

CLEAN & GREEN COMMISSION

OUR TOWN, OUR NEIGHBORHOODS, KEEP HAMDEN CLEAN & GREEN

Informal Notes: The Clean & Green Commission held a Special Meeting on Monday, February 24, 2014 in the third floor conference room, Hamden Government Center. The following issues were discussed:

Commissioners in Attendance: Sandra Serrano Alvarado, Agnes Orłowski, Carl Jordan

Commissioners Excused: Peter Palmieri, Lisa Feliconio, Mary Solis

Others in Attendance: Diane Hoffman, Scott Howland, Solid Waste & Recycling Coordinator Pam Roach, Commission Clerk Gerry Tobin

1. Call to Order – 7:07

Ms. Serrano Alvarado called the meeting to order at 7:07 p.m. and introduced speaker Diane Hoffman, member of the Hamden Alliance for Trees (HAT) and former commission member.

2. Review Minutes of November 18, 2014

Postponed to March meeting due to lack of a quorum.

3. Old Business

4. New Business

Ms. Hoffman distributed a flyer regarding United Illuminating's (UI) Enhanced Tree Trimming Plan. This group got together when they heard of UI's plan. Hamden is a pilot town and UI planned to start in January. Lisa Hammomoto and Ms. Hoffman started emailing everyone and put together this group of people called Hamden Alliance for Trees (HAT). They fully support the removal of dead and diseased trees and the trimming of trees, but they also believe UI should grind the stumps of removed trees so new trees can be planted, and trees that are removed should be replaced by UI. They believe there is a need to balance the need to protect the electric grid and power delivery for residences and businesses with the need to preserve the Town's tree scape. They feel the original plan was not balanced. They also believe that if UI had been doing the maintenance they should have been doing the trees would not have fallen on power lines. Wallingford has its own electric service and they experienced no power outages due to trees during the same storms, because they were doing their tree maintenance.

The first article about UI's plan was in the newspaper on 12/11/13 placed by The Garden Club of New Haven. They had their first meeting on 12/15 and started reaching out to organizations. On 12/16 the Energy Use and Climate Change Commission (EUCC) passed a motion that said the The Energy Use & Climate Change Commission recommend that in setting the rules, and in the Town's implementation of those rules for cutting down trees, a balance be preserved between taking down the trees that are clearly putting power distribution at risk, and preserving as many trees as possible for the benefits those trees provide.

Ms. Hoffman was concerned because nothing had appeared in the Hamden papers and citizens were unaware of the Plan. She called the Chronicle, and Ms. Fredrickson published the article on 12/18/13. On 12/20/13, HAT filed an objection to the Plan with the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA). HAT send a letter to to Mayor Jackson asking him to meet with them, which he did in February. They also met with State Representative Mike D'Agostino.

On January 1st there was an article in the Post Chronicle saying that Mayor Jackson and Mr. D'Agostino asked UI to suspend the plan until they held public information sessions. UI did not do any communicating with the public, and didn't set up meetings. Ms. Hoffman contacted Ms. Mastropietre, president of the Dunbar Hill Civic Association, advising her that UI had not arranged a public session. Two UI representatives spoke to the DHCA in January. While the representatives were very nice, they couldn't answer some basic questions. UI got approved for \$100,000,000 for the Plan, and the largest part of that is for tree removal. The pilot program was only in the Dunbar Hill area, which UI chose because it is the least dense area and the residents were the last to get their power back after the storms. UI's plan is for the entire state, not for individual areas.

The flyer distributed by Ms. Hoffman listed the benefits of having trees.

Ms. Orłowski wondered what other towns are doing. Ms. Hoffman said the media has not been good about reporting on this plan, and many people are unaware of it.

UI had a meeting on 1/15 at the Hamden Middle School at 6:30 p.m. and about 200 people were in attendance. That was the second meeting giving people the opportunity to ask questions. Ms. Hoffman said Hamden's Council representatives stood together and said Hamden needs to hire an arborist which has been funded. There is a public session scheduled in Hamden on March 6th.

The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection made a statement that although PURA is part of their department, they don't have anything to do with each other. DEEP advised PURA that UI had to look Task Force Report done by the State. The state Vegetation Task Force Plan was a very balanced and good plan. UI took the report and totally ignored it.

Mr. Jordan said we want the power to be on during storms, but we don't want them to defoliate the town.

PURA had been asked by UI for a rate increase to do the tree cutting. PURA needs to have a bigger picture of how to serve the public.

