

MINUTES
City of New Castle Tree Advisory Commission
November 6, 2017 -- 4 p.m.
New Castle Town Hall

Members Present: David Robinson, Chair
Marco Boyce*
Tom Maddux

Member Absent: John Antonio

Also Present: John Lloyd (*advisor*)

*joined meeting at 4:10 p.m.

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

Minutes – Keith Adams is no longer part of the Tree Advisory Commission. His name will be removed from the 10/2/17 Tree Advisory Commission minutes. **A motion was made to approve the minutes as amended. The motion as seconded and the minutes approved.**

Old Business

Application 2017-16 – A tree causing damage to the sidewalk was removed by the City. The tree stump has also been removed.

New Business

Mr. Robinson received a letter from Ron Gillespie about sidewalk damage. The sidewalk has been fixed privately.

New Applications

2017-17 – Mr. Antonio looked at the Zelcova tree; it appears to have been damaged during street work in the area. The homeowner would like a replacement tree. Mr. Lloyd thinks the tree was damaged by the utility company and should be removed. Further he said that ANