Meeting Minutes

September 14, 2023

The meeting convened at 6:35 pm.

**Tree Commission members present:** Paul Knowlton (Chair), Bob Uhlig (Vice-Chair), Paul Harrington (Financial Secretary, Marcia Edson (Secretary), Stephanie Pellegrini, Jean Berger, Becky MacKnight (Alternate).

**Absent**: Marilyn Cohodas, Scott Hanley

**DPS liaison:** Mike Hennessey

**Agenda additions:**

* Paul K. brought up a problematic situation involving the Zelkova planted on Pond St., near the corner of State St., across from statue of George Washington. He shared photos of the tree which is too large for that spot. Mike suggested moving it nearer the corner where it could serve as a succession tree for the Norway Maples there, that will eventually be taken down. Mike will figure out the best way to move Zelkova. Paul K. reminded commissioners to be thoughtful about choosing appropriate species that meet the size limitations throughout the city, especially height restrictions created by overhead wires.

**Public comment:** None

**Tree Warden report:** No report.

**Secretary’s report:**

Motion by Jean to approve minutes of the August 10, 2023, meeting, seconded by Paul H. Minutes approved unanimously.

**Treasurer’s report:**

Paul H. reviewed the Financial Report. The FY’24 initial balance was $80, 821.68. The Revolving Account has been eliminated. Any fees, fines or insurance settlement monies will now go into the Donations Account. Cris Miller informed Paul H. that the FoNT donation will be $17,000. This will enable us to plant 60 trees and water 174 trees in spring 2024. Paul K. commented on the increase in residents’ donations this year, citing Butler St. and the positive response he’s received around the city when he has spoken to residents about donations for planting street trees.

**Social Media update:**

* Paul H. asked how the Tree Commission can most efficiently inform residents about what we do. Paul K. agreed, but added we need to work out how FoNT and the Tree Commission can best share information. Is there a way to share through the city website and social media? Steph suggested that we use Instagram rather than X (formerly Twitter). She offered to work with Marilyn to set up an Instagram account. We could create, post, and then have the city share those posts on their account.
* Bob mentioned the information tags that could be attached to the new trees with one side providing maintenance information for the trees and the other side with a link to Tree Commission page on “How to get a tree.”

**FoNT report:**

* Steph explained that in revising their website, the information on requesting a tree was confusing.
* Jean presented a revised *Request A Tree* information sheet. There was some discussion over the language, but commissioners agreed the information was accurate and clear. Residents who want a tree in a specific location can donate $575 and residents who want to dedicate a tree and leaf for the sculpture can donate $850. Jean will tweak the language to reflect the commissioners’ discussion. It was suggested that the document will be reviewed annually for revisions.

**Fall Planting 2023:**

* Butler St. plantings awaiting Dig Safe confirmation. In the future, Mike wants to work out a more efficient way of handling the Dig Safe requests.
* Paul H. said that 60 trees will be planted this fall. This was doable because of the multiple trees planted in areas like Butler St. Mike questioned whether that’s number is feasible for the spring given the work that must be done before the trees can be planted: Dig safes, pits to be dug, dealing with larger root balls that don’t fit the pits, etc.

**New Business:**

Presentation by John Whalen on Carbon Credit Program a non-profit venture supporting communities investing in urban forestry by mounting projects to reduce carbon emissions. These projects would result in carbon credits that would be purchased by companies. The money from these carbon credits would benefit the city’s goals, planting and maintaining street trees and protecting urban forests. The registry program requires a municipality to plant and maintain a minimum of 500 street trees over a three-year period. Newburyport, through FoNT, could establish a tree planning or tree preservation project and earn income through the carbon credits that would accrue and be purchased by companies looking to lower their carbon footprint. Collaborating with neighboring towns is also a possibility. John will send additional information on the program for us to review. An overview of a sample tree planting program in DesMoines can be found at https://www.cityforestcredits.org/carbon-credits/carbon-registry/des-moines-forest-carbon-offsets-2/

**Old Business:**

* Protecting new trees corner of Toppans Lane and Low St. – Marcia spoke to Superintendent of Schools Gallagher about the school crossing guard’s car parked in front of the trees. He said HR has spoken with the crossing guard about parking so that the trees are not nicked of hit. The Superintendent asked that we contact him if we notice any problem with the way the crossing guard is parked in that area that might affect the health of the trees.

**Adjournment**

Motion to adjourn by Jean, seconded by Bob. Unanimous.

Next meeting will be at 6:30 PM, October 12, 2023, in the Program Room of the Library.

Respectfully Submitted,

Marcia Edson, Secretary