

Hamden Tree Commission Minutes

Tuesday, September 15, 2020 at 7:30 p.m. via Zoom

Commissioners in Attendance: Mr. Parlapiano, Ms. Nathanson, Mr. Montgomery, Mr. Cummings

Commissioners Excused: Ms. Sternberg

Others in Attendance: Ms. Hoffman, Mr. Matlock, Mr. Cronan, Ms. Etkind, Mr. Harris, Ms. Tobin

Call to Order

Mr. Parlapiano called the meeting to order at 7:39 p.m.

Approval of minutes of regular meeting of August 18, 2020

Mr. Montgomery made a motion to approve the minutes of August 18, 2020. Ms. Nathanson seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous in favor.

Public comments on agenda items:

Ms. Hoffman mentioned that at the last meeting Mr. Montgomery was talking about tree planting and his concern about the lack of water. Mr. Montgomery said the trees planted this year were more affected by the lack of water. Mr. Parlapiano said we were talking about street trees rather than trees on other public property. Mr. Montgomery said two trees dropped their leaves and one of them re-foliated which is bad. Fewer people are watering their trees. There was mention at last month's meeting by Ms. Sternberg of damage to trees by mowers and string trimmers.

Ms. Hoffman mentioned that HAT (Hamden Alliance for Trees) wants to donate a tree for planting in Town Center Park. Mr. Montgomery mentioned that Spring Glen planted ten American elm hybrids. A lot of hybrid trees do not have good crown structures. He mentioned that the Princeton variety has a better crown and is disease resistant, and Jefferson is a National Arboretum selection. Nurseries are not selling as many American elms as they used to. The most recent tree planted in the park is a white oak. Mr. Harris said it looked good the last time he saw it. Mr. Montgomery mentioned there is a need for trees at the Keefe Center. He also mentioned the intersection of Woodin Street and Pine Rock Avenue where a property owner is willing to chip in and water.

Ms. Hoffman asked about the Tree Ordinance. Mr. Parlapiano replied there is no news to date. She mentioned under the protection of trees on Page 3 an item was removed. Ms. Nathanson said it was probably a legal matter. Ms. Hoffman also mentioned the ground to sky pruning. Ms. Harris made the case that in some areas that would be beneficial, and the decision would be on a case by case basis. He tells the work planners that we don't allow ground to sky in Hamden, but there are occasions where we would.

Mr. Matlock said he is working on a project through Sustainable Connecticut for an alternative style of food production. He is working with Kathleen Schomaker and is selecting sites for "food forests." There is a garden at the Keefe Center that is producing food for the food bank.

They would plant food items, fruit trees, shrubs and pollinators in these food forests. Mr. Montgomery mentioned paupau, persimmon, hackberry and filbert trees as good choices. Mr. Matlock has grant funds that would help support this plan and an educational segment.

Mr. Montgomery mentioned that in the area of Brookside off of Santa Fe that we discussed at a previous meeting, a group of neighbors planted four trees.

Mr. Harris mentioned that Laurel View was one of the hardest hit places in Hamden. Many trees down and outbuildings demolished.

4. Educational Programs/Ideas

Mr. Parlapiano mentioned an educational letter to the editor. Ms. Nathanson said it should include what he and Mr. Montgomery wrote about the potential solar farm.

5. Other Old Business

There was no additional old business to discuss.

New Business

Solar Farm Project

Ms. Nathanson said because other groups are talking about flooding, we should probably stick to trees. Mr. Parlapiano mentioned that Planning and Zoning and Inland Wetlands have statutory regulations. Mr. Montgomery said it was frustrating reading 300 plus pages of the proposal. There is a storm water issue and no plan yet. The appendix mentions to a storm water basin. The information is not accessible to the public. There are technical deficiencies in the application. Mr. Parlapiano mentioned the summary table. Mr. Montgomery said the table is completely in error. Mr. Parlapiano feels the proposal is sloppily done and reminds him of a past application. It seems they don't really want to build this. He is really interested in how the Siting Council will receive this proposal. They say there is no substantial impact. There is an impact on the wetland. It is going from swamp to meadow and there is no plan to harvest timber. Mr. Montgomery talked about the carbon that would be left on site.

Ms. Hoffman hopes the Tree Commission will point out all of the deficiencies. Ms. Nathanson thinks Mr. Montgomery's letter is very strong and makes some cogent arguments. Mr. Montgomery said another key deficiency is that the site has not been evaluated by a qualified forester. The site is separated by power lines from the Regional Water Authority property and the Naugatuck State Forest.

Mr. Montgomery mentioned a sign put up by a neighbor of the site saying this area will be clearcut, but this area along the road will not be clear cut. The forest is quite healthy and valuable. DEEP can't comment on the forest portion, only on the air and water quality. Inland Wetlands wrote a letter but can't stop the project because it is under the jurisdiction of the Siting Council.

Mr. Parlapiano asked for comments on the letter to the Siting Council. There were no additional comments.

Mr. Montgomery made a motion to approve his version of the letter presenting eight points, with some minor revisions to the calculations in point 2 and other revisions that might come to the attention of the chair as he reviews this draft. Ms. Nathanson seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous in favor.

1. Other New Business

There was no additional new business.

Ms. Hoffman asked about the status of the Tree Ordinance. Mr. Parlapiano said it is still in the Town Attorney's Office. Town Attorney Gruen is discussing the changes with Town Attorney Sharkey. There was discussion on how this Ordinance can be finalized and presented to the Legislative Council.

Adjournment

Ms. Nathanson made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Montgomery seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous in favor. The meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Submitted by _____

Gerry Tobin, Clerk of the Commission