

Newburyport Annual Report FY 2020

July 1, 2019 - June 30, 2020

Mission

The mission of the Newburyport Tree Commission as stated in in the Newburyport Code of Ordinances: Chapter 12: Streets, Sidewalks and Other Public Places, Article VI: Protection of Public Trees, Section 12-172 is to select, plant, protect, maintain, plan for and increase the health, beauty, quantity, diversity, and vitality of Newburyport trees.

Organization

The Tree Commission is a volunteer group whose members are appointed by the Mayor with the approval of the City Council. The Commission consists of seven (7) voting members, plus two (2) alternates, not including the Tree Warden or his designees who serve as ex-officio members of the Commission.

Responsibilities

Advise the Tree Warden and other City officials with respect to the adoption and amendment of plans, programs and regulations pertaining to the protection of Public Trees in the City, including the City Tree Plan and Tree Regulations;

Monitor the health and protection of Public Trees, creating and updating inventories of such trees;

Identify issues relative to the health and protection of Public Trees and recommending solutions to problems identified;

Advise the Tree Warden and other City officials with respect to the planting and replacement of Public Trees and on tree-related issues;

Seek grants and conducting fundraising to assist the Commission's mission, such funds to be deposited into the Tree Fund;

Promote knowledge and awareness of the benefits of trees and their impact on the quality of life in Newburyport;

Actively design, select, plant and maintain the tree ecology of Newburyport in coordination with the Tree Warden and the City Tree Plan.

Fiscal Year 2020 Activities:

In furtherance of this mission the Commission, holds meetings, conducts projects, plans and implements activities during the year, either alone or in collaboration with the Tree Warden and Assistant Tree Warden. These projects and activities included:

- Purchased and planted 48 trees in the Fall 2019 and 61 in Spring 2020. They were planted in selected locations as part of the plan to replace the 41 trees which were removed in this period throughout the City's neighborhoods. The locations were selected by the Tree Commission in collaboration with the Assistant Tree Warden and suggestions from the general public.
- Watered and maintained tree pits for 275 trees in Summer 2019 and 197 trees in Spring 2020. This included a collaboration with the Planning Dept where the TC watered 17 trees at the new parking garage in Summer 2019 and were reimbursed for the costs. The maintenance of those trees was transferred to Parks for the 2020 growing season.
- The *High Street Project* saw the planting of 6 trees in Spring 2020. This is an on-going project with an additional 37 sites planned which extend from Atkinson Commons to the Newbury town line.
- The *Merrimac Street Project* saw 12 trees planted in Fall 2019.
- Provided on-going support for and advice to the Assistant Tree Warden relative to hazard trees, proposed tree action, and related issues.
- The Assistant Tree Warden actively uses the Inventory as a management tool. New trees are inventoried at planting and removed trees/trunks/stumps are noted in the system when action is taken. A system is in place to update existing trees on a 5-year basis.
- Maintained, in collaboration with the Tree Warden, a Tree Plan including: Tree Regulations, A Guide for the Protection of Public Trees and the related Checklist, the Tree Inventory Data Elements, and lists of both Acceptable ("approved") and Unacceptable ("prohibited") Trees for planting street trees in Newburyport.
- The Tree Commission's Annual Spring Pruning and Mulching, scheduled for April 25 and May 2, were not held this year due to the pandemic. The Tree Commission hopes to prune and mulch the newly planted street trees on a rolling basis once the quarantine is lifted.
- Continued to raise supplementary funds for the purchase and care of trees in collaboration with other public, private, and nonprofit groups. Funding from grants paid for over 50% of our annual expenditures in FY 2020.
- Requested and received funds from several sources:
 - City of Newburyport Trusts: Bromfield Fund, \$12,000 and Cutter Fund, \$6,000;
 - Institution for Savings, \$650 for a Recognition Tree leaf;
 - Newburyport Bank, \$650 for a Recognition Tree leaf;
 - Community Preservation Committee, \$13,000

