

Hamden Tree Commission
Main Floor Conference Room Hamden Government Center
Meeting of Tuesday, August 18, 2015
Minutes

Commissioners in Attendance: Tom Parlapiano, Jill Nathanson, Mike Montgomery,
Susan Sternberg

Commissioners Excused: Andy Brand

Others in Attendance: Arborist Geoff Harris, Diane Hoffman, Harmon Street Guest,
Gerry Tobin, Commission Clerk

Call to order

Mr. Parlapiano called the meeting to order at 6:40 p.m.

Approval of minutes of regular meeting of July 21, 2015

The following corrections were made to the minutes: Page 1, item 1, first line, after “letter” insert going to the Planning and Zoning Commission; 5th line after “authorization” insert of the Planning and Zoning Commission so the tree warden has the option of using these trees, and delete remainder of sentence. Page 2, 3rd paragraph, first & second line, remove sentence beginning Mr. Parlapiano; 7th paragraph first line change first sentence to Ms. Nathanson suggested... and add Ms. Sternberg agreed. Page 4, Item 5, third paragraph, change Government Center to Fountain; 4th paragraph, first line, change Monroe to Melrose.

On the attachment “Tree Removal Policy” correct numbering on first page to 1., 2., 3. (and add bullet points to last paragraph – trees will not be removed for the following reasons)

Ms. Nathanson made a motion to approve the minutes of July 21, 2015 as corrected. Ms. Sternberg seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous in favor.

Public Comments on Agenda Items

There were no public comments.

Old Business

1. Changes to Tree List

There was discussion on changes to the tree list. Mr. Montgomery will discuss with Planning and Zoning the list of recommended trees and understands that the tree warden works off of this list and there is a need to be flexible. There was discussion on the replacement of the trees being removed on Hogan Road. Mr. Montgomery will move forward with the letter to Planning and Zoning.

2. Tree Policies/Ordinance/Permits

Mr. Harris needs to revisit the tree removal policy. He has to do the report on Hogan Road for the Legislative Council. He said the biggest issue for him is not knowing the width of the town right of way – which will define whether a tree is a town or a private tree. If it is a town tree, and it is in the UPZ (Utility Protection Zone) it has to be posted. Ms. Nathanson said that is correct. Mr. Harris said that has not been the case. Ms. Nathanson said if it is on the side of Sleeping Giant, it is on state property. The state property goes to the pavement of the road. Mr. Montgomery said the area around Sleeping Giant is clearly under the jurisdiction of the park commissioners. The Town has no jurisdiction. There is no Town owned right of way along state roads. There was discussion on who replaces sidewalks along state roads.

Mr. Montgomery showed a map illustrating areas on Chestnut Lane that belong to the state. Blue Trail is mostly private property.

Mr. Harris' other point concerns Quinnipiac University, and whether the Town has any say in what happens to the trees abutting the road along their property. It appears that Quinnipiac has given UI carte blanche. Mr. Montgomery disagreed and said the Town warden does have a say, as do the homeowners, and the decision can be appealed to PURA. Ms. Nathanson said if UI just goes ahead and does what it wants, that is a violation of state law. Right now Hogan Road has Mr. Harris' attention. He said the proposal for Hogan Road is vague and inaccurate.

Mr. Harris is meeting with UI tomorrow at 8 a.m. He would like all commissioners to see Hogan Road. Mr. Parlapiano asked Mr. Harris if he is finding the policy useful. Mr. Harris responded that it has been somewhat useful. Mr. Parlapiano would like input from Mr. Harris about any modifications he feels would make the policy more effective.

Mr. Parlapiano said the Ordinance that created this commission states that it is the commission's job to create policy, which has to be enacted by the Mayor, and then Town employees will start to follow that policy. Prior to this commission writing the policy, there was no policy. The Town has to be consistent, therefore we need a policy. Mr. Montgomery said he hopes the Legislative Council will make it clear that these policies need to be enforced by the Town.

The notice currently posted on trees by the Tree Warden includes references to Section 7-152b of the Connecticut General Statutes and Title 7, Section 70 of the Hamden Town Code, which refer to traffic/streets. These references need to be clarified.

Ms. Nathanson asked Mr. Harris if he can think of a tree that has been taken down that is in the Town right of way. Mr. Harris believes the ones he has seen were on state property, and he has no say about what is going on on Chestnut Lane. If a tree is in the

Town right of way, it must be posted, because anyone from the public has the right to object.

Today Mr. Montgomery talked to Mr. Bassett of 335 Blue Trail. He said trees have been cut by Asplundh. Mr. Bassett also said UI personnel have spoken with him. None of these trees were posted. North Haven is posting their trees.

Nine of the affected residents on Hogan Road said no to brush removal. The strategy by the utility companies is to cut down all the big trees near the utilities. The strategy mentions leaving the smaller trees in the understory. This should not be happening. The Legislative Council regarding Hogan Road said that mature trees should not be removed. The statement that the Town Attorney drafted for the Legislative Council giving approval for UI to go ahead with its work plan on Hogan Road needs modification. He has seen clear cuts, but has never seen anything cut to the ground.

