

MINUTES
City of New Castle Tree Advisory Commission
March 12, 2018 – 4 p.m.
New Castle Town Hall

Members Present: David Robinson, Chair
John Antonio
John Lloyd
Marco Boyce
Tom Maddux

Mr. Robinson called the meeting to order at 4 p.m.

Mr. Robinson called for a roll call.

Minutes – a motion was made to approve the minutes as presented. The motion was seconded and the Minutes approved.

New Applications

2018-03 – 157 Casimir Drive (Seleski) – Mr. Robinson advised this issue has been around for a while. Mr. Robinson stated the tree is a poor tree, and Mrs. Seleski has requested it be pruned.

Mr. Lloyd moved that the tree be removed due to the limited space, growth pattern of the root system and the tree itself, lifting of the sidewalk and the overall poor condition of the tree. The motion was seconded and approved.

2018-04 – 40 Megginson Avenue (Johannesen) – Mr. Lloyd stated the tree is a large Sycamore tree on the left front of the house at 106 Brylgon Avenue is lifting up the left side of the house, and has been that way for quite a while. It was ultimately determined that it is more than likely a City tree since the tree at 108 Brylgon Avenue had a Maple tree in front that was further from the edge of the pavement, so he feels the right-of-way extends into and beyond the Sycamore tree at 106. The Commission reviewed a picture of the tree that accompanied the Application. After discussion it was agreed that the first thing to be done is to determine if the tree is within the right-of-way.

Mr. Boyce stated he would be concerned that since the tree is lifting the house, if the City removed the tree it may cause the house to come down and create additional problems. He recommended that it be clearly determined if it is a City responsibility. Mr. Robinson said the City crews should not touch the tree for liability reasons.

Mr. Robinsons stated action on this Application will be tabled and ask for a clear definition if this is a City tree.

New Business

Speed Limit - Mr. Robinson advised the Commission that he had a lengthy conversation with Lisa Rashford. He gave her a run-down of all the things that have been done and she is very happy with the actions taken by the Commission. Part of the reason Ms. Ratchford wanted to speak with Mr. Robinson is that the Budget Year is coming up and Mr. Robinson is hopeful that they will look as favorably in the coming year as they did last year. Ms. Ratchford asked specifically about the work on the Rt. 273 Proposal and she agrees with Mr. Boyce's proposition that we should look into having the speed limit reduced. The first step is that she will contact the Chief of Police and confirm that he is in agreement, and then to approach DelDot.

Mr. Antonio asked if there were any consequences of having the speed limit affecting where plantings may be on the roadside.

Mr. Boyce stated that DelDot and the most Department of Transportations typically have a Clear Zone Provision in the Roadside Design Guidelines and the faster the speed limit, the wider the Clear Zone needs to be. Mr. Boyce stated the Clear Zone is the distance measured from the travel lane outward, so the distance must be larger as the speed limit goes up and it takes into consideration whether the side slope pitches up away from the road or down away from the road. If it pitches down, it needs to be wider because a car needs more space to recover as it departs from the road. Mr. Boyce said he thought the only place in the City limits where the speed limit is 50 mph is Hare's Corner, and that the speed limit is less than 35 mph due to traffic at most times. DelDot will need to do a traffic study to warrant the speed reduction. He also said that the City could pass an ordinance stating that all traffic and speeds in the City must be 35 and under, which would be helpful. The lower speed provides more flexibility for planting trees, which generally creates the perception that you should drive slower. It would also provide more opportunity for the Gateway treatment as you enter the City. This would open many opportunities that would be available to the City.

Mr. Robinson clarified that Mr. Boyce was speaking of planting other low foliage in the Clear Zone.

Mr. Boyce went on to advise that Delmarva Power is proposing to upgrade the existing gas line down the Industrial Track Trail, the Markel Trail, and west on Rt. 273 beneath the Penn Farm Trail to a 12" gas main during the fall of 2018 and into the winter. This could impact the location of some of the trees and the pathway itself. DP&L would have to replace any plantings that they dig up. Mr. Boyce said Delmarva Power may have already reached out to Administrator Barthel, and the Commission should check into that. Mr. Boyce recommended that the Commission clarifies with Mr. Barthel where the gas main will be located as this could impact future plantings. Mr. Robinson stated that Ms. Ratchford wondered why a change in the speed limit was being proposed. He gave her a broad overview of the plan, and she is on board with the plan. She also asked if the Commission was planning on doing something on the other side of the street, and he advised her that there were no plans in the foreseeable future. Mr. Boyce added that the other side of the street was a more difficult side of the street to work on, and that some of it is outside the City limits.

New Trees - Mr. Robinson said the only other item is that bids were received for the trees to be planted along Rt. 9 toward Dobbinsville. Four bids were received. One was \$14,000. Brandywine came in at \$6,750 for 45 trees, and he thought the bid was a bit higher because the Proposal asked for 5'-6' tall trees. Mr. Robinson said no action would be taken until Administrator Barthel returns from vacation and gives approval to the proposal. Mr. Antonio asked about stump removal and Mr. Robinson advised that the City would rent a stump grinder and the City crew would take care of that task, which will save the City quite a bit of money. Mr. Robinson is hopeful that the new trees can be planted where the stumps are currently. He also said there should be 1,100' from beginning to end and this should be sufficient.

Public Relations - Mr. Robinson put together a piece for publication in the Weekly to let people know what is going on with the Tree Commission. Mr. Robinson asked the Commission to review it for approval. Mr. Maddux stated he liked what Mr. Robinson put together and suggested giving credit to the Trustees who have spent a great deal of money on trees for the City. Mr. Robinson will edit the last paragraph.

Mr. Boyce asked if there was a plan for DP&L to replace the large white pine trees that they removed near the substation on Rt. 9 across from Van Dyke Village. Mr. Lloyd stated traditionally utility companies put road screens in front of their substations. Mr. Lloyd said he would like to see DP&L do

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plantings in the open area between the street and the fence because the substation needs a road screen. Mr. Boyce said DP&L may have some obligation to screen the substation. Mr. Robinson will discuss this with Administrator Barthel to see whether the City has spoken to Delmarva and if a plan is in place to screen the substation.

Budget – Mr. Maddux asked when requests are made for the budget for money to be spent on trees. Mr. Robinson advised that the Budget year starts June 1st and the budget has to be approved prior to that. Ms. Ratchford is thinking about the budget at this time, and there will be public budget meetings that residents can attend. Mr. Robinson said if there is a budget surplus in the future that can be spent on plantings, the Commission should begin thinking of any projects that could be accomplished. Mr. Robinson said one project he thought of was the area on Rt. 9 by the shopping center between the medical buildings and the shopping center, which is bleak. Mr. Lloyd stated that would be a good area for an arborvitae hedge, especially around the shopping center itself. Mr. Lloyd asked if the State would allow the City to infill the grass strip on the way out of town between Buttonwood Avenue toward Brylgon Avenue.

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

Kathy Weirich
Stenographer