



City of Newburyport Tree Commission

Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, 13 January 2021

Zoom meeting

Meeting convened at 6:02 pm.

Tree Commission members present: Constance Preston (Chair), Sheila Taintor (Secretary), Paul Bevilacqua, Scott Hanley, Andrew Soracco, Sue Brown (Treasurer), Jamie Tuccolo (Tree Warden, ex-officio)

Public in attendance: Paul Knowlton, 37 Milk Street

Open time for residents

Paul Knowlton stated that he is attending the Tree Commission meetings to see how best he can help the Commission.

Reports

Secretary

The Commission approved two sets of minutes: Minutes of the September 21, 2020 Meeting as amended, and the Minutes of the November 18, 2020 Meeting.

Treasurer

The December Treasurer's Report was unanimously accepted.

The annualized 2020 financial summary has been completed. This document is important for grant applications.

Tree Warden

There has been a limited number of takes downs, but tree trimming is ongoing.

Since the line item for the Tree Commission was eliminated for FY 21 budget, the Tree Warden has been trying to obtain money through a Free Cash proposal. Connie Preston will check with Ethan Manning, the Finance Director, to verify whether Free Cash needs to be expended in the current fiscal year.

Jen Sullivan, DPS administrative assistant, is on maternity leave. Jamie Tuccolo will be handling the work orders while she is out.

Planting

Spring 21 Planting

The Tree Commission will plant 45 trees using PCI Synthesis funds in addition to 5 community trees donated through FoNT.

Connie Preston has discussed the placement of a memorial tree in honor of former Tree Commissioner Kim Kudym with the Office of Planning and Development, the school administration and DPS. The tree will be planted in front of the high school near Toppans Lane. Her husband's donation will cover the cost of purchasing, planting and watering the tree. There will also be a leaf on the memorial "tree" sculpture on the rail trail. Friends of Kim have also donated a tree (as yet not located) through FoNT's Adopt-A-Tree program which will be planted in the Spring.

Fall 21 Planting

An additional 7 trees will be planted on Housing Authority property in Spring 2021 with the remaining funds from PCI Synthesis. Connie is working with Tracy Watson, the Executive Director of Newburyport Housing Authority, and Peter Bettencourt, HA Maintenance Supervisor, on the placement of those trees. Two tree sites have already been identified at Kelleher Park.

There are currently 43 trees on the community planting list that will be delayed unless more funds are budgeted.

Connie has tried several times to find out what the status of a free cash proposal is but has not yet received any information.

Connie consulted with the Office of Planning and Development on tree placement at 22/24 Oak St.

Grants/Donations

Former Commissioner Jane Niebling, working as a volunteer on grants until we find a commissioner to take over this responsibility, submitted the Tree City USA application in December. Jane has suggested a candidate for the Tree Commission to replace her. This candidate will be invited to attend a meeting before joining the Tree Commission.

The CPC report on the Gateway II project was submitted today.

Jane provided additional information re: grants that the Tree Commission can apply for.

Education

Andrew Soracco has been working with Andy Wulf, the principal of NHS, and Art Currier, the leader of ACES, on setting up an internship for a student who would be supervised by Andrew. This intern might participate in pit clean ups, tree pruning as well as the wood lot.

Connie suggested that Andrew contact David Clay, coach of the Newburyport basketball team, whom she has not been able to reach about involving his athletes in volunteer activities.

Old Business

Tree Warden Report

The Commission discussed the Tree Warden's Report and voted to amend its decision taken at the 11/18/20 meeting. The Tree Warden will submit two reports: an initial report in March for the Preliminary Annual Report to be distributed to the Tree Commission for the April meeting as well as a final report in July for the final FY Annual Report. The report will include (a) the number of trees removed (b) the species (c) the address, and (d) the last recorded DBH (with date). This information will be submitted to the Tree Commission in the form of a spreadsheet.

New Business

2021 Tree Commission meetings

The Tree Commission will meet on the second Thursday of the month during 2021.

Annual Tree Commission Calendar

Discussion of the Annual Tree Commission Calendar was postponed until our next meeting.

Tree Commission position descriptions

Paul Bevilacqua presented position descriptions that he had initially developed at the request of former Chair Cris Miller, but which had never been discussed before. After discussion they were accepted as a guide to understand the responsibilities of the various Tree Commission leadership positions. The document was unanimously approved and accepted by the Commission with the understanding that it could be easily amended at any meeting.

Election of 2021 Officers

The Tree Commission unanimously elected Connie Preston as the Chair and Sheila Taintor as the Vice Chair for 2021. Sue Brown was elected Treasurer and Sheila Taintor will continue to be the Secretary.

The meeting adjourned at 7:15 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Sheila Taintor, Secretary

Next meeting via Zoom: Thursday, February 11, 2021 at 6 PM