

The Tree Commission Meeting for the City of New Castle took place on April 5, 2010 at 5:30 p.m. in the City of New Castle's Town Hall.

Members Present: Chip Patterson, Chairperson
Susan Keyser, Co-Chairperson
Erv Thatcher
Toby Hagerott
John Lloyd
Mark Miller

Members Absent: Fran Peden
Nancy Coning
Tom Truman

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Patterson at 5:35 p.m. Roll call was taken.

Approval of Minutes – Minutes for the March meeting will be addressed at the April meeting.

MEMBERS REPORT

Toby Hagerott – There is a tree in front of a residence on Fifth Street that appears to have been hit and has incurred damage. A branch may need to be cut back if it does not survive.

John Lloyd – At Sixth and Tremont Streets a tree has been improperly cut by an outside tree firm, possibly via Delmarva. A photo of the tree was shown to Commission members. Mr. Patterson suggested showing the photo to the arborist for Delmarva Power and ask him to encourage their people to do a better job. Delmarva has the right to trim trees as part of their franchise. Mr. Patterson will also invite the arborist to attend a future Tree Commission meeting. Delmarva operates on a 3-4 year trim cycle and just finished a cycle.

(Ms. Keyser arrived at 5:40 p.m.)

There are many small trees throughout the City that he has been receiving complaints about. He has looked at several and they do impede parking and pedestrian traffic. The City Ordinance states limbs must be 7' off the sidewalk. He feels these small trees should be regularly taken care off to avoid liability issues to the City. If it is a continual process costs will be minimized. Discussion turned to organizing volunteer groups to spread out around town and address these smaller issues and keep costs down. We have several members of the Tree Commission who are qualified to oversee this work. *(Additional discussion followed.)*

Mr. Lloyd reported on private property at 627 Clymer Street and 629 Clymer Street. The backyards contain hazardous trees that the City arborist should demand be corrected. There is big dead wood in the trees and damage dating before the June 2009 storm and they pose a danger to the neighborhood. Tree Ordinance Section 210-10 addresses hazardous trees and their location on private property.

Mr. Patterson said he advises citizens who have concerns with trees that threaten the public right-of-way (sidewalks and streets) that they have civil remedies to deal with

the issue. The hazard first must be established officially, then bring it to the neighbor's attention and if they do nothing they would be liable for damage from the tree if it should fall and they are also liable punitively for ignoring their responsibility to remove a hazard. (*Extensive discussion about the intent of Section 210-10 followed.*)

Erv Thatcher – Photos of low-lying branches at 16, 20 and 36 West Fifth Street were shown. Ms. Keyser said one of the trees is not a Tree Commission tree; the homeowner planted the tree. Pruning of the subject branches was discussed. The maple tree at the Methodist graveyard (near 528 Delaware Street) has a large hole in the trunk.

Two (2) locust trees approximately 50 feet tall along the Battery Park walkway have been removed. They are rotten and hollow. Mr. Rizzardi looked at them and recommended removal of same.

Susan Keyser – There is an elm tree as you enter Battery Park with a large piece of bark missing on the back. She inquired when elm treatment is scheduled to take place again. The last treatment (every three [3] years) that Bartlett did cost approximately \$3,000. Ms. Keyser will contact Bartlett to determine the schedule. (*Discussion and concern about monies followed.*) She suggested delaying our tree planting in order to do the elm treatment. Mr. Lloyd stressed the importance and value of the City's elm trees. We will have a better knowledge of funding by the fall and can decide on tree planting at a later meeting.

Mr. Patterson made a motion to treat the elms at a cost of no more than \$4,500 and Ms. Keyser is authorized to work with Bartlett to do the work if it is within the three (3) year timeframe. Ms. Keyser seconded the motion. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

Mark Miller – He reported on conversations he has had with Trustees concerning budgeting and funding of the Tree Commission. This body has always been totally dependent on Trustee finances and Mr. Miller doubts the City will now undertake financing this body. Mr. Hagerott offered that with the adoption of the Tree Ordinance if the Tree Commission runs out of funding we need to go to the City to request funding. The City is obligated by the Ordinance to follow it and fund what the Ordinance says. (*Discussion followed.*) Mr. Patterson said that the Tree Commission falls under the Trustees' Outreach Program. No one from this program has ever come to one of our meetings to inquire about our role, what we do, or what our funding needs are. The function of the Outreach Program is to be the liaison between various civic organizations who receive support from the Trustees. The Tree Commission has always enjoyed having a liaison who was also a Trustee member serving on this body. We do not have any Trustee liaison at this time. Mr. Patterson believes educating new Trustee members about the Tree Commission's functions, history and responsibilities is necessary.

Arrange Meeting with Trustees Outreach Committee – Mr. Patterson suggested asking this Committee to attend a workshop/meeting with the Tree Commission to educate them on what we do. (*Discussion took place.*) A presentation will need to be prepared for our workshop/meeting. It is important to conduct this workshop/meeting soon. The City is still in their budget process for the coming year and the Tree Commission needs clarification on whether continued funding will be received from the Trustees or if we need to approach the City. All Commission members were requested to put together talking points on the purpose and needs of this body to be conveyed in the presentation and submit to Mr. Miller.

Organize Committee to Write Urban Forestry Manual – Ms. Keyser and Messrs. Lloyd and Hagerott volunteered for this committee.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Mr. Patterson informed he sent a letter and photo of the bag worm problem to Jennersville to offer advice. It appears one tree is dead and still standing while the partially dead tree is gone.

Adjournment

A motion was made and seconded to adjourn the meeting. The motion was approved and the meeting was adjourned at 7:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Debbie Turner
Stenographer