

MINUTES
City of New Castle Tree Advisory Commission
September 12, 2022 – 4:00 p.m.
1 Municipal Boulevard

Members Present: Sheila Shannon
Judie Baldini
Scot Savitch
Carl Benson
Wolcott Davis

Also Present: Furio Casale, Code Enforcement Officer
Ron Vukelich

Ms. Shannon convened the meeting at 4:00 p.m. Roll call followed and a quorum to conduct business was declared.

Minutes

A Motion to approve the Minutes of the July 11, 2022, meeting as amended was made, seconded, and unanimously carried.

Update on Tree Watering Program

Mr. Casale distributed a report on watering from July 15-September. Mr. Savitch noted that today (September 12th) that by the Methodist Church water bags were a combination of empty, partly full and full. Mr. Casale noted that there was a staff shortage recently. Mr. Benson stated that Public Works does most of the watering on Thursday-Friday, and explained the watering pattern used by Public Works. Mr. Vukelich noted that in the last 4-5 weeks watering has been very consistent. Mr. Casale urged the Commissioners to inform him of any watering issues. Ms. Baldini asked if a schedule should be formalized to check on watering. Mr. Benson suggested that all Commission members check the trees near their homes and report any issues.

Mr. Vukelich stated that he took down a dead tree by the Cemetery between 2nd and 3rd Streets on Harmony Street. He noted this was one of the trees that had been treated with Round-Up. A discussion was held on the danger of using chemicals in the ground around trees. Two European Hornbeams on Delaware Street between 3rd and 4th were also treated with chemicals; one is brown and the other is turning brown.

Mr. Vukelich explained plantings of Spring Flurries between 5th and 6th Streets and the plan to plant Pink Flairs by the Post Office. Mr. Vukelich introduced Mr. Norman Lehr from Gateway Garden Center, who has been advising on the trees and watering. Mr. Lehr will be providing staff to assist with watering through May 2023.

It was noted that the extreme dry, hot weather is contributing to watering issues. Ms. Baldini noted that the Commissioners need to be watchful of watering through the late fall and winter. Mr. Lehr noted that watering should continue through Thanksgiving or the beginning of December.

New Tree Work Applications

Mr. Savitch stated that he has been in touch with all Applicants.

2022-13 – Leanne Deptula – 51 West 4th Street

Ms. Deptula submitted an Application for the removal and replacement of a Chinese Dogwood tree located between 53 and 51 West 4th Streets. The Application states roots of the tree are pulling up the sidewalk bricks, causing a tripping hazard. The Applicant is concerned that the tree roots will begin to affect her home, and branches are overgrown and touching the wires.

Messrs. Benson and Vukelich inspected the tree. Mr. Vukelich feels he can address the brick issue to make the area better. Mr. Benson noted that there is a large slab of concrete in the sidewalk that the TAC cannot address. Mr. Benson stated that the tree is a Cherry Tree. Ms. Baldini asked if the two large branches (one extending toward the house and one extending over the street) could be removed to save the tree. Mr. Casale noted that the Commission tabled this matter in July to have the tree inspected by an arborist.

Ms. Baldini asked Mr. Lehr for his opinion. Mr. Lehr opined that both of the limbs could be removed with affecting the center part of the tree.

During discussion it was noted that Kwanzan Cherry trees grow very wide and are not suitable as a street tree; but the Pink Flair Cherry tree is narrow and would be an option.

A Motion to continue to table Application 2022-13 until an arborist can inspect the tree was made, seconded, and unanimously carried.

Mr. Vukelich will look into fixing the bricks. Relative to the concrete slab, Mr. Vukelich noted that if it were removed, a significant number of bricks would be required to fill the space.

Mr. Casale updated the Commission on the City's search for an arborist to work with the Tree Advisory Commission. Mr. Casale will follow-up with Mr. Barthel.

Mr. Savitch asked about trimming the London Plane trees on Washington Street that are growing up into the wires.

2022-16 – Sheila and Marty Shannon – 313 Delaware Street

Ms. Shannon submitted an Application for pruning a large Ash tree that has dead limbs overhanging the street.

Ms. Shannon noted that the City cut the constrictor roots, but the dead limbs still need to be taken down. Ms. Shannon asked if this work could with other work the City may be doing in the area.

Relative to the Ash Borer it was noted that the City is treating Ash trees in town.

A Motion to add pruning dead limbs from an Ash tree at 313 Delaware Street (second tree from the corner of East 4th and Delaware Streets) to the City Pruning List, to be completed when possible, was made, seconded and unanimously carried.

2022-17 – Vivienne Cameron – 158 East 4th Street

Ms. Cameron submitted an Application for tree work at 158-170 East 4th Street to (1) have a Cherry tree pruned of dead branches, (2) have two replacement trees of the Commission's choice be planted, and (3) have two large trees removed due to roots destroying the bricks and garden wall and branches being entwined with the wires.

A Motion to table Application 2022-17 and refer the matter to an arborist was made, seconded and unanimously carried.

2022-18 – Benjamin Ryan – 300 Delaware Street

Mr. Ryan submitted an Application to have a dead tree removed and a replacement tree planted.

