

MINUTES  
City of New Castle Tree Advisory Commission  
June 5, 2023 – 4:00 p.m.  
1 Municipal Boulevard

Members Present: Carl Benson, Chair  
Sheila Shannon  
Scot Savitch  
Wolcott Davis  
Art Walker

Also Present: Furio Casale, Code Enforcement Officer  
Ron Vukelich  
Norman Lehr

Mr. Benson 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 April 3, 2023, and May 1, 2023, Tree Advisory Commission meetings as presented was made, seconded and unanimously carried.

**Old Business**

Application 2022-24 – 205 Chestnut Street, Ernest & Edith Brown

Mr. Benson stated that the tree in this application was removed and Mr. and Mrs. Brown are now requesting a replacement tree. Mr. Benson added that there was significant sidewalk damage and Mr. Davis stated that the sidewalk had not been repaired.

Mr. Casale noted that a request was submitted to have a tree replaced at 207 Chestnut Street that was received too late to be added to the June Agenda, and suggested that the Commission take this matter into consideration when making a decision on 205 Chestnut Street.

A motion to plant a replacement tree and straighten the bricks around the tree pit was made.

During discussion it was noted that the stump was ground out. Mr. Vukelich suggested that approximately 6-8 Magyar or Princeton Century trees could be planted in that area under the TAC 5-year plan.

The motion on the floor was seconded and unanimously carried.

Mr. Benson suggested that the Commissioners inspect the tree at 207 Chestnut Street in anticipation of reviewing an application at the July meeting.

**STATUS: A replacement tree will be planted and the sidewalk bricks will be repaired.**

**New Business**

2023-10 – West 4<sup>th</sup> Street & Delaware Street

An application was submitted to have a large Sycamore tree removed. Ms. Shannon reported that the tree is healthy and is leafed out; however, it is leaning into the street and would cause damage to any vehicles in the intersection if it should fall and could be a liability to the City.

During discussion, Mr. Lehr stated that the tree should be removed, and Mr. Casale concurred. Mr. Casale added that Public Works informed him that they could remove the tree.

A motion was made to have a Sycamore tree at West 4<sup>th</sup> Street & Delaware Street be added to the City Tree List to be removed based on information presented to the Commission. The motion was seconded and unanimously carried.

**STATUS: The tree will be added to the City Tree List for removal.**

2023-11 – East 4<sup>th</sup> Street & Delaware Street

An application was submitted to have a core sample performed on a large Elm tree in front of the Amstel House to determine the health of the tree. Ms. Shannon explained that the tree is leafed out, but it has unusual deep disturbance in the bark (cankers) that appears to be worsening, and Mr. Lehr had suggested that a core sample be done.

Mr. Casale stated that he would obtain a quote for the work and report back to the Commissioners. Mr. Lehr stated that the tree appears healthy, but if it should fall it would seriously damage the Amstel House and he felt it would be prudent to perform a core sample.

A motion to get more information on a cost estimate to have a core sample performed by a tree expert to evaluate the health of the tree was made, seconded and unanimously carried.

**ACTION: Mr. Casale will obtain a quote to have a core sample performed on the tree.**

2023-12 – 148 East 4<sup>th</sup> Street , Jason and Lesley Mellinger

An application was submitted to have a Zelcova tree that is adjacent to the front door and mailbox removed at 148 East 4<sup>th</sup> Street. The tree is located directly in the path of electrical service to the residence.

Mr. Benson stated that he inspected the tree. Mr. Mellinger stated that the tree was trimmed by MSC about 10 years ago, but it continues to grow into the wires. Mr. Davis noted that there had been improper pruning done on the tree. During discussion Mr. Casale stated that MSC would need to be consulted if the tree were to be pruned; however, that would not be necessary if the tree were removed. Mr. Mellinger added that there are approximately three other trees in the row that have also caused interference with the wires, opining that they have never been trimmed. It was noted that all four of the trees are Zelcovas. During further discussion Mr. Casale stated that the Commissioners were welcome to oversee the work if the tree were to be trimmed.

A motion to table the application to the July meeting in order to give the Commissioners an opportunity to inspect the tree was made, seconded and unanimously carried.

Mr. Mellinger expressed his disappointment that resolution was being delayed, and recommended that all of the Zelcova trees in the row be evaluated.

**ACTION: The motion was tabled to the July meeting to inspect the tree and make an assessment as to whether the tree should be trimmed or removed.**

2023-13 – 47 West 4<sup>th</sup> Street, Joseph & Susan Campbell

An application was submitted to have a tree planted. Mr. Benson stated that there is a tree pit in the location. Ms. Shannon opined that this would fit in with the 5-year plan on the west side of 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> Streets.

A motion to consider this tree in context with any future plans the Commission may have for that Street was made.

During discussion Mr. Vukelich opined that the Commission could ask the home owners if they would be willing to pay for, or contribute to, the cost of the tree; adding that it would be a wise decision to consider this in context with the 5-year plan. Mr. Vukelich noted that the City's ability to water new trees should be taken into consideration in planting new trees. Mr. Vukelich also suggested that the Commission establish a protocol for when new trees are planted. Further discussion included the City's watering plan, other options to have new trees watered, how to plan new plantings in an efficient manner, and the efficiency of the watering bags.

