

The Tree Commission Meeting for the City of New Castle took place on July 12, 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
John Lloyd
Mark Miller
Nancy Coning
Tom Truman

Members Absent: Toby Hagerott
Fran Peden

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Patterson at 5:30 p.m. Roll call was taken.

Approval of Minutes – Mr. Lloyd made a motion to approve the 6/7/10 minutes. Ms. Coning seconded the motion and the minutes were approved.

MEMBERS REPORT

Erv Thatcher – There are four (4) trees (sycamore, oak, maple, ash) at 36 West 7th Street that need to be trimmed. Branches are very low. A thorny Hawthorne and low-hanging branches on an oak tree were also trimmed in this area.

Susan Keyser – Nothing to report.

Nancy Coning – A coil of cable from a service provider is in a Bradford pear tree. It blew off during high winds in the winter. Most of the cable has been cut but there is still a portion in the tree that needs to be removed; it is weighing down the branch. No service provider is claiming ownership.

Tom Truman – Two (2) trees (oak and maple) on the corner of Harmony between Second and Third have low branches that should be trimmed. A box truck recently struck the branches causing damage to the maple tree. He suggested removing the maple tree. The tree appears to be in poor condition aside from the branch damage. Commission members will look at the tree before making a decision.

John Lloyd – In front of 8 The Strand there is an ash tree limb that is pulling down the service wire causing tension. Commission members will look at the tree before making a decision.

Mark Miller – There is a large limb hanging from a tree near East 3rd Street to Harmony Street that should be removed. It is across the street from the Episcopal parish. He also reported four (4) branches knocked down from a tree at 32 West 4th Street. Two (2) large branches had been torn off and two (2) others had been cut off. He is unsure if it is a case of vandalism but he is concerned.

Grant – Mr. Miller informed Commission members that he has been unable to do any work on the grant. He did attend a meeting at Blackbird Forest concerning the grant. We can apply for two (2) \$2,500 grants; one would be for Trustee property along the walkway. The State's top priority for funding is anything that repairs, such as trees along the walkway. He suggested 7-8 trees for \$2,500. He wanted to get Mr. Thatcher's input on placement since mowing will need to take place. Mr. Thatcher reported the Corps of Engineers is concentrating on removing trees along walkways and the river bank over the next two (2) years because of trees being knocked down during storms thus weakening of the river bank and washing the levy. Some Commission members expressed concern with this policy and want to learn more about it.

Mr. Miller said that if we support anything with a 'repairing' function it will be funded. The second grant would be for street trees. We would need to match the funds. His strategy would be to note how much money the Tree Commission has spent and how we have responded to the attrition of trees in the park and street trees during the storms last year and use that as the framework for this grant. *(Discussion followed.)* The deadline for applications is 7/15/10. Three (3) bids are required along with a site plan. It will be difficult to get the necessary bids and signatures in place in time, but an attempt will be made. *(Additional discussion took place about the process.)*

Ratchford and Beale, Willow Oak Letters – Mr. H. Binney Beale spoke concerning the removal of the willow oak at 26 The Strand. He referenced the letter dated 6/21/10 from the Ratchfords which covers his position. *(That letter accompanied his letter dated 7/6/10.)* He sees these trees as becoming a significant deterrent to upkeep of their properties going forward. The Ratchfords are experiencing issues with their granite front door step and the Beales have seen a difference in the brick configuration in front of their house meaning the roots are extending. He expressed concern with the gas delivery pipe (no check valve on the end) and with these trees' expansion. Roots in sewage lines has also been a problem. Mr. Rick Pennell spoke in support of Mr. Beale and the Ratchfords. He lives nearby and requested that the locust in front of 28 The Strand be addressed. A better choice of tree in place of the locust would be preferred. If the Tree Commission elects to remove these trees he would like to see uniformity of trees along The Strand and include 28 The Strand.

Mr. Pennell noted he would like to see appropriate trees for The Strand rather than the current trees. Homeowners have a vested interest in maintenance of their properties and a balance needs to be found.

Mr. Patterson then provided a history of requests of tree removal along The Strand over time. He is curious to know what the character and nature of the street would look like and what would have been planted in their place as well as what the residents along The Strand would think if this body granted the wishes of all the homeowners not wanting trees. He believes trees give a street character but conceded that there are a number of very large trees along The Strand.

Discussion about sidewalks being distorted, species and sizes of trees, and accommodating trees in an urban environment took place. Mr. Patterson said there is a letter he will provide to the homeowners detailing the policy to follow for sewer line issues, i.e., what the County is responsible for and what the homeowner is responsible for. It has been the Tree Commission's policy over the years that we do not remove healthy trees.