- Through a collaboration with the Mayor's office, the TC was able to secure \$40,732 from PCI Synthesis which is a company in the Newburyport Business Park. PCI was required to pay a fine to the EPA due to a violation but was able to donate the cost of the fine to the City. We worked closely with PCI management to satisfy the EPA that the funds would be spent as outlined in their guidelines. The TC planted 26 trees in the Newburyport Business Park and several low income housing units (a subset of the 61 total trees) around the City with these funds and anticipates planting an additional 25 trees in Environmental Justice Areas in FY 2021. The TC generates reports for PCI Synthesis to submit to the EPA.
- In recognition of their 200th anniversary, the Institution for Savings generously donated 15 beautiful trees to the City in Spring 2020 and the TC managed and paid for the planting of the trees. The TC will continue to maintain the trees by watering them for 2 growing seasons.
- Continued to actively seek increased support for the Adopt-a-Tree Program (22 to date) and other related projects in public/private partnerships with the non-profit Friends of Newburyport Trees (FoNT).
- Received Tree City Award designation from the Arbor Day Foundation and Mass DCR.
- With the approval of the Tree Warden the Tree Commission supported the limited tapping of street maple trees as an educational project by 4-8 grade students at the River Valley Charter School (RVCS). Additionally, it authorized the RVCS faculty's use of the Tree Inventory to plan educational activities.
- Once again fifth graders at the RVCS and Molin participated in the MA DCR Annual Arbor Day Poster Contest. Schools across the Commonwealth may participate in this contest, each selecting one poster to submit. Students in all 7 fifth grade classrooms at the Molin Upper Elementary School attended one of 3 Tree Commission presentations explaining the contest and this year's theme, and subsequently created their own posters. Each class then judged the posters in another fifth grade classroom, selecting two posters. There were a total of 15 finalist posters chosen since one class had 2 posters tied for 2nd place! Everyone in the Molin community – students and adults – then voted to select the poster that would be sent to MA DCR as the Molin entry. Fortunately the winning school entries from both RVCS and Molin were mailed just before schools closed due to the pandemic. First place was awarded to Emma Burkhardt, at the Molin. Her prize includes a certificate for art supplies, tee-shirts and a tote with her poster printed on it, and a tree valued at \$200 to be planted at the Molin. The Awards Ceremony will occur later due to social distancing.
- The 56-page [Guide to Newburyport Trees](#), first published in FY 2019, is in its 5th printing and continues to generate revenue for the Tree Commission.
- Sixty-five [Guide to Newburyport Trees](#) were donated to teachers at the River Valley Charter, Bresnahan, Nock, Molin Schools as well as the Newburyport High School.
- An expenditure of \$828 was made to purchase additional/replacement watering bags.

- Due to Corvid 19, the festivities celebrating Arbor Day 2020 planned by the Tree Commission and Friends of Newburyport Trees (FoNT) had to be cancelled.
- “Tree Talks” were given by Cris Miller and former TC member Jean Berger to 50 people at a monthly Greater Newburyport Village meeting, 30 people at the Rotary Club of Newburyport and 45 people at a reception at the Estey Gallery.
- Tree Commissioners continue to educate the public about issues related to trees with a monthly “Tree Talk” column in the Daily News. This past year former Tree Commissioner Jane Niebling wrote the following articles: Edible Avenue Open for Business (8/26/19), Friends of Newburyport Trees Keeps Things Growing (9/9/19), The Realm of Elms (11/22/19), A Few Words about Trees (2/24/20) and Arbor Day is Still Growing (4/30/20).

Summary

As in the past, the Tree Commissioners are committed to continuing their volunteer efforts to meet their assigned mission and responsibilities and to build upon their accomplishments to date in spite of the current difficulties imposed by the COVID-19 emergency. The Commissioners would welcome an opportunity to meet with appropriate officials to discuss the work of the Commission.

Respectfully Submitted,

Newburyport Tree Commission

Constance Preston, Chair

Scott Hanley

Crispin Miller, Vice Chair & Treasurer

Andrew Soracco

Sheila Taintor, Secretary

Paul Harrington, Alternate

Paul Bevilacqua

Janet Morris, Alternate.

Sue Brown

Jamie Tuccolo, Tree Warden, ex officio

Lance Rickard, Assistant Tree Warden & Tree Warden Designee, ex officio