Mr. Harris will approach tomorrow's meeting with the thought that a softer approach is needed to keep the look of the Town's scenic roads (there are 4 in town). He said there are many inconsistencies/vagaries in the proposal. He doesn't think a crew would know what to do when they arrive at a scene. He has put green ribbon around many trees that he feels should not be removed. Ms. Sternberg said the first question that needs to be answered is is this a public or private tree. If there is a question about a tree, UI would have to go to the Town engineering department to determine who has authority. Mr. Harris said Mr. Green has not given approval for any trees on Hogan Road to be cut. Ms. Sternberg said she felt the letter Mr. Green sent to Council gave approval. Ms. Nathanson agreed. Mr. Harris said the only trees that were cut on Hogan Road were the ones on private property and the owner gave permission.

Mr. Parlapiano said UI gives the tree location as between the poles, instead of using the GPS coordinates which we have consistently requested for verification purposes. There needs ~~has~~ to be a meeting between UI, Mayor Leng, Public Works Tree Warden, and the Town Engineer. There was discussion on the trees listed for removal on Quinipiac property. Ms. Nathanson said there should be an immediate halt to this.

Mr. Montgomery is concerned about inaccuracies in the list of trees and addresses included in the consent letter that the town attorney drafted. The Legislative Council should have the Town Tree Warden provide a correct list of trees that are proposed for removal, and they should be posted. There was discussion regarding inconsistencies on the list. Mr. Montgomery identified the portion of Hogan Road that is a scenic road.

Mr. Parlapiano will call the Mayor's office tomorrow and let him know that the Town needs to take a greater role in coordinating this process, and if he is concerned about this,

we need to set up a meeting. When Mr. Harris meets with UI, he can say “these are the concerns of the commissioners,” and point out the inaccuracies.

3. Commission website ideas

Ms. Sternberg and Mr. Parlapiano met with Chief of Staff Julie Smith and webpage manager Patrick Donnelly and discussed the commission's website and what changes the Commission can make. The commission mostly wants to have links to informational sites. Ms. Sternberg mentioned treesaregood.org, which is user friendly and includes a utility section. It should be easy for citizens to access the Tree Commission page. Other items to include are: Request a Tree, Tree Ordinance, Commission mission statement and goals; approved tree list, how to care for trees, etc. Mr. Parlapiano sent out an email asking people for ideas as to what they want to put on the site. We can provide as many links as we want. The site can be reviewed in draft form before it is made live. Mr. Parlapiano will send his draft around again as a starting point. Ideas should be sent to Ms. Sternberg. Mr. Parlapiano would like to see the page ready by the end of September. We should try to find information that is professional, not controversial, and is readily available.

Mr. Parlapiano had asked about an email address that people could use to contact us. Ms. Smith suggested that communications with commissions is now handled through the Help Desk.. There are currently seven people that have requested trees. Ms. Sternberg mentioned a form to be used for the tree request. There was discussion on how and when a person requesting a tree might get one.

Harmon Street Tree

Mr. Montgomery reported there were no trees near the tree that has been posted for removal. He did a quick inventory of the street noting the size and species of the 25 trees on the street. The posted tree was not in good shape and he felt it should be removed. He noted three other trees with mushrooms growing out of their base. On the wire side of the street there were only nine trees. He mentioned pear trees planted by neighbors on the south side that look terrible. Mr. Montgomery marked all of the trees. He said dogwoods and crabapples are doing well and that Harmon Street has a fairly decent tree lawn and could use some tree activity. Permits are required for planting trees in the tree lawn, and the process should be simple, but we want to be able to let residents know which trees would be appropriate.

4. Fall Event Ideas

Mr. Parlapiano reported two events coming up. The Whitneyville Fall Festival is on September 12th from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. The Brooksvale Fall Festival takes place on September 26th. Mr. Parlapiano said the commission should have a presence at these events and coverage is needed.

Mr. Brand wants to lead a tree walk and we need to pick streets that have a variety of trees. There are six neighborhoods in Town plus some other areas. Columbus Day weekend was suggested as a possible time to schedule these.

5. Other old business

6. New Business

1. Hogan Road Update

2. Public Hearing: tree at 117 Harmon Rd
Results will probably be available tomorrow.

3. Review of State Tree Trimming Statute

Mr. Parlapiano e-mailed the relevant state statutes to members of the Commission to review. Any questions will be discussed at the next meeting.

4. Public Works Tree Activity

Tree Planting/Removal/Pruning/Permits Issued

No report from Public Works

5. Tree Request List – 7 on list now.

There are currently seven names on the tree request list. Mr. Parlapiano said that he has been told that there is \$100,000 to spend on trees in the next three years. Now is the time to plan for that. Ms. Nathanson said Woodin Street would be a great spot for tree planting with everything that is going on there.

Mr. Parlapiano would like to get Public Works to tell us where the Town's responsibility ends when they ~~we~~ plant a tree.

6. Other new business

Adjournment

Ms. Nathanson made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Sternberg seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous in favor. The meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Submitted by: _____
Gerry Tobin, Commission Clerk