**Newburyport Tree Commission**

**Minutes March 12, 2015**

**Newburyport Tree Commission**

**Children’s Activity Room, Newburyport Public Library**

**Meeting Convened at 7:05 PM.**

**Tree Commissioners (TC) present:** Paul Bevilacqua (Secretary) **(PB)**, Crispin Miller **(**Chair**)(CM)**, David Dylewski **(DD**), Byron Getchell **(BG),** Sheila Taintor **(ST)**,Wayne Amaral, Tree Warden and Director of the Department of Public Services, ex-officio **(WA)**

**Members Absent:** Ed Taylor **(ET)**, Paul Harrington (Vice Chair and Treasurer) **(PH**)

**Others Present**: J. Esche, J. Niebling, Wilbur Shenk **(WS)**, Newburyport Waterfront Trust **(NWT)**

**Open time For Residents**

Wilbur Shenk representing the **NWT** appeared before the Commission to request support for a project proposal which the **NWT** hopes to initiate in the next month with the goal of improving the park area for use by residents and visitors. The project would involve both substantial pruning as well as removal of several public trees. The **TC** expressed concern about the number of trees to be removed and the lack of consideration for replacement trees. Members of the **TC** agreed to do a site review of the area on Tuesday evening March 17, and to make a recommendation for action to the Tree Warden. The recommendation may include the removal of fewer trees and the replacement of all or some, preferably with taller trees, either on the site or at another site.

**Report of the Secretary**

The Minutes of the February 12 meeting were reviewed and approved 4 in favor and 1 abstention. **ST** abstained as she was not present at the February meeting.

**Report of the Treasurer**

The report was submitted in abbreviated form by **PH**, Treasurer, was not present. The report was unanimously approved.

**Report on the Emerald Ash Borer**

Jeff Esche reported briefly relative to the Emerald Ash Borer as it relates to Newburyport.

The Emerald Ash Borer invasion is described as an “invasion wave”, beetles hatched about early June fly about 2 miles or are transported by human agency to a new location, feed high in the canopy, causing foliage defoliation, lay eggs within the bark, the hatched larvae or instars feed in the cambium layer essentially destroying the ability of the tree to circulate, hatching in the next year, the new beetles complete the defoliation of the lower canopy and move on.

The Emerald Ash Borer (EAB), an invasive insect from Asia, has since the year 2000 killed 10s of millions of American native species Ash Trees. Probably transported by accidental human agency it has spread through 22 states and 3-4 Canadian provinces. It threatens extinction of the ash species. Infestations have been discovered in MA including North Andover & Haverhill.

Affected trees die within two years, leaving a very brittle dead tree that collapses “catastrophically” in large, dangerous pieces within three years. Removal costs of these trees are very high given the heightened precautions necessary to safely remove the dead trees and many affected municipalities have faced budget-busting removal costs.

Prevention by chemical injection is reported to be 95% effective in the numerous communities choosing that as adoption.

NUFA carried out an all streets Newburyport survey identifying about 130 trees as being in the public way and shared this survey with Tree Warden Amaral late last fall, and to the Tree Commission by email to members.

With EAB in Haverhill we are coming up on the “danger radius” of 15 miles in which proactive treatment should be started.

NUFA will actively advocate that the city review the survey, determine if the few Ash trees in poor or fair condition be removed proactively and the rest of the population be preventively treated.

“As an urban forest tree the Ash is a good choice, few disease issues, little conflict with sidewalks, little flower or seed litter. The Ash’s early autumn display of clear yellow foliage ushers in the autumn season”.

The **TC** will take Jeff’s information under consideration and make a recommendation to the Tree Warden.

**Report of the Tree Warden**

1. Future roadway / sidewalk construction streets.

Due to the snowy winter, no schedule has been established yet.

1. Tree Warden Summary for 2015.

0 trees have been reviewed by the Tree Warden

0 High Hazard trees have been removed.

0 Non-High Hazard trees have been removed.

1. Green Street reconstruction.

May be putting street out to bid for design. DPS will be meeting with consultant over the next few weeks to discuss and prepare standard sidewalk specifications, which will include tree pit details.

1. Working on ordering vests.

**Sub-Committee Reports**

**Education:**

**ST** noted that for various reasons she has not been able to reach the appropriate school staff to continue the planning for the program. She will continue her efforts with the hope of reporting at the April meeting.

**Planting and Pruning**

**DD** led a multi-part report by members of the Committee.

**Spring 2015 Planting**

**BG** reported on the planting of 10 trees for the Spring 2015. **WA** confirmed City support for the planting in cutting out the sidewalk for the pits to be dug and the trees planted. **DD** will work with **WA** to confirm sites for Dig Safe to be completed. The projected planting will occur in May.

**Street Tree Inventory Management**

**CM** reported thatit appears that hisprojection that the remaining trees would be inventoried by the end of the winter will not be achieved as the trees to be inventoried are buried under the snow. The project will resume and be completed as soon as conditions allow.

**Green Street Planting**

**DD** There has been no change since the February meeting. **TC** portion of the project is funded and ready for implementation.

**Pruning**

**DD** confirmed the annual TC pruning and activities to be held on April 18 and 25.

**Calendar Review**

As agreed at the February meeting **CM** maintains the Calendar and will submit it for review at each scheduled meeting. **CM** made suggested changes in the document and asked for further input from Commissioners. There was agreement with the direction that the planning document is taking.

**OLD BUSINESS**

**Update: FY 15 Free Cash Proposal for Spring 2015 Planting**

To the best of **WA** and **CM’s** knowledge there has been no action on this to date. Given the costs incurred by the City due to the impact of the snow and cold, it is questionable whether funds will be available.

**Update: FY 16 Budget Process**

No new action to date.

**Adopt-A**-**Tree Program**

**BG** said that he is still involved in developing the proposal. He will report further in the future. The members encouraged him to do so. The item will be placed on the agenda in the future at the initiation of **BG.**

**NEW BUSINESS**

**CPA Grant Application/Proposal-Historic Trees Restoration Phase II**

The CPA grant proposal has been submitted requesting $13,532 to purchase and plant in the Fall of 2015, 15 trees of no less than 1 ½” in diameter in residential neighborhoods. The **CM** and **DD** will attend the CPA meeting on 3/24 to answer questions about out proposal.

**City Tree Nursery**

**ST** briefly described the history of the **TC** Tree Nursery. Given recent experience she recommended that the effort be deferred to the future when the Commission can give it more time and resources.

**Update: Tree Watering**

An individual has been identified who may be willing and able to do the tree watering/tree care of tree this year. He will be hired as a summer DPS employee. **PB** has agreed to monitor this activity. **PB** and **CM** will meet with **WA** and then the individual involved to work out the details of the arrangement.

The meeting adjourned at 8:43 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Paul M. Bevilacqua, Secretary

Next meeting: Thursday April 16, 2015 at 7 PM

Location: Children’s Activity Room, Newburyport Public Library