

# *Hamden Tree Commission*

*Main Floor Conference Room, Hamden Government Center*

*Meeting of Tuesday, January 19, 2016*

## **MINUTES**

*6:30 P.M.*

Commissioners in Attendance: Tom Parlapiano, Andy Brand, Mike Montgomery, Jill Nathanson

Commissioner Excused: Susan Sternberg

Others in Attendance: Consulting Arborist Geoff Harris, Hamden Alliance For Trees (HAT) member Diane Hoffman, Commission Clerk Gerry Tobin

Call to order

Ms. Nathanson called the meeting to order at 6:39 p.m.

Approval of minutes of regular meeting of December 15, 2015:

Pg. 2, paragraph two, line two, after West Todd, change have to “are proposed”

Pg. 2, Item 2, paragraph 2, change Mr. Parlapiano to “Mr. Montgomery”

**Mr. Brand made a motion to approve the minutes of December 15, 2016. Ms. Nathanson seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous in favor.**

Mr. Cesare said he is not aware of a permit for the tree removal in the Westwoods area. Mr. Montgomery mentioned that United Illuminating (UI) said they have done work on Paradise Avenue to Four Rod Road and there are trees marked near Westwoods School on Still Hill Road.

Public Comments on Agenda Items

There were no members of the public in attendance.

Old Business

### 1. UI Vegetation Management Status/Permit Review

Mr. Parlapiano heard that trees were cut down on Dunbar Hill Road, and more are tagged. This is a work plan that we haven't seen. Mr. Cesare knows of nothing new happening in the Dunbar Hill area. Mr. Cesare said UI would like to do their wood recovery program for Hamden. UI would move the logs to a municipal site and then the Town can sell the wood. Mr. Montgomery said there is a private company in Hamden that has a contract with UI to remove the wood. Wood is offered to the adjacent property owners, and if the wood remains after about a month, UI will come and take it.

Mr. Parlapiano asked if the tree removal permits are issued by Tony Green. Mr. Cesare said yes, and UI permits are checked over by the Town Attorney. There has been some discussion about tightening up the permit process. Mr. Cesare said there have never been permits until now. If someone wanted to take down a town tree in the past, they were

given verbal permission. Mr. Parlapiano said the only input this commission has had to the permit process was when the Town Attorney forwarded the Hogan Road permit to Mr. Parlapiano and he added some verbiage, but he doesn't know if the language was included in the actual permit. Mr. Cesare said commission should request copies of the permits from Public works.

Mr. Parlapiano said he would like to figure out a way that we can get notice of the permits at the time they are issued so commissioners will be aware when people ask him questions. Mr. Cesare said that a meeting with the Mayor that got cancelled a week or two ago has been rescheduled for some time next week. Mr. Montgomery mentioned that the tree commission has to get up to speed on the work plans.

Ms. Nathanson said that we have also talked about getting Mr. Harris in the planning and said we hoped that the town arborist would be able to review the proposed tree removal/pruning. Mr. Cesare said UI is just tagging right now, and the next step would be for the commission and Mr. Harris to review the plan. Mr. Cesare was not aware of the work being done on Dunbar Hill Road.

Mr. Cesare said UI was given a permit for Mt. Carmel Avenue. There was one objection and one concern, and Public Works went out, met with that person, addressed his concerns and moved on. Mr. Cesare said we don't have the time or the resources to do another Hogan Road. Mr. Parlapiano felt the tree warden should be going tree by tree, and using Mr. Harris' expertise when needed, and change UI's work plan to what we want to see it look like. Ms. Nathanson said we want to get the wording into the permit.

Going up West Todd Street, Mr. Harris noticed a different situation as opposed to Hogan Road. There is a lot of wooded area where the removal of a few trees might not be noticeable. When you go to certain areas that have been clear cut, it looks like a tornado went through that street. We don't want to see that on our roads. There was discussion regarding the trees that came down on Denslow Hill Road. Mr. Harris said the commitment has to come from the Mayor down. Mr. Cesare guarantees that the Mayor doesn't want UI to do in Hamden what they did in North Haven. Mr. Montgomery also mentioned that citizens should know what their rights are. Ms. Nathanson suggested that instead of the doorknob hangers that UI is handing out, Hamden residents should be given something written by this commission.

Mr. Parlapiano said it should be as easy for someone to file an objection as it is to give permission to remove/prune trees. Mr. Cesare would like to know how we could get a copy of what the homeowners on Hogan Road signed for UI giving permission or objecting. Mr. Cesare told of the many QAlerts they get on a daily basis about getting trees removed. Mr. Parlapiano wants to even the process out. If someone files an objection to UI, they should copy the Town.

Mr. Parlapiano mentioned the letter being drafted by the commission to go out to homeowners in the UI work area. Mr. Harris said it should be bullet points, one page,

simple to read, and provide options. It should also refer to Tree Commission's web site for further information.

## 2. Tree Ordinance

The only update Mr. Parlapiano has heard is that the Mayor has his people working on the tree ordinance. Mr. Montgomery found information from the Beautification Committee from 1993 that he will scan and forward to commissioners. Mr. Montgomery read what should be included in a Municipal Ordinance.

## 3. Commission Website

Ms. Sternberg was unable to attend tonight's meeting but submitted a letter via email to the commissioners which Ms. Nathanson read. Ms. Sternberg met with Patrick Donnelly of the Mayor's Office and made progress on getting Tree Commission items up and viewable to the public. She sent him a couple of changes today and feels it looks pretty good. She also learned that Mr. Donnelly manages the press and social media for the Town, and he has agreed to schedule release of commission articles to the newspapers. He will also be working on a newsletter that will feature the various Town boards and commissions. She also learned that he will be organizing the Town Earth Day event this year.

