



## *City of Newburyport Tree Commission*

### **Meeting Minutes**

Wednesday, 18 November 2020

Zoom meeting

Meeting convened at 6:02 pm.

**Tree Commission members present:** Constance Preston (Chair), Sheila Taintor (Secretary), Paul Bevilacqua, Scott Hanley, Andrew Soracco, Sue Brown, Paul Harrington (alternate), Jamie Tuccolo (Tree Warden, ex-officio)

**Public in attendance:** Paul Knowlton, 37 Milk Street

### **Reports**

#### **Secretary**

The Commission did not approve the Minutes of the 21 September meeting due to corrections that need to be made. There was a lengthy discussion about several items in the minutes. The vote to approve will be taken at the December meeting.

#### **Treasurer**

The October Treasurer's Report was unanimously accepted.

The invoices for Northeast Nursery fall tree purchases have been processed but no invoice for the planting has been received yet from Plants & Pleasantrees. This invoice for planting the trees will be reflected in the November report.

#### **Tree Warden**

6 trees were removed in October.

Assistant Tree Warden Lance Ricard has been out with a crew every day trimming trees. They currently have a backlog of 75 work orders.

#### **Planting**

Connie reported to PCI Synthesis that the Tree Commission expended \$1,944 to water 25 trees in the second half of 2020 and plans to utilize the remainder of the funds to plant 45 trees in Spring 2021 and water all the trees through the remainder of 2021. All funds must be utilized by 15 Nov 2021 and the final report submitted 15 Dec 2021.

18 community trees were planted on Thu 15 Oct. The trees were purchased at Northeast Nursery and were planted by Plants & Pleasantrees which is now owned by Tim Lyons. Dave Carvill is an employee of P&P and supervised the planting.

There was discussion about the PCI trees that were planted in the Newburyport Business Park last spring as if they were street trees and thus ended up being too close to the road. Connie had reported that five trees had been dug up and replanted. One was a Business Park tree which had been planted too deeply, and the others were street trees.

Cris Miller has inventoried and mulched all the newly planted trees. Cris and Paul Knowlton removed all the tree gator bags and stored them at DPS. They also staked any trees that needed assistance.

In the Spring, we are currently planning to plant 45 trees utilizing the funds from PCI Synthesis along with an additional four community trees that have been donated through FoNT. One of the trees was donated in honor of Kim Kudym, former Tree Commissioner. Connie is working with Kim's husband on species and placement for the tree.

There are currently 43 street trees with addresses on the list requested by residents that will have to be delayed until we have more funding.

Paul Bevilacqua raised a question about tree pits on the sidewalks on Merrimac Street. Jamie Tuccolo explained that ADA handicapped accessibility regulations require a width of 5' for new sidewalks, but that DPS was replacing the existing 4' sidewalks at a width of 4'.

### **Grants/Donations**

Former Commissioner Jane Niebling is now working as a volunteer on grants until we find a commissioner to take on this responsibility. Jane submitted a grant application to the MA DCR for funding to inventory the trees in the City Forest off of Hale St.

Jane shared a link to a National Science Teaching Association (NSTA) grant with Andrew Soracco to see if he could think of a project.

Jane Niebling and Connie are meeting the week of November 23 to discuss current grants and pending applications.

### **Education**

A 15-year-old sophomore at NHS reached out to the Tree Commission to volunteer his services after speaking with his guidance counselor. Connie put him in touch with Andrew Soracco and he has proven to be a bright and super-motivated tree lover. There is a senior who is potentially also interested in participating in the project inventorying trees and possibly building a trail in the City Forest.

Andrew suggested that the Tree Commission consider adding a student liaison, who would attend meetings and participate. The Commission in general was very favorable to this idea, and Andrew will look further into it. It would probably be an internship that Andrew would manage and grade for the student.

## **Community Outreach**

Jean Berger wrote a Tree Talk column titled “Fall is a great time to plant trees”, which appeared in the 30 Sep 2020 issue of the Daily News.

## **Old Business**

At our last meeting we discussed the regularly scheduled number of meetings per year required by the Tree Ordinance. The Commission considered not changing the Ordinance but rather meeting only when there were critical items to discuss rather than just updates. No vote had been taken in October. The issue was raised again this meeting.

After discussion, Paul Bevilacqua proposed that a small group (Connie, Sheila and he) convene before the next meeting to discuss how we schedule meetings going forward and come up with a plan to present to the Commission. The group will report back to the Commission in our December meeting.

## **New Business**

### **Tree Warden report**

Connie Preston raised the issue of removing the number of trees that have been taken down across the city and their addresses from Tree Commission minutes. She feels that tree removal is the scope of DPS rather than the Tree Commission, and wanted it removed from our TC minutes. Jamie Tuccolo reported that during his tenure as Tree Warden, two residents have requested that their addresses not be reported in the Tree Commission minutes.

After a lengthy discussion, the Tree Commission unanimously voted to approve that the Tree Warden submit a more complete report annually to the Tree Commission, which will not be published in the monthly minutes nor on the website but the information it contains will be incorporated into the Tree Commission’s Annual Report submitted to the Mayor. This report will include the (a) number of trees removed, (b) species, (c) location. Addresses will not be included in the Annual Report which is posted on the website. This information will be extremely useful to three of the purposes listed in the Mission Statement of the Tree Commission: monitoring the health of public trees (2), identifying issues (3) and advising the Tree Warden with respect to the planting and replacement of Public Trees (4). Seeing this information on an annual basis will allow the Commission to see trends more clearly.

The first report will cover FY 2020, and thereafter will be submitted in early July to be incorporated in the Final Annual Report to cover the previous fiscal year.

The meeting adjourned at 7:28 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Sheila Taintor, Secretary

**Next meeting:** Wednesday, 9 December, 2020 at 6 PM

**Location:** Zoom Meeting