Mr. Miller said a previous owner had requested removal of a tree in the subject area. We had our arborist, Russ Carlson, look at the tree and he determined it was a solid tree. Mr. Miller understands the homeowners' concerns and believes we need to make more progress in planting trees that fit the street. Mr. Patterson stated trees are a benefit to the city. Mr. Truman suggested trimming branches before removing the trees totally. He understands the concerns about the roots, branches into the wires and over their homes, how close the trees have grown to the homes, and the bricks and foundation of the homes.

Mr. Thatcher offered that a former arborist stated that roots would not affect the foundation of a home. Mr. Patterson said it is a concern of residents.

The concerns expressed tonight by these homeowners are not uncommon throughout the City. It is difficult to keep the residents happy while still preserving trees.

Mr. Miller said sidewalk repairs will need to be shouldered by the homeowner. Mr. Pennell asked about an approved street tree list. Mr. Patterson said the list was assembled in the 1980s. We confer with Russ Carlson on appropriate trees to plant in the City and what species to stay away from. Trees on the list have changed over time.

Mr. Lloyd inquired what is to be done about the damage to sidewalks from trees. Mr. Patterson said we have helped homeowners in some cases in the past. In one instance we removed a root thus allowing the sidewalk to lower. We have asked residents to ramp sidewalks over roots. He acknowledged this is a problem throughout the City. The City charter says that curbs and sidewalks are the responsibility of the homeowner. We can give advice on bricks but it is not the responsibility of the Tree Commission.

Mr. Truman asked if we should recommend someone to look at the bricks to get them straightened out. Mr. Patterson said this could be done and the Tree Commission would pay for his opinion. *(Additional discussion followed.)*

Mr. Lloyd noted these trees are going to be more problematic sooner or later. The larger the trees are the more cost is involved. He suggested a hardwood maple as a replacement tree. He would like to see disease-resistant elm trees planted in the

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City. Ms. Keyser said the Tree Commission has already planted some of these trees in the City. *(There was discussion about an opinion done from Russ Carlson previously and revisiting the matter.)*

It was the consensus of the Commission to engage Russ Carlson to look at the trees on The Strand as noted in the two (2) letters submitted to the Tree Commission and advise us on the best policy to take with those trees. We will also ask Mr. Carlson to look at the tree (Crimson king maple) in front of 104 East Third Street that is causing drainage issues and some basement flooding at 106 East Third Street as submitted by Mr. Jim Mariner of 106 East Third Street. In the meantime trimming of branches on the willow oak trees on The Strand will be lined up with Tree, Inc. Mr. Truman will meet with the contractor at the site.

Financial Funding and Payment Procedures – Mr. Patterson spoke to Cathie Thomas who informed the Tree Commission has to get Council's approval for expenditures. No specific amount was approved in budget deliberations. Mr. Patterson sent an email to Council President Bill Barthel asking for a response concerning how we handle issues that we typically handle such as trimming. We have the authority to spend money on emergency-type issues but if it is something that can be budgeted/planned, then it must go through Council for approval. Ms. Thomas said the grant of \$5,000 the City received from the Trustees for "Greenscape" is earmarked for this body's use, but Mr. Paterson is not clear on whether these monies will be put in our checking account. We have approximately \$10,000 left from the last monies received from the Trustees. General maintenance (removal of dangerous limbs, etc.) will continue until the monies are gone. He hopes to have a decision by that time from the Trustees on whether they will continue to fund us.

Discussion then turned to the timeframe for getting a response from the Trustees on future funding. The Trustees will not meet again until September. *(Lenthy discussion followed.)*

Dillon Tree Removal, 18 West 4th Street – The Tree Commission spent \$300 to purchase and plant a tree (ash) at this location. Ms. Dillon wanted the tree removed immediately claiming the tree's roots are growing into her water lines causing interruption of service. She mentioned the tree may be blighted. She has indicated that she spoke to the Tree Commission about getting this tree removed but no one at this meeting has spoken to Ms. Dillon about this matter. The tree has been removed. Mr. Miller will speak with Ms. Dillon to learn who she spoke with about removal of the tree. Mr. Patterson is interested in pursuing reimbursement for the Tree Commission's investment of \$300.

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Adjournment

A motion was made and seconded to adjourn the meeting. The motion was approved and the meeting was adjourned at 7:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Debbie Turner
Stenographer