

Hamden Tree Commission

Meeting of Tuesday, June 16, 2020 at 6:30 p.m.

This meeting was held via Zoom

The Meeting ID is 97342275218, Password conifer
to call in, dial 1 312 626-6799

Minutes

Commissioners in Attendance: Mr. Parlapiano, Ms. Nathanson, Ms. Sternberg, Mr. Montgomery, Mr. Cummings

Others in Attendance: Legislative Councilman Mr. Macdowall, Consulting Arborist Mr. Harris, HAT Representative Ms. Hoffman, Commission Clerk Ms. Tobin

Call to Order

Mr. Parlapiano called the meeting to order at 6:59 p.m.

Approval of minutes of regular meeting of February 18, 2020

The following corrections were made to the minutes: Remove "Informal Notes" from the heading; 2nd Paragraph under Old Business: line 2, insert regarding Targeted Risk Management (TRM) after meeting; page 2, 1st paragraph, the substation referred to should not have been referred to as the on on Whitney Avenue near Millbrook Road, but instead, the one at the Eli Whitney Museum on Whitney Avenue, for the substation decommissioning project. The Comment by Ms. Nathanson made regarding the area being a flood zone, should be disregarded; Start new paragraph at Mr. Parlapiano; under Notable Trees, second line, change Silby's to Sibley's; under #3 Tree Planting, 3rd line, change to Mr. Montgomery said that trees are usually planted within 10' ...; under #4, first line, insert could instead of will.

Ms. Nathanson made a motion to approve the minutes of the February 18, 2020 meeting as corrected. Ms. Sternberg seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous in favor.

Public comments on agenda items

Diane Hoffman of Hamden Alliance for Trees (HAT) asked the status of the Tree Ordinance. The Ordinance originally submitted to the Town Attorney for review was returned to the Commission with comments. Mr. Parlapiano said the Commission went along with most of the Town Attorney's suggestions, but understands if there is something legal that we can't change, that's okay. The Ordinance was again returned it to the Town Attorney in January 2020. It was given to Legislative Councilman Brad Macdowall in February. Mr. Macdowall said he will review the latest version with the Town Attorney and propose what the Tree Commission wants to incorporate and hopefully next month get it to the Legislative Council's Agenda.

Mr. Macdowall mentioned the 42 acres added to Brooksvale secured largely by grant funds to purchase open space land to be preserved by the Hamden Land Trust.

Ms. Hoffman asked how the budget cuts will affect the plans to plant trees. Mr. Macdowall doesn't believe that line was cut. The funding of the Town Arborist was not cut. He will check. Mr. Montgomery said Craig Cesare reached out to him about tree planting, but it is too late in the season to plant. Mr. Montgomery believes the money is still there to purchase trees. Mr. Macdowall will get back to Mr. Parlapiano regarding the funds for the purchase of trees.

Ms. Hoffman asked in terms of the gift fund, who decides what kind of trees get planted with the money. Mr. Parlapiano doesn't have the ordinance in front of him, but believes the Tree Commission is in charge of these funds. Ms. Hoffman wants to ask the Town for something in writing saying the account can't be swept. Mr. Montgomery said the Tree Commission can only recommend what trees to plant, and Public Works never overrides the recommendations.

Ms. Hoffman asked if people can continue to request trees. Mr. Montgomery responded yes, especially in southwestern Hamden.

Old Business

1. Tree Activity Report
 - Public Works: Trees planted/Removed/Pruned/Permits issues
 - UI Vegetation Management Status

Ms. Hoffman asked Mr. Harris if he received the email she sent him asking what streets are in the 6th circuit. United Illuminating reported that they pruned 675 trees and removed six. She wants to know what streets were UI's answer to PURA. Mr. Harris said he was not sure. Mr. Parlapiano suggested Ms. Hoffman go to the Tree Commission web page and look on UI's Plan, which shows the streets in each circuit.

Ms. Hoffman asked in terms of the UPZ, is UI complying with the rule of the Mayor allowing Mr. Harris to work with the Tree Warden. Mr. Harris said he checks everything UI and their subcontractors are doing. No ground to sky pruning is allowed, but there is a fine line. Ms. Hoffman would like to resend the article Mr. Parlapiano wrote and will send it to him for revision if necessary.

Mr. Harris showed a map of the area where utility pole replacements are going on.

2. Notable Trees

The sargent cherry moved with a tree spade to Chris Rendiero Park in northern Hamden will be the notable tree for July. Mr. Montgomery will get the information to Ms. Nathanson. Mr. Montgomery took some photos of a pin oak for future use. Ms. Nathanson reported that the Blue Spruce at her old house that was State champion has to be taken down. Mr. Harris said it is continuing to die off. He said the three big ash trees are still doing well. Mr. Montgomery will pass the news on the blue spruce along to the State for its data base. Mr. Montgomery visited the big leaf magnolia at 617 Evergreen Avenue near Knob Hill, and he thinks it is a State champion. It is in the data base.