Mr. Harris said he has a draft of a tree article that he wrote, and wondered how many words would be acceptable.

## 4. Notable Tree List

Mr. Brand had something that Jim Brandi put together back in 1993, which Mr. Montgomery can also scan. Mr. Parlapiano mentioned a Sugar Maple at Benham Street and Megin Road. Mr. Brand mentioned a huge Sycamore and Mr. Parlapiano mentioned some massive Tulip trees at West Rock Nature Center. Mr. Parlapiano said we have a list of Hamden trees on the State notable tree list. We can get that to Ms. Sternberg to post on the web site. This might tie in to something we do for Arbor Day. Mr. Montgomery said we have an American Chestnut that is the oldest in the state (or country) near Chesnut Lane.

## 5. Other old business

### New Business

#### 1. Public Works Tree Activity Report

##### Tree Planting/Removal/Pruning/Permits Issued

Mr. Parlapiano asked Mr. Cesare if he could put a report together every month showing trees added and trees removed. Mr. Parlapiano said this commission has been charged with developing a tree management plan. This information would help the commission to be in the loop. Mr. Montgomery had a report on all of the stumps to be removed and tree requests from a period of time after the tornado. The Town received grant money and planted 500 trees. FEMA gave the town about \$75,000 to replace trees in the Newhall Street area. Public Works started to do the work, and FEMA said no, you have to have a

contractor. Stump removal was discussed. Mr. Cesare said the stumps are all removed by Public Works. Stumps present no danger, so many other issues take precedent. Mr. Cesare said he would prepare some kind of report for the commission. He explained that tree work has been minimal in the last couple of months because the workmen have all be on leaf pickup. They have a nine person tree crew but they have other work to do. When you figure in five weeks each vacation, there are some limits to what they can do.

Ms. Nathanson's request for a tree pruning permit wa denied by Mr. Green. Mr. Cesare said the philosophy has been that the Town doesn't prune for aesthetic reasons. There are also labor issues to deal with. Mr. Parlapiano said he believes that one of the things the tree warden should be doing is issuing permits where appropriate for pruning town trees. Technically speaking, Public Works is supposed to prune Town trees. Mr. Cesare mentioned that the property owner adjacent to Hamden High School where Wooden Tap is located, is going to hire someone to prune the trees that are hanging over Town property.

## 2. Spring Tree Planting Plans

### a. Furman Street & Others

Mr. Montgomery said we have been contacted about planting on Furman Street. There are 36 homes and 12 trees on that street. He also looked at Lent Road. Mr. Cesare also mentioned Leo Road. Mr. Montgomery said there needs to be community involvment. We should meet with people in the community to see what they want, ask if they want a tree or not. We should focus on those streets and the library planting. Mr. Cesare said they got some random requests because of the HAT letter that went out. We could plant 12-15 trees each for Furman and Lent and plant in one day in a concentrated area. Mr. Cesare said budget wise, we are still in good shape with funding. It was suggested we do a third project and ask Council members to ask their constituents where they would like to see trees planted. The bonded money for purchasing trees can also be used for overtime to plant the trees if necessary. Mr. Cesare would like to take a look at some of the parks such as Bassett, and plant more trees in the common areas. Perhaps we could do an Arbor Day Planting at the Library.

Mr. Parlapiano mentioned that Vinnie Lavorgna mentioned Ash trees near Brooksvale that probably need to come down. Would the town Try treating an Ash in a key location? Mr. Harris said he would have to look at it first, but it is possible to treat ash borers.

## 3. Arbor Day Ideas – Friday the 29<sup>th</sup> of April - Diane Hoffman

Ms. Hoffman distributed a printout with suggestions for an Arbor Day celebration involving kids, the young at heart, etc. She feels that good memories could be created on that day, and we could educate people about trees. We might be able to get people from other commissions to assist. Some suggestions were: name tree and place plaques on trees along Dixwell Avenue near the Town Hall; a writing contast with winners hanging their compositions at the Library; tours of natural areas adjacent to schools; teaching children how to identify trees. Mr. Montgomery has taken the girl scouts for nature walks around Spring Glen School and is willing to be the expert and would need

volunteers to help. Mr. Harris said if the Town is having an Earth Day Celebration, perhaps we should tie it to that. The Tree Commission gave out little trees at the Earth Day celebration last year. Ms. Hoffman also mentioned a reading of The Giving Tree at the Library for younger children. She also presented a song about trees to sing to Three Blind Mice. Ms. Nathanson mentioned perhaps we could do something at the Library. Mr. Montgomery said there was a plan for the mulched area in front of the Library to be replanted. This project should take place in the Spring and there are five trees proposed for that area as well as more shrubs (Mountain Laurel).

#### 4. Policies and Procedures

Ms. Nathanson asked if the commission has decided that we will only plant a tree in front of a house if the adjacent property owner is willing to water it. Having the homeowner sign a contract to care for the tree might encourage people to actually do it, although it would not be legally binding. Mr. Montgomery suggested that when planting a tree, put five gallons of water in the hole, and that would go along way.

#### 5. Other New Business

Ms. Tobin distributed information from the Town Attorney and the Town Clerk regarding remote participation in meetings, and this will be discussed at next month's meeting. Each commission has been asked to decide on a policy regarding this topic.

Mr. Harris read the rough draft of his article "Let's Talk Trees." Commissioners thought the article was good and liked the title. There was discussion on further articles.

#### 6. 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.**

Submitted by: \_\_\_\_\_  
Gerry Tobin, Commission Clerk