

MIDDLETOWN URBAN FORESTRY COMMISSION
Regular Minutes of June 26, 2014

<u>MEMEBERS PRESENT</u>	<u>MEMBERS ABSENT</u>	<u>ALSO PRESENT</u>
Jane Harris	Tony Marino	James Sipperly, Staff
Jeremy Clark	Chris Holden	Dana Whitney, City Arborist
Ken Ahnell	Jackie Ceberek	Bill Russo, PW Director, Mark Peryga, homeowner

1. Roll Call

Chairperson Jane Harris called the meeting to order at 4:34pm in the conference room at the Water and Sewer Department Headquarters. The roll was called and a quorum was not determined. The following are informal minutes of the meeting.

1) Review Minutes of May 22, 2014

The minutes of May 22, were reviewed by the Commission members present.
Motion: To approve the minutes of May 22, 2014 as presented.
Moved by Ken; Seconded by Jeremy, approved unanimously.

At the suggestion by staff, the Chairperson would like to move New Business item #1 616 East Main Street tree removal to this time on the agenda. The Commission members agreed.

Jim stated that this item was added to the agenda at the request of Mark Peryga who wrote an email to Bill Russo, Public Works Director, on June 13, 2014. Mark wanted to discuss the condition of a city tree near his house at 616 East Main Street. Mark presented historical information on this tree that he has been documenting for a number of years. He presented a video of the tree branch catching fire when a low branch hit the power lines in an ice/snow storm. Mark also stated that numerous large branches continually to drop at various times of the year and due to the height of the tree could be deadly to anyone underneath them. Mark also mentioned that when the city reconstructed the road they cut into the embankment and cut and exposed many of the trees roots on the road side. Jane agreed that the root system has been compromised as a result and the roots are girdled around its base. Mark stated that also CL&P has pruned the tree horribly and the tree has been limbed in half. He also stated that he has been going back and forth with Rick Romano and Bill Sbona on this for a while now. Mark also stated that CL&P has removed trees in better condition and that are located further back on the street.

Dana Whitney reported that he did an evaluation on this large sycamore 3 years ago and that at that time documented that the tree is a healthy tree and recommended that the tree not be removed. He just recently did another inspection and his findings are the same that the tree is healthy and it should not be removed. Dana further stated Sycamore's are a really strong tree and there is no overriding reason for this tree to come down.

Mark stated that he has lived there for 8 years and the tree has been declining and dropping branches.

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Bill Russo is also the Tree Warden. Jim stated that he wanted to remind everyone that the UFC is advisory to the City and other departments. The ultimate decision for this tree removal lies with Bill and he has his authorization by state statutes. Bill stated that since now, at this meeting, the city has been put on notice of a danger and if nothing was done and something did happen the city would be liable. Bill stated that he received that advice directly from the city attorney's office. Bill also stated that he continues to want to work closely with the UFC and would never go against its recommendations.

Mark thanked the Commission for its time and left the meeting. Jim will contact him with the outcome of the Commission's decision. Much additional discussion occurred.

Motion: That the Sycamore tree at or near 616 East Main Street be removed by the city or CL&P.

Moved by Ken; seconded by Jeremy, approved unanimously

2. Old Business

3) Tree Warden Report

Bill reported that the trees out at Westlake Drive have been getting watered, at least once a week they are getting a good soaking. He also reported that Asplundh was awarded the new tree bid. He reported that they have been great to work with. Bill also stated that one tree in front of Citizens Bank is dead and two near Itkin's and Amato's needs to be removed. He asked if an Autumn Gold was good for Main Street and Jane said it would be fine.

Bill also reported that many trees will be removed at Woodrow Wilson Middle School for the improvements there. Bill said that City trees will be posted, Dana added those are all city trees. Because of the tennis court and track all the trees have to go, and there will be a 1:1 ration to replace.

Bill also said that the city is working the CT DOT to remove the Austrian Pines along Route 9 near Harbor Park.

1) Tree Nursery Update

Jim reported that the new fence is up and looks great. The fence is wire and very strong and deer will not be able to over it or through it. A large gate was also installed for easy access and it will accommodate the large tractor the city uses for mowing. A final bill is forthcoming and it will be paid with the remaining LOCIP funds.

5) Middletown Garden Club Centennial Celebration

Jane reported that the tree species has been selected and the sites. A base map is needed to use at a meeting with the CT DOT. Jim reported that the CT DOT said they are willing to work with us on this project. Chris Holden, who has been out recently agreed to develop the base map.

6) Veterans Memorial Trees

Jim reported that the trees have been delivered and need to be planted ASAP. Ken Ahnell apologized for not being able to plant them. The Commission appreciated that he volunteered to do it in the first place and are glad he is feeling better and in attendance today. Jim has asked for some bids and is awaiting the costs. Veterans Group is very pleased that we are doing this, as Jim met with them recently. The Water Department has been watering them in the morning and afternoon.

7) Trees of Honor Memorial

Jane reported that at last month's meeting the UFC voted to sponsor a tree and at that time we thought the cost was about \$350, but it's not, it's more like \$1000. Jim reported that that price includes the tree and a granite monument as well. Discussion ensued.

Motion: To expend \$500 towards the Trees of Honor Memorial for the purposes of purchasing a tree at the memorial.

Moved by Jeremy; seconded by Ken, approved unanimously

Jane also mentioned that the Wesleyan students are looking for community projects and perhaps we can have them volunteer at the Chestnut Farm. Jim will follow up with Wesleyan on this.

Jane also mentioned about a tree cut by Lutz tree and most likely the tree was a city tree. Jane will follow up with Bill who left the meeting earlier.

Motion: To adjourn at 5:35pm

Moved by Ken; seconded by Jeremy, approved unanimously