged storm drains but explained that trees help to slow rainfall and can help to create a buffer in some rain events and they also absorb stormwater runoff which is helpful in flood prone areas. Parking and sightlines were also a concern, so she explained that tree plantings are spaced to maintain on-street parking, and that this is the first year young tree pruning could be performed by seasonal staff and hopes to continue to be able to do so.

Ms. Cruz said out of the 50 or more tree planting locations that the consultant doing the tree inventory had suggested, she and her staff identified 30 tree planting locations to be suited for city standards currently and out of those 30 locations after taking into consideration all of the community concerns and feedback, decided to plant at six locations that are primarily on Gregory Blvd. with the understanding that folks are welcome to take part in the adopt-a- tree program for planting in private yards and in the future as other trees start to overly mature or if there are more opportunities that additional trees can be planted.

B. Recap of meeting about roundabout for Richards Avenue and Cedar Street, held at Norwalk Community College on September 30th with Jim Travers, Director of Transportation, Mobility, and Parking.

Ms. MacLeod said the meeting took place on September 30th, and Mr. Travers, the Director of TMP, presented, stating that construction is to begin in the summer of 2027 and will replace aging signals by constructing a single-lane roundabout, including curb ramps and crosswalks. The roundabouts have been proven to reduce injury and fatal accidents and will create a gateway to the West Norwalk area and the community college. The new land will come from the community college property only and will add safety improvements, such as a new pedestrian crosswalk between the campuses, and provide a multi-use path. The sidewalks will be lined with new shrubs and trees, and the center of the roundabout will provide space for greenery. She said one of the questions she had raised was about greenery in the roundabout and along Richard's Avenue and Cedar Street, which seems to have been addressed. She said she requested that Mr. Travers attend a committee meeting so the committee could be involved in selecting the greenery, as well as the concerns about the maintenance, soil composition, and watering. He agreed to attend a committee meeting, and she will reach out to him in January or

February to invite him. She said she would also like to discuss with him a very mature maple tree located on the east campus of the community college to ensure it is protected during the construction of the roundabout. Ms. Kipp said there is information on the meeting on the CT State website.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

A. Outreach and Education: Brochure to hand out to residents who ask for a tree to be planted.

Ms. Cruz said she had a conversation with Ms. MacLeod regarding creating a brochure to hand out to residents for the tree-planting program and on how to care for the tree once it is planted.

Ms. MacLeod said the number one question she gets when she meets with residents is, "Who is going to water the tree?" Even though she assures them that there is a watering in the contract for the next two years, they don't feel comfortable about that guarantee, so the next question they have is how often they should be watering the trees. She thinks it would be better to have a brochure to hand out to residents about caring for trees. Ms. Kipp suggested supplying a gator bag, which would address most of those questions.

Mr. Whitehead said the watering issue comes up time and time again and asked whether issuing gator bags should be incorporated as an option in the new RFP, rather than being mandatory. Mr. Viteretto suggested it is applicable to individual trees and optional for street trees, said people will still need to understand how to water a tree, and that the gator bags would be supplemental. Ms. Cruz said she thinks the gator bags would be helpful for people and would be relatively inexpensive to provide them, so it may not be necessary to put in the contract if they are only going to be provided to private residences, and she does not know if it would be advisable to regulate how the street tree plantings are watered.

VII. NORWALK TREE ALLIANCE UPDATES

Mr. Scherr provided an update on the year's tree count and said they planted 373 trees, a record for them. He reiterated to the committee that if there are any residential location requests that are in backyards, send them to him. He said they have begun to compile the spring planting list, and so far, have approximately 60 locations

Mr. Scherr said that an educational series was held at Fodor Farm's tree farm, featuring four sessions of tree bathing, which were well attended.

Ms. MacLeod said that a city councilperson had reached out to her requesting a tree planting in their backyard, and she had shared the information with Mr. Scherr.

Mr. Sotnik requested that Mr. Scherr begin working on the budget numbers for the tree plantings in fiscal year 2025 for the Tree City USA recertification application.

Ms. Cruz said later this evening, the Common Council will be voting on updates to the tree ordinance that will include updating some definitions and language in accordance with recommendations from the Tree Master Plan, which includes that the Tree Advisory Committee will be renamed the Urban Forestry Commission, new memberships will begin, and the current Tree Advisory Committee will be dissolved. The mayor will thank all members of the Tree Advisory Committee at the Common Council meeting for their involvement. Ms. Cruz also thanked the committee and said it has been a pleasure to work with them.

Mr. Sotnik distributed a letter of recognition from the mayor to the committee members, thanking them for their work over the past 23 years since the committee was formed.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was unanimously adjourned at 6:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Dilene Byrd