

Hamden Tree Commission

Meeting of Tuesday, October 20, 2020 at 6:30 p.m. via Zoom

Meeting ID: 943 5350 9087

Password: conifer

Call in: 1 946 558-8656

Minutes

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

Others in Attendance: HAT Representative Ms. Hoffman, Legislative Council Clerk Ms. Tobin

Call to Order

Mr. Parlapiano called the meeting to order at 6:38 p.m.

Approval of minutes of regular meeting of September 15, 2020

Ms. Nathanson made a motion to approve the minutes of the September 15, 2020 meeting. Mr. Cummings seconded the motion. The vote was four in favor and one abstention.

Public comments on agenda items

Ms. Hoffman mentioned that she attended a GC3 webinar on engineered soils and learned how important they are in letting you plant trees with roots that go down and don't interfere with sidewalks. Mr. Montgomery said engineered soil is expensive, and it would not help with sidewalk repair. He said it is mainly used in new construction or in some tree pits. Landscape plans do not come to the Tree Commission for review. One plan reviewed by the Tree Commission was not followed. Ms. Sternberg said guidelines to include engineered soils should be included in the regulations.

Ms. Hoffman asked if this is something the Tree Commission would support. Mr. Parlapiano believes we made Planning & Zoning aware of it. Mr. Montgomery said recommendations are not necessarily followed. Projects generally originate with Economic Development. Ms. Hoffman said it is important to help our street trees thrive and survive.

Mr. Montgomery said the hawthorns by the library are not doing very well and the trees planted around the Town fountain are not doing very well. He attributes the soil as an issue in some areas. Also, some trees are planted on state owned property. Ms. Hoffman feels that the State should be helping the towns.

Ms. Hoffman mentioned the trees being removed from Whitney Avenue by the RWA. Mr. Harris said were two other trees that were removed because they got nervous. Mr. Hoffman said they are going to replant.

Mr. Macdowall said he discussed the tree ordinance with the Town Attorney. She wants to make sure sidewalk repairs by contractors are monitored. The word shall will be changed to something less strong. Any damage to trees by contractors has to be reported to Mr. Harris. During sidewalk repair both safety and environmental issues must be considered. Mr. Macdowall offered to assist the Commission between meetings.

Old Business

1. Tree Activity Report
 - Public Works: Trees planted/Removed/Pruned/Permits issues
 - UI Vegetation Management Status

Ms. Hoffman brought up the charter revision (as regards the tree warden position). Mr. Harris spoke with Mr. Cesare and his feeling was that this is a union thing and difficult to change. Mr. Macdowall is in general agreement that the position of the tree warden falls under these union contracts which take precedence over the charter because right now there isn't an official tree warden. Mike Siciliano is covering the position, and it has not been put out to be filled yet. Mr. Macdowall said that police and fire management get stipends for jobs that are not part of union work. It is possible that Mr. Siciliano is being paid a stipend for his work as tree warden. Mr. Macdowall will have to dig in deeper. There was further discussion. Mr. Montgomery said under State law, the tree warden position is a Mayoral appointment. Mr. Montgomery mentioned the superintendent of trees position, which is usually the tree warden. Mr. Harris is of the opinion that it would be nice to have a tree warden that is also a licensed arborist. He feels the tree warden should be a separate job, doing what Mr. Harris is doing now. West Haven's tree warden is a separate part time job. No doubt there is a need. Mr. Harris said Mr. Collelo is taking tree warden webinars to get credits. Mr. Harris suggested he take the arborist course which is very difficult.

Mr. Harris mentioned that Mr. Siciliano has called on him to look at trees. He has recently visited several locations and made recommendations, which helps create a list. Some of the trees that have been posted are trees that he has looked at. Other names on the list are from people calling in. He mentioned that the Town has done some fine pruning. He presented further details on pine trees on Ridge Road and Thornton Street and said a lot of trees have been pruned by TRM all around Town. Ms. Hoffman asked is TRM working or are there some problems. Mr. Hoffman thanked Mr. Harris and said if he feels TRM is not working he should let Mr. D'Agostino know.

2. Notable Trees

Mr. Parlapiano said he saw the catalpa in the New Haven Register, but without the photo. It was a good story. He didn't see it in the Advisor. Ms. Nathanson sent Tom a suggestion for this month, a ginkgo. Mr. Montgomery thought it was fine and gave some additional verbiage. Mr. Montgomery suggested a pin oak at the corner of Whitney Avenue and Woodlawn Street for November and will send the information to Ms. Nathanson. Mr. Parlapiano mentioned massive oaks on Armory Street.

3. Tree Planting

Mr. Montgomery said the tree planting list contains 41 tree requests. We have the funds for 30 trees. There will be no planting this fall because Public Works is having trouble getting the storm damage removed. Mr. Parlapiano has been receiving information on the posted trees from Public Works and Mr. Harris is taking a look at them. The acting tree warden is asking Mr. Montgomery to put people on the tree request list.

There was discussion on a Brookside Drive group planting three trees, taking one down, and will receive a tree in the spring. They are removing non-native species and need a de minimus ruling from the wetlands commission. This group would like to make a donation to the tree fund to purchase trees and asked if they could specify where trees could be placed. Mr. Parlapiano said he reviewed the ordinance and said the Tree Commission can make recommendations to the Town, but the decision would be up to Town administration. Mr. Harris would like to see an adopt a tree program with a licensed arborist to do the work.

4. Educational Programs/Ideas Other Old Business

- Letter to CT Siting Council
- Tree Ordinance

Mr. Parlapiano mentioned that he saw Ms. Hoffman's letter to the editor in the New Haven Register, and also mentioned an article by Randall Beach regarding trees..

Regarding the tree ordinance, Mr. Parlapiano heard back from Town Attorney Gruen. She liked our updates, but it has not been run by other groups except CIRMA. They had some issues. The use of the word shall might cause the town to lose immunity from liability. She will fix that to make it less mandatory. She forwarded the ordinance to Personnel and Labor for review.

Other Old Business

Mr. Parlapiano sent everyone a copy of the letter to the Siting Council regarding the proposed solar farm on Gaylord Mountain Road. The letter is now on their web site along with a letter from Planning & Zoning and others. The Public Hearing will take place on November 17th at 2:00 p.m. with no public comments. A session at 6:30 p.m. will allow brief public comment. The information can be found on the Connecticut Siting Council web site. Ms. Hoffman listened in to the November meeting and wrote to Dawn. She has not heard back. Mr. Montgomery asked Mr. Kops regarding downstream flooding and he would like the town engineer to say something. There is supposed to be a site inspection.

There was no additional old business.

New Business

1. Re-Appointments

Mr. Parlapiano mentioned that there were two reappointment's to the Commission this month. He has been sworn in. Mr Cummings received his reappointment letter and has not yet been sworn.

2. Letter from New Haven Country Club

Mr. Parlapiano forwarded the letter from the New Haven Country Club to Commissioners regarding trees in poor state of repair. They were deemed to be Town trees. There is no reason for us to respond. Ms. Nathanson fielded a call regarding this and told them who should be sent the letter. The trees are considered out of bounds and considered to be on Town property. The Club is willing to do the work.

3. Other New Business

There was no additional new business to consider. Mr. Parlapiano asked for a motion to adjourn.

Adjournment

Mr. Montgomery made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Nathanson seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous in favor. The meeting adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

Submitted by _____

Gerry Tobin, Clerk of the Commission