



City of Newburyport Tree Commission

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, 8 July 2021

Zoom meeting

Meeting convened at 6:06 pm.

Tree Commission members present:

Constance Preston (Chair & Treasurer), Sheila Taintor (Vice-Chair & Secretary), Paul Bevilacqua, Andrew Soracco, Sue Brown, Scott Hanley, Paul Harrington (alternate), Jamie Tuccolo (Tree Warden, ex-officio)

Public in attendance: Paul Knowlton, 37 Middle Street

Reports

Secretary

The Commission approved the minutes of the March 11, 2021 Meeting, which was the previous time the Tree Commission met.

Treasurer

The Commission discussed the June Treasurer's Report, reflecting the end of fiscal year.

Tree Warden comments

The Tree Warden reported that he is in the process of switching to a new work order system which eventually will become public.

His current focus is on removing stumps which were left in the ground in previous years generally down to 3" below ground level. The removal effort is at a rate of about 7 per week (since they need to be dig-safed). There are some 98 stumps to be ground. The grinding is done by an outside vendor. Once caught up, DPS will call in the outside vendor when there are ~10 stumps to be ground.

The Final Tree Warden Report to the Tree Commission will be submitted no later than the coming Monday. There was a discussion about setting up a subcommittee to analyze the tree removals in the Final Tree Warden Report. The Tree Warden and the Chair felt there was no need for such a subcommittee since the City Arborist is aware of all trends.

Paul Bevilacqua asked if the documents which the Tree Commission had prepared around the street tree removal process were posted on the Tree Commission webpage. Sheila Taintor said only one of the three documents is posted. Tree Warden Jamie Tuccolo asked her to send him the other documents for posting and he would post them.

2021 planting

The indented material in these minutes is from updates from prior months when we did not meet. It was not discussed at the 7/8 meeting but is updates from May through July.

The Spring planting was done in May and June. A total of 74 trees were planted; 45 trees utilizing the funds from PCI synthesis, 23 community trees and an additional 6 trees for the Safe Routes to School (SRTS) project for the Dept. of Planning and Development.

PCI Synthesis funds will pay for the purchase and planting costs for 38 trees at the Industrial Park and 7 at Housing Authority properties (6 at Kelleher Park and 1 at Horton Terr) as well as the watering of these trees and the trees planted last year with PCI funds for the remainder of the year. Connie Preston recently gave a budget update to PCI Synthesis so they can compile a report to the EPA. We are currently on track to have surplus funds of \$1,358. Bill Anderson from PCI confirmed that the TC can utilize those funds for further waterings.

The SRTS trees were purchased, planted and will be watered utilizing funds from the Planning Dept.

All of the new trees were inspected, bagged, mulched, staked (where necessary) and added to the tree inventory by Cris Miller and Dave Dylewski.

Watering began on May 26 with 207 trees on the watering list. The TC decides by Wed each week if we are canceling the watering due to rainfall. Coastal Landscaping waters the trees on Thu & Fri (it takes more than 1 day) each week and will notify the Chair if there are any changes. Our monthly cost is \$6,432.

The City Council approved a \$9,500 donation from FoNT at their April 26 meeting. These funds and existing funds from CPA will pay to water the newly planted trees as well as community trees planted last year.

The Tree Commission was granted a \$20,000 line item for FY 2022, which started July 1 which allows us to purchase, plant and water 33 trees. There are 40 trees on our waiting list and additional money in Revolving Fund to plant additional 7 trees and save money for watering trees planted in the previous 2 years. There are currently 201 trees on the watering list for the remainder of the growing season. That will drop to 126 in Spring 2022 including the 20 trees to be planted in Spring.

The Spring Street project organized by residents Keith Eddings and Jack Santos raised \$2,500 from residents to purchase 10 trees to be planted in the Fall. The donations are currently with FoNT. An article describing the project appeared in the Daily News on June 21.

Tree Commission Consulting on Developments for the Dept. of Planning and Development

Connie Preston consulted on development projects at: 60 Liberty St, 490 Merrimac Street, 14 Highland Street and 150 Merrimac Street in May; 3 Parker St, 22/24 Auburn Street, 192 Low Street and 32 Forrester Street in June; and most recently, a development project at 86-88 Prospect Street.