A Motion to remove a dead tree at 300 Delaware Street was made, seconded and unanimously carried.

2022-19 – David Webster – 917 Clayton Street

Mr. Webster submitted an Application to have a tree pruned. Mr. Casale noted that this tree is already on the list of trees to be trimmed. MSC has been contacted to insulate the wires before trimming is done by the City.

2022-20 – Irene Briggs – 36 West 6th Street

Ms. Briggs submitted an Application for permission to plant an appropriate street tree in front of her house.

Ms. Baldini asked how the TAC should respond to Ms. Briggs' request.

Discussion included the City Budget for the TAC, cataloging the trees in the town, and a "wish list" for tree planting. Mr. Savitch, as TAC liaison to the City, will speak with Mr. Barthel relative to the TAC budget. Mr. Casale noted the importance of having a prioritized list of projects to present to the City for the next Budget process.

Ms. Baldini stated that Ms. Briggs is asking for a permit to plant a tree. During discussion ownership and maintenance of the sidewalks was discussed in depth. Ms. Baldini noted that a clarification of what homeowners are responsible for relative to sidewalks was published in the MSC newsletter.

Various options on how to respond to Ms. Briggs' request were discussed. Mr. Vukelich noted the importance of planting an approved tree. Ms. Baldini noted that the Commission could provide guidance to Ms. Briggs relative to the tree species to be planted. Ms. Baldini will discuss options with Ms. Briggs and report back to the Commission.

422 West 7th Street

It was reported that an Application was received for a tree that is not a street tree requesting recommendations for programs that might be able to assist with tree removal at little or no cost.

Ms. Shannon noted that the TAC does not have purview of non-street trees. Mr. Savitch will contact the homeowner.

Review of Past Tree Work Applications

2022-08 – 33 West 6th Street

Mr. Benson noted that would be a major job for the tree between 33 and 36 West 6th Street, and a professional would need to remove the tree. Mr. Casale stated the City would not be able to do the work.

A Motion was made to refer Application 2022-08 for trees between 33-35 West 6th Street to a professional tree company for removal of a tree. The motion was seconded and unanimously carried.

After discussion, Mr. Benson amended his Motion. The amended Motion to read:

A Motion was made on Application 2022-08 for trees between 33-35 West 6th Street to obtain an evaluation and quote for removal by professional tree companies. The Motion was seconded and unanimously carried.

124 East 3rd Street – Rodney Miller

Mr. Savitch stated that trimming on Mr. Miller's tree is complete.

2017-09 - 128 East 4th Street – Ian Huntley

Mr. Casale restated the Commission's decision from the July 11th TAC meeting. Mr. Savitch stated the tree (Zelcova) is healthy, noting that it does need to be trimmed. Mr. Vukelich noted that he spoke with Mr. Huntley as well.

A Motion was made to deny the request to remove the tree, and to approve pruning of the tree.

Mr. Vukelich recommended that the pruning be "around" and not a "V".

The Motion was seconded and unanimously carried.

Public Comment

Rick Starr

Mr. Starr suggested that if an arborist is on staff with the County or State that the City may be able to partner with him under the umbrella of that relationship. Mr. Vukelich explained the relationship with Mr. Seo and the National Forestry Service. Mr. Benson noted that New Castle County does have an arborist; however, he did not feel the City had that kind of a relationship with the County. Mr. Starr also noted that having an arborist on staff opens up other funding opportunities that might not otherwise be available.

Miscellaneous

Mr. Vukelich noted that six trees were donated by the Trustees.

Mr. Savitch suggested that the List of Approved Trees be published in the newspaper.

Member Comments/Discussion

Mr. Benson reported News From The Street:

- Nearly 90' of brick sidewalk has been redone along West 5th Street.
- A tree planting is scheduled in October along Delaware Street between 5th and 6th Streets. A date will be forthcoming.
- A dead Parrotia Vanessa was removed on Harmony Street between 2nd and 3rd Streets.
- Four Amelanchier Autumn Brilliance trees in front of the Dutch House were attacked by leaf hoppers. Those trees will be removed and replaced with either a Pink Flair or Summer's Tower.
- Two Parrotias on Delaware Street and The Strand were treated for an infestation of spider mites. Mr. Vukelich explained the cause of the spider mite infestation.
- All other trees are in good health.

Ms. Shannon stated that the TAC has still not addressed updating the City website. She suggested that the members review the website and bring ideas on how to improve it to the next meeting. Suggested updates:

- A checklist to be used by TAC when inspecting trees.
- A more "user friendly" Tree Approval Form for resident use.
- A checklist for homeowners for reference when completing an Application.
- An updated Approved Street Tree List.

Ms. Baldini will discuss updating the website with Ms. Burgmuller. Ms. Baldini also suggested that the TAC have a separate work session to discuss updates to the website.

Ms. Baldini asked if a chart could be developed to track the status of Tree Applications. During discussion it was noted that the TAC would not have control of such a document.

There being no further business to discuss, Ms. Shannon called for a Motion to Adjourn.

A Motion to adjourn was made and seconded. On vote the Motion was unanimously carried and the meeting ended at 5:47 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen R. Weirich
City Stenographer