



## *City of Newburyport Tree Commission*

### Meeting Minutes

Thursday, Aug. 18, 2022, 6:00 pm

The meeting convened at 6:02 pm.

**Tree Commission members present:** Sheila Taintor (Chair), Paul Knowlton (Vice-Chair), Marcia Edson (Secretary), Marilyn Cohodas, Scott Hanley, Paul Harrington (Alternate), Jamie Tuccolo (Tree Warden, ex-officio)

**Absent:** Sue Brown

### Reports

#### **Tree Warden**

1. Pruning – Due to the drought, trees are not being pruned this summer.
2. EAB update – Jamie reported that no more trees have been taken down, but other pests are emerging.
3. 5 Pond St. – Jamie is concerned that the tree looks very settled in and moving it would be risky. He offered an alternative, pruning the tree to avoid utility wires. Paul Knowlton will meet with Jamie at the site next week to ascertain next steps.
4. Resident problem with tree roots obstructing sewer line – Jamie gave a detailed explanation of the problem that exists at this residence. He did not provide the address, but said they are experiencing repeated backups and because of the location of the main, rerouting the sewer line would be an exorbitant cost. Jamie felt that for now it makes sense to wait and see what the owners decide. He agreed with Paul Harrington's suggestions that the residents replace their sewer pipe and trim the roots of the tree. This would allow us to see how the tree reacts, rather than cutting it down now.
5. 61 State St. – Jamie apologized and stated he “dropped the ball” on his conversations with the bank. He stated that in the future, he will try to improve communication by emailing commissioners about any visible tree issues. These emails would be for informational purposes, not for discussion through email.
6. Community meeting – Jamie said that he will be setting up a community meeting soon to share information with the public about tree planting and removal policies.

#### **Secretary**

Sheila asked if there were any changes or additions to the minutes of the July 14, 2022, meeting. Marilyn Cohodas moved to accept; Paul Knowlton seconded. Votes to approve: Sheila, Marilyn, Paul Knowlton, Scott Hanley, Marcia Edson. Paul Harrington abstained. Motion passed; minutes approved.

## **Treasurer**

Sheila shared a screenshot of the financial report that indicates an uncommitted balance of \$8,087.05. Sheila reported that there has been a problem with overdue vendor payments. Plants and Pleasantrees and Coastal Landscaping have not been paid. Sheila expressed concern and has notified Jen Sullivan and copied Jamie. Paul Harrington suggested calling the Treasurer's office to find out the cut off date for invoice submissions. Sheila will follow up on that.

Sheila also raised the issue of budget constraints given the need for additional waterings due to drought conditions. This may mean planning for additional watering next year, which would impact the budget for purchasing trees. The discussion included suggestions for spot checking bags to make sure they are being filled completely. Scott will do that once Sheila provides him with the watering schedule.

There was an extended discussion around how to improve watering, perhaps purchasing the larger Gator bags that are more durable, hold an additional 5 gallons of water.

## **Fall 2022 Planting**

There are currently 31 trees, including requests, on the list to be planted this fall. Sheila and Marcia reviewed requests in the south end and found 4 that did not comply with regulations. Paul Knowlton asked for clarification on whether these regulations can be adjusted. He cited several plantings throughout the south end which are not 10 feet from a utility and yet were okayed by Dig Safe. These restrictions severely limit the placement of trees in the south end because of the narrow streets and sidewalks.

Paul Harrington mentioned Dig Safe and that a 10 ft. boundary from gas lines is a universal code. Sheila suggested that we take photos when we come across plantings that do not comply with the regulations. Sheila will check into the regulations to clarify these differences.

## **Tree Commission meeting schedule**

The commissioners and Jamie agreed that going forward, meetings will be held at DPS offices on Perry Way, at 6:00 pm, on the 2nd Thursday of each month. Jamie understood the meetings need to be hybrid. Sheila will check with Richard Jones.

Paul Knowlton mentioned that the commission is only required to hold 10 meetings a year. After some discussion, a motion was made by Marilyn to meet for 10 months, with no meetings in July and December. Second by Paul Harrington, unanimous vote to approve.

## **Standards for planting trees and building tree pits**

Sheila brought up some interesting points about the size of tree pits and other ways to plant trees. She shared shots from Cambridge where pits are longer and narrower, allowing more space for water to drain and roots to grow. Trees were planted with stakes on either side of the trunk and Gator bags attached to each trunk, providing more stability and more water. In the discussion, there was support for these innovations, but concern about expense. Paul Harrington and Sheila will work together to do a pit study.

## **Emerald Ash Borer**

Sheila will be submitting information to Dave Rogers for an upcoming article in the Daily News.

## **New Business**

### **Meeting with Mayor Reardon**

Marcia reported that Mayor Reardon asked Sheila to meet with him on Aug. 16. Also in attendance were Andrew Levine, Jamie, Connie Preston, and Marcia. The Mayor's stated purpose was to clear the air regarding misinformation about the removal of trees in front of the Bank. Jamie explained it was his decision to take down the 5 trees based on communication with the Bank since Jan. 21, 2022. He cited an incident where a patron tripped and almost fell into the plate glass doors. Sheila inquired about the lighting project that Jamie mentioned when he talked about the tree removals at our July meeting. Regarding the plantings, Jamie agreed it was the Tree Commission's role to advise on replacement trees, but in this case he relied on the Arborist's recommendation for the Japanese lilacs that were planted. Connie agreed this was an appropriate tree, but Sheila reminded them it is not a shade tree. Much of the discussion centered around lack of communication between DPS and the Tree Commission. Jamie agreed to send emails to the commissioners to alert them about developing tree problems that would then be discussed at Tree Commission meetings. Marcia also suggested that Jamie's presence at the Tree Commission meetings would be helpful. Andrew concurred that more frequent communication from DPS to the Tree Commission is the way forward.

Motion to adjourn by Paul Harrington, seconded, by Paul Knowlton. Unanimous vote to adjourn.

**Next meeting:** Thursday, September 8, 2022, at 6:00 pm at DPS offices, 16 Perry Way.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Marcia Edson, Secretary