Violation notifications with associated fines (\$300) were sent to the following residents: 3 Chatigny, 33/35 Bromfield St, 9 Chestnut St, 6 Bayberry Rd for removal and/or illegally pruning of City trees without permission of the Tree Warden or City Arborist. The fines are payable to FoNT.

Grants/Donations

The Commission discussed the need to recruit a Commissioner to be able to write grants for the Tree Commission.

Paul Bevilacqua suggested we may want to consider paying a grant writer, if we do not find a Commissioner who will take on this responsibility, but said we need to doublecheck to make sure we can first. Connie Preston offered to reach out to Jane Niebling to see if she is interested.

Our most regular grantors are the CPC, the Bromfield Trust, the Morrill and Cutter Funds. Connie Preston reminded the Commission that CPC funds may be difficult to access going forward, since a recently appointed member of the CPC does not believe CPC funds should be used for trees.

Connie had contacted the Mayor's office earlier to ask that they publish requests for new Tree Commission members on the various City social media accounts as well as in the Daily News but has heard nothing back. She will follow up with the Mayor's office.

Connie will check with FoNT to see how much money is still in their account.

Education

Andrew Soracco reported that he is working with ACES to post our interest in having a student intern join the Tree Commission.

Connie Preston discussed having an intern work on labels for the trees at Atkinson Common, similar to the tree placards at the Indian Hill Reservoir (description of the tree, its English and Latin name, a picture of its leaf) in a separate conversation with Art Currier, the spokesperson of ACES (Alliance of Climate and Environmental Stewards).

Andrew mentioned thinking about how to involve more people in planting and caring for our trees and feels students may be an inroad.

Old Business

Annual Tree Commission Calendar

Brief discussion about 2 tabs on calendar document. There is a consolidated calendar with all activities, separate tab which is a subset focused on planning. Connie stressed the need to spread activities among Commissioners. Sheila expressed an interest in getting involved in the fall planning to help with transition.

New Business

Recruitment of New Tree Commission members

Currently we have 6 Commissioners and 1 alternate, so we are down 1 Commissioner and 1 alternate.

Our process includes inviting interested parties to attend Tree Commission meeting. Connie Preston feels that our current priorities are for Grant writing and Outreach (Tree Talks columns). Paul Bevilacqua mentioned the need for an arborist as well.

Pruning and Mulching

Three crews of current and former members of the Tree Commission and community volunteers mulched and pruned young trees on Merrimac and High Streets on 5/22. A small crew went out on June 5th to complete the north side of High St.

The Commission and volunteer Paul Knowlton discussed doing further pruning/mulching during the summer. Paul explained that trucks need to be reserved 5-7 days in advance to be sure to have one. Paul has cancelled less than 24 hours in advance with no negative consequences. There was a discussion of truck vs. van. Although a van is easier to load and unload, a truck allows for bigger and more limbs and fewer trips to yard waste facility. We discussed scheduling additional workdays by sending out an email a week in advance to see who would be available. Paul Bevilacqua mentioned importance of keeping Tree Warden informed.

Recommended Trees List

Sheila raised the idea of reviewing the posted Recommended Tree List, focusing on drought resistance, salt tolerance and increasing the number of native trees. Sue Brown added the criterion of considering branching habit. Connie Preston mentioned there are several trees on list that are never planted. Paul Bevilacqua suggested asking the Tree Warden if the City Arborist might be available to meet with a group of arborists for no more than 1.5 hours.

Andrew Soracco suggested using the state list, however Connie Preston mentioned that our list includes trees that do well in Newburyport and excludes other trees that are on the state list that

have not worked in Newburyport. Sheila will reach out to Jamie Tuccolo about Lance and local arborists to set up meeting to review the list.

Future agenda item

Sheila mentioned the purchase of 50 Liberty Elm trees which had been purchased with the Parks Department. These elms were a smaller dbh than we normally plant and many needed to be staked, but none have died. Connie mentioned that the Parks Department did not end up planting their full share because of their size. However, it would be a cost-effective way to purchase trees, if we could guarantee the size we need. However when full grown the elms will be very large trees and it may be difficult to find good placements for them. Paul Bevilacqua asked about planting more trees in the Business Park, where the elms might work.

The meeting adjourned at 7:57 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Sheila Taintor, Secretary

Next meeting via Zoom: Thursday, August 12, 2021 at 6 PM