

Newburyport Tree Commission

Minutes May 8, 2014

Children's Activity Room, Newburyport Public Library

Meeting Convened at 7:03 PM

Members present: E. Taylor (Chair) (**ET**), P Bevilacqua (Secretary) (**PB**), S. Taintor (**ST**); P. Harrington (Vice Chair and Treasurer) (**PH**), Crispin Miller (**CM**); A. Lafferty, Tree Warden and Deputy Director of the Department of Public Services, ex-officio (**AL**)

Absent: D. Dylewski (**DD**), Byron Getchell (**BG**)

Report of the Secretary

The Minutes of the April 10 meeting were reviewed and unanimously approved.

Report of the Treasurer

The Treasurer inadvertently did not bring a written copy of the report to the meeting. He reported no new funds had been received and only one expenditure of slightly over \$100 had been requested.

Tree Warden's Report

AL reported that there have been 20 removals since January 1, 2014. He explained that the final decisions relative to a tree removal are made by him, based upon a review individually, or in combination, by the designated Commission member **DD**, **AL**, and Tom Brann, the DPS tree specialist, who removes the trees which are scheduled by **AL** according to Tom's available time and resources.

AL agreed to provide the Commission a monthly list of the proposed and completed removals.

The number of trees to be planted on Merrill Street will likely be 4/5. The species and number have not been finalized. The Commissioners reminded **AL** that members want to be present to oversee the planting.

AL confirmed that he had received a list of 20 planting sites. He was not able to provide an update on the planting schedule as he has not had an opportunity to confer with **DD** to clarify some of the questions that he had about the sites. Funds are available to purchase the trees as the Commission had previously authorized \$4,800 for that purpose from the Revolving Fund. **AL** was reminded that **DD** and other members of the Commission, as agreed, plan to be present to supervise the planting of the trees. **AL** has indicated that he will designate the Commissioners as agents of the City in carrying out the supervision.

Sub-Committee Reports

- **Planting and Pruning**

Six members of the Commission participated in the Arbor Day tree pruning of several street trees. The pruning, trimming, and stake pulling was completed by three teams of Commissioners, as well as by Valley Tree Services, along with Jean Berger and Mark Delaney, both of whom are Massachusetts Certified Arborists, from the Green Jeans Design Company.

In the future, if the Commission notifies **AL** as to when members will be pruning, he will arrange to have the cuttings picked up by his staff, and/or he will notify the City tree disposal facility staff that the materials will be disposed of by Commissioners for the City on those days.

The teams concentrated on the South and North Ends, pruning the smaller trees of the City's canopy and looking for dead and crossing branches; on the smaller side streets the focus was on sidewalk and street clearance. The alley along the High Street mall (in front of the Superior Court House) were fully pruned by Valley Tree. The trees on Green Street alongside City Hall were pruned.

DD had previously confirmed that a substantial number of sites had been identified. **DD** was not been able to provide an update on the planting schedule as he was not present. Relative to this, **AL** confirmed that he had received a list the sites from **DD**. **AL** indicated that he had questions about the list and that he would be in contact with **DD** to address them.

At the April meeting **DD** had reiterated that he was confident that there are appropriate locations for the trees that will be purchased with the \$4,800 authorized from the Revolving Fund. Commissioners confirmed that they plan to be present to supervise the planting of the trees. **AL** indicated that he will notify Commissioners of the planting schedule once it is confirmed, and that he will designate the Commissioners as agents of the City in carrying out the supervision.

- **Green Street Planting**

It appears that the Commission will receive funds from the CPC to plant the remaining Green Street trees, a total of 29. **AL** confirmed that the City will cut hard surfaces (concrete, blacktop) in preparation for digging the pits for the trees to be planted on Green Street. The number of trees planted at this time will depend upon the timing of the works completion.

OLD BUSINESS

- **DD** was not present to report on the number of requests for tree evaluations since the last meeting on March 13.
- Revolving Fund Memo of Understanding (MOU) has been agreed to by **AL** and signed by **ET**. It has been sent to the Mayor for her review and signature. Once received from the Mayor's Office **AL** will sign. At previous meetings there has been substantial discussion resulting in a consensus as to the purposes and process by which those funds may be spent. .

FY 15 Budget Update

No action was reported to date. This is in the hands of the Mayor and the Council.

- **Contracts for Tree Care for April-June/July-November**

At the April 10 meeting the Commission voted unanimously to award the contract to Classic Companies. The work will be funded by the balance of the 2009 CPA grant for that purpose and, as needed, by other sources to be identified.

At this time the contract will not include the approximately 23 trees that the City planted in the Green Street parking lot because there has not been a response from the Planning Department to

the Commission's request that the Planning Department provide a funding source to pay for watering these trees. As noted these trees were not planted by the Commission. Additional funds are required in order for the Commission to accept responsibility for caring for these trees.

The approved contract will not exceed \$4,500 for trees planted by the Commission in 2012 and 2013. The total amount of the tree care contract will not be finalized until the total number of trees involved is finalized. **PH** will contact Jeff to conclude the contract, with or without the Green Street parking lot trees, ASAP. Consistent with past practice, the contract will be for services. It will not be based upon a per unit payment schedule.

NEW BUSINESS

- **Proposed Annual Calendar of Activities**

PH took the initiative to suggest annual calendar of activities. The proposal will be discussed at the June meeting.

- **Parks Department request to the water wagon/pump**

Lise Reid of the Parks Department has requested use of the Commission's water wagon for three days each week from May-November to water the various Rail Trail plantings. The consensus of the Commission was that it wanted to be able to make the water wagon available and to cooperate with the Parks Commission. The concern was the additional wear and tear on a vital piece of equipment.

The Commission unanimously agreed to allow the Parks Department to use it, with the conditions being that a schedule of use must be agreed upon that allows the Tree Commission to complete the watering in a timely manner, and that there will be a sharing of any costs of repair and/or replacement with the Parks Department, as no other entities use the water wagon which is housed at the DPS site.

- **DPS help in removing concrete and blacktop from planting sites**

AL agreed that his staff will continue to remove concrete and blacktop from planting sites on a scheduled basis, but generally they will not dig the holes to plant the trees.

- **Community Relations**

Consideration of this item was requested by **BG**. Discussion was delayed until the June meeting as he was not present. There was a consensus that the DPS and the Commission must continuously make every effort to keep the public informed, especially when removals and plantings are involved. **AI** explained that knowing exactly when trees will be removed is difficult because scheduling is dependent upon weather and competing resource needs.

The meeting adjourned at 8:47 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Paul M. Bevilacqua, Secretary

Next meeting: Thursday June 10, 2014 at 7 PM

Location: Children's Activity Room, Newburyport Public Library