3. Tree Planting Update

Mr. Parlapiano said the perhaps the tree planting can be done in the fall. He said the Public Works crew worked very well this spring. Mr. Cesare said the funds are still there but it is already too hot. Mr. Montgomery has a list of 27 requests. He will need input from the Engineering Department.

There was discussion on the trees on Whitney Avenue in Whitneyville. Whitneyville Civic Association had this subject on their agenda for April, but Mr. Parlapiano has not heard back. On the Playwright block eight cherries were planted in 3 x 3 tree pits. Only two are alive and healthy and two are dead. On Putnam Avenue near Whitney a red maple is diseased and needs to be removed. Near Soup Girl, two pears should be removed and in the same block two ginkgoes appear to be healthy. The red maples planted in tree pits are not doing well, but the sycamores are although they are probably too big for the area. They have deep roots and can find water. South of Putnam, the Calgary pears should be replaced with ginkgo. Near Playwright, perhaps planters instead of trees. Ms. Sternberg said you can't replant in tree pits without removing the root balls. Ms. Sternberg also mentioned there were no tree pits where the pear trees are. They were part of a sidewalk improvement program in the early 2000. They were originally planted to keep people from driving on the sidewalk. Two rubber trees planted by Whitneyville Market died and they replaced them with Ginkgo.

Mr. Montgomery would like to send an email to the Tree Warden asking him to post the five trees he mentioned (two cherries, a red maple and two pears). He will also talk to Mr. Siciliano regarding the removal of root balls and planting ginkgo trees, and perhaps placing planters instead of trees near Playwright. Ms. Sternberg mentioned perhaps a sidewalk improvement plan with a greenbelt.

4. Educational Outreach

Mr. Parlapiano said the tree pruning at the municipal parking lot in Spring Glen should be pushed back to the fall. He mentioned the commercials he has seen for discovertheforest.org. They have some nice tree activities including tree identification, which will make a nice addition to the Commission's web page.

Mr. Montgomery read a poem written by a Fairfield student. Commissioners had no objection to his sending it to Mr. Donnelly for posting.

5. Other Old Business

- Tree Ordinance

Discussed earlier with Mr. Macdowall. Hopefully we will be on the road to a Tree Ordinance, thanks to Brad.

Mr. Parlapiano thanked Commissioners for the materials they submitted for the annual report.

New Business

1. Trees on Whitney Avenue in Whitneyville
Discussed earlier in the meeting.

2. Tree planting to mark Earth Day with Clean & Green Commission

3. Other New Business

Solar Farm on 15 acres of private land on Gaylord Mountain Road

Ms. Hoffman advised that HAT had a meeting and Ms. Nathanson was in attendance. A 15 acre solar farm is proposed for 15 acres of private land. The project needs a permit from the Connecticut Siting Council. Mr. Montgomery said that Dan Kops had advised him that local residents can ask the Siting Council to have a hearing. Ms. Nathanson feels it is important to have a letter from the Tree Commission reflecting our concern. The project would clear cut a forested area. Mr. Parlapiano showed the area on a map. The project on Gaylord Mountain is to support Gateway Community College. He said no trees would have to be cut if the project was located at the old New Haven Dump.

There was discussion on the Siting Council, which is similar to PURA in structure. Ms. Hoffman said nothing will ever change at the Siting Council unless people stand up.

Mr. Parlapiano asked for a motion that the Commission draft a letter of concern, to be run past the Town Attorney, to send to the Siting Council, regarding the proposal for a solar array on 15 acres of private land on Gaylord Mountain Road in Hamden. Ms. Nathanson so moved. Ms. Sternberg seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous in favor.

Ms. Hoffman expressed her concerns regarding PURA Docket 18-12-25. Due to concerns regarding United Illuminating and TRM, PURA sent eight questions to UI and two to DEEP to work on their concerns. UI responded that TRM was their plan to address all trees that they were behind on on their maintenance schedule. This maintenance is an emergency to them because they want t get it done. It has taken away their need to get a permit, etc.

Mr. Harris said he is reviewing all of the TRM work. UI agreed that he could go along with the tree warden and the workers, and he gets along well with them. There is over-site. He hasn't seen anything that's a big deal. They have been trimming suckers. He likes to think we have eyes on what is going on. PURA's docket is open indefinitely. The hearing is scheduled for June 23rd. Ms. Hoffman said we worked hard to get laws in place and TRM takes away the rights of the abutting property owner to have a say. Mr. Harris said he sees no problem. Mr. Harris wants Hamden residents to know someone is watching. Ms. Hoffman said UPZ work is not TRM. Mr. Parlapiano agreed people should read the interrogatories and send comments.

Adjournment

Ms. Nathanson made a motion to adjourn Mr. Montgomery seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous in favor. The meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.