Ms. Orłowski asked what Ms. Hoffman is asking the commission to do. Ms. Hoffman said HAT wants balance. UI is a large corporation with plenty of money and they have the money to do this right. There was discussion on burying wires.

Ms. Hoffman would like the Commission to consider passing a motion as follows: **The Clean & Green Commission endorses the need to balance the need to protect the electric grid and power delivery for residences and businesses with the need to preserve the Town's tree scape. Mr. Jordan moved accordingly and Ms. Orłowski seconded the motion.** Because a quorum was not available at the meeting, Ms. Serrano Alvarado will send an email out to commissioners requesting them to vote on the motion via email and respond by weeks end.

HAT asked the Mayor Jackson to have the town's tree warden not consent to any permissions to cut or

trim town trees until a tree expert was hired. \$25,000 has been said aside to pay for the services of a tree expert.

Ms. Hoffman said a law was passed stating that a property owner has to notify UI within 10 days of receiving a notice to remove tree/s that they don't want the work done, and if UI didn't hear within 10 days UI could do the cutting. UI said they would wait, in case an owner was out of town or a tenant in the home didn't pass the information on to the owner, but the law says they don't have to. In addition, UI's Plan is supposed to go from 2014 onward – with no review. They should have periodic reviews to determine how the Plan is working. Also, UI put the burden of telling the public on Mayors and First Selectmen, instead of taking it on themselves.

Mr. Howland said he lost a tree on his property during the storm, and he knew it would come down, and he had reported that tree to the UI. Mr. Howland agrees with some of the points and not others. He said last year he lost his power several times. He lives in the pilot area, and UI has been out trimming and removing trees. We have had many storms this year, and he has not lost his power even once.

Ms. Hoffman said don't make the trees the villains, they are the victims.

New Business:

Earth Day discussion

Ms. Orłowski said last year she went to Paradise Nursery two weeks before Earth Day and they had no open plants. The next week she went and got all of the open flowers that they had available (140) and we gave all of them away. Her concern is finding open plants this year since our Earth Day celebration is early. Seed packets were suggested, but Paradise has to purchase the seed packets, so they won't give us seeds, but they are willing to give us plants. There was a suggestion to ask Home Depot for plants if Paradise doesn't have them available. Ms. Roach said Home Depot is a corporate sponsor of Earth Day and they do a lot.

There was discussion on the commission's Earth Day question for the scavenger hunt. Ms. Serrano Alvarado expressed concern that we now have so few members and it might be difficult to man the table at Earth Day. Ms. Roach said she can get high school or Quinnipiac students to help.

Annual Report and Unfinished Business:

Ms. Serrano Alvarado asked about the status of the park sign replacement and should the commission do something as a group to beautify the areas around them. Ms. Roach will check.

There was discussion regarding the recycling totes, Ms. Roach said there have been many complaints about their size. She said the Town purchased 15,000 each of the larger ones and 2,000 each of the smaller ones. They started by delivering the smaller ones to the elderly.

On the subject of the street scape design update – light fixtures, bike racks etc., Ms. Orłowski said a bike rack has been installed at the intersection of Whitney and Putnam Avenues. Regarding the area at the intersection of Whitney and Dixwell Avenues, and the plan for planting trees on the corners and possible continuing down Whitney Avenue to the Library, Ms. Roach will ask the Mayor's Office. There was discussion on the stretch of sidewalk between the Cuozzo Building and the Library, and the need for some work in that area.

Ms. Serrano Alvarado asked if we could have an update on the \$25,000 for tree planting referred to in

the 7/15/14 minutes.

The commission would like an update on the letter to go out to businesses regarding keeping up their property, and the mailing list being developed by the Quinnipiac fellows. The letter was to be signed by the Mayor and the commission. Ms. Roach will mention this to the Mayor's Office. An update on the traffic calming projects and the Woodin Street fence would also be appreciated.

Ms. Serrano Alvarado also asked if the commission could partner with the Economic Development Commission on clean energy, or with other commissions.

There was discussion on the need for nominees for the Orchid Awards for a business and a citizen or citizens group. Ms. Serrano will email commissioners asking for suggestions.

Regarding graffiti, is there an opportunity for C&G to help?

Clean & Green supplies – Ms. Roach will check.

Are commissioners willing to march in the Memorial Day Parade

Regarding Quinnipiac's big event, Ms. Roach will forward the email she received from Quinnipiac.

5. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

Submitted by: _____
Gerry Tobin, Commission Clerk