Ms. Shannon revised her motion.

A motion to consider the species of the tree as part of any future plans for that Street and to approve a new tree be planted when trees are available or as part of the 5-year plan. The motion was seconded and unanimously carried.

Ms. Shannon will inform Mr. and Mrs. Campbell of the decision.

**ACTION: Consider the species of the tree to be planted and to plant a tree when trees are available or as part of the 5-year plan. Ms. Shannon will inform the homeowners of the TAC decision.**

East 4<sup>th</sup> Street – Mrs. Biggs

Mr. Vukelich reminded the Commission that it had approved planting a tree for Ms. Biggs approximately 18 months ago, and that tree had not yet been planted. Mr. Davis added that the Commission considered an application from Joanna Smith at 124 East 4<sup>th</sup> Street (2023-09) to have a tree removed and replaced; and Mr. Casale reported that tree had been removed.

2023-14 – 607 Tremont Street, Marcello DiAlessandro

An application was submitted to have a tree removed on 7<sup>th</sup> Street that has a cracked trunk and leafless branches. Mr. Benson stated that he inspected the tree and concurred that it is in bad shape and needs to be removed. Mr. Casale also inspected the tree and opined that the City might be able to remove the tree.

A motion to have a tree at 607 Tremont Street be removed was made, seconded and unanimously carried.

**ACTION: The tree will be added to the City Tree List for removal. Mr. Casale will determine if the City can do the work.**

2023-15 – 166 East 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, Katie Rhodes

An application was submitted to have a tree that is dropping sap be pruned. Mr. Benson inspected the tree and reported that the tree has been heavily pruned and he did not feel that the tree needed additional pruning. During discussion it was noted that trees have been sapping heavily this year.

A motion to table the application to the July meeting was made, seconded and unanimously carried.

**ACTION: The application was tabled to the July meeting.**

2023-16 – 172 East 4<sup>th</sup> Street, Kathy Walsh

An application was submitted to have tree branches that are hitting the house and causing roof damage from debris landing on the roof be pruned. Mr. Casale opined that this tree was among those that Mr. Mellinger referenced on East 4<sup>th</sup> Street. Mr. Benson noted that there are a significant number of branches near the house and suggested that they need to be trimmed. It was also suggested that the application be tabled to give the Commissioners the opportunity to inspect the tree.

A motion to table the application to trim the tree at 172 East 4<sup>th</sup> Street was made, seconded and unanimously carried.

**ACTION: The application was tabled to the July meeting. The tree will be added to the City Tree List for pruning. Mr. Casale will determine if the City can do the work, and will obtain estimates if necessary.**

2023-17 – 5<sup>th</sup> Street and Delaware Street

An application was submitted to have a Hawthorn tree removed that is on the side of the Post Office parking lot at 5<sup>th</sup> and Delaware Streets. The tree is past maturity. Mr. Vukelich suggested that it be replaced with a European Hornbeam.

A motion to investigate what will be involved to remove the Hawthorn tree and replace it with a European Hornbeam was made, seconded and unanimously carried.

Mr. Vukelich stated that John Antonio indicated he could remove the tree.

**ACTION: The Commission will look into removing and replacing the Hawthorn tree with a European Hornbeam.**

### **Miscellaneous**

#### 222 Delaware Street

Mr. Vukelich suggested removing a Honey Locust and a Sycamore in front of the Booth House for discussion replanting Mesa Glows in that area. He added that the Mesa Gold is drought resistant and does well in very cold weather. Mr. Benson noted that he thought this was discussed at the April TAC meeting.

### **Public Comment**

#### Ron Vukelich

Mr. Vukelich made a presentation of the 12 tree species that are currently on the Approved City Tree List, noting that they are all recommended as ideal street trees.

### **Commissioner Comments**

#### Tree Inventory

Mr. Benson stated that Sue Barton at the University of Delaware put him in touch with Anna Wick, who is interested in speaking the TAC about how they can assist with the City Tree Inventory. He will update the Commission at the July meeting.

#### 5-year Plan

Topics discussed in relation to the 5-year plan included:

- The deadline for ordering spring trees is fast approaching.
- Areas of the City that are in dire need of new trees.
- An inventory of empty tree pits and open spaces will be conducted.
- A number of trees have been lost at the Farm, and there are approximately 25 left.
- Mr. Barthel wishes to be involved in purchasing new trees and suggested purchasing 10 new trees for approximately \$4,000 from the upcoming TAC budget. The upcoming TAC budget will remain the same as last year.
- The TAC received a grant from the Delaware Forrest Service for \$5,000 and a grant from the Trustees for \$3,200.

Mr. Benson asked that the Commissioners consider the 5-year plan in order to discuss a preliminary plan at the July meeting. Mr. Savitch will begin an inventory of tree pits.

A motion to adjourn was made and seconded. The motion was unanimously carried and the meeting ended at 5:21 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen R. Weirich  
City Stenographer