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Shade Tree Committee Meeting Minutes for September

The Zoom meeting was called to order at 16:30 pm by Chair Eva Hoffman and attended by: Jay Marcotte (Director of DPW and Acting Tree Warden), Lucia Gates, Eva Hoffman, Chris Arthur, Vicki Amalfitano and Adam Howe.

There were 4 members attending so there was a quorum for the meeting.

The **June** Minutes were approved as amended.

Eva Hoffman gave Chris Arthur permission to use her electronic signature for the Meeting Minutes as required by law.

Jay Marcotte gave his Tree Warden report.

- He mentioned how very dry it has been, his concern that many newer trees might not have survived the summer, and the need to be patient until next spring to confirm how many were lost. His team was out all summer watering. Some trees will still be under the warranty, like the dogwoods on the campus.
- He mentioned the Inventory Project will begin in October. The project will be in GIS and some part of it will be available to the public. The inventory will include the species, the diameter at the base, the tree height and the overall condition (good, fair, poor, dead.) Vicki asked about the criteria and Jay said he would send it. The project includes only Town owned trees on Town owned land. This "Tree-Keeper" Inventory will create a benchmark to compare with other towns and support programs and initiatives around shade tree planting. Jay said that Concord Tree warden was very happy with their inventory.
<https://concordma.treekeepersoftware.com/index.cfm?deviceWidth=1920> and that Waltham has a forestry website. <https://www.city.waltham.ma.us/forestry-division/pages/tree-programs>. Brookline and Newton also have tree management programs that could guide our deliberations.
- Jay mentioned serious concerns with the Right-Of-Way aspects of tree planting on streets without a sidewalk. The Town owns 7'-0" from the edge of the street but bringing this to the attention of more well-heeled neighbors has caused issues, as an example, along Concord Ave.
- Lucia Gates moved that the Watertown Street Tree planting brochure that was sent to everyone by Chris Arthur be reviewed for the next meeting in October.

- Chris mentioned Watertown's "Green Initiative," and the possibility of having Matthew Shuman from the Green Initiative in Watertown speak at our November meeting. Vicki was given permission to invite members of the Sustainable Belmont committee as all Shade Committee meetings are open to Belmont Residents. Lucia would like Jay to ask Glenn Clancy if he would like to attend, since this effort is under Watertown's Planning Office.
- The Commemorative Tree Program will plant 14 trees by the end of September. The species were determined with the owners.
- Jay mentioned that he plans to add a plaque to the tree given by Hartney Greymont for the 9/11 memorial with their words from the bequest. HG also has pruned and helped the Town maintain its plantings.
- Tree Regulations: Years ago, the Shade Tree committee made recommendations that the Selectboard did not vote on. Lucia wondered if Jay had any recommendations for clarifying the law over the next few months. It was decided that a smaller subcommittee of 3-5 people will be formed to review the laws around shade trees and plantings in the median. The Selectboard will have to approve any changes to the law. Eva wondered about the grey areas in the law around planting in the median, and Jay agreed and mentioned that enforcement is patchy.
- Jay mentioned an owner who built a garage and found out after the garage was built that getting a permit to remove the street tree that sits squarely in front of the garage is difficult and requires a tree-hearing in front of the Selectboard. Chris mentioned that an owner submitting for a building Permit has to get the signature of the Fire Chief prior to the submission. Requiring the owner to get Jays signoff on projects with street tree issues could be added to the owner's responsibility prior to submitting for Permit.
- Jay mentioned that in Brookline, removing a street tree is very difficult and the owner has to pay for the trees value and future value, costing owners in the tens of thousands. Tom Brady is their tree quarterback and he is serious about keeping trees.
- Jay mentioned that most of the Towns narrow strips aren't large enough for large trees, which require a 4'-0 x 4'-0" planting area. Chris mentioned that the planting area can be jogged over but the path has to remain 3'-0". Jay mentioned that sometimes it goes the other way into the street and causes all sorts of problems.
- Chris mentioned that there is a provision in the law that allows street trees to be planted on private property and Jay felt that it is too soon to add that possibility to our needs list with so many other pressing issues.
- Jay mentioned that it costs over \$800 per tree for a tree to be planted and watered for a year. Any trees planted in the median by a homeowner belong to the Town of Belmont.
- There are many volunteers who help with Belmont's present plantings. Including the idea of a volunteer army to help plant trees is not an impossibility.

The Committee reviewed the following ongoing projects:

- The Library: no review since no planting plan yet. On the Nov ballot. The arborist for the landscape designer will be asked to talk with us about the project. Vicki asked that they employ best practices to keep trees alive during construction. The dawn redwood and the Woodlawn gardens will be protected.

- Clay Pit Pond: There are some dead trees, the extent will be unknown until next spring.
- HS Building: All trees will be planted Spring 2023.
- Town Field: Starts construction on September 19th. Some trees planted and some removed.
- Grove Street: Some of the London Plane Trees look in poor health.
- Police Station: Has a viable watering system.
- Alexander underpass: No plans yet.
- Community Path: Eva will speak with Russell Leino who is the Chair about this.
- Wellington easement: Two Norway Maples removed, and a few other trees removed at Cottage and School. Cottage Street playground will hopefully be partially funded through the CPA.
- Lucia moved that the Cottage Street Project be added to the list and the Wellington Easement be removed from the list.
- Payson Park is not yet in final design. Two trees might be affected.
- The Belmont Hill School: Lucia will draft a letter to the Belmont Hill School concerning the large number of trees to be cut down to produce a large parking lot to recommend that trees be planted throughout the parking lot. Vicki mentioned that one should not be allowed to remove a tree without serious consideration. The Planning Committee is meeting tomorrow night to discuss the project which also includes a building and access from the neighboring street. Eva mentioned that she will sit in to find out more in the hopes of stimulating more ideas.

The meeting ended at 17:37 and the next meeting will be on October 24th, 2022 at 16:30.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Chris Arthur.

Approved by Eva Hoffman, the Chair
Her electronic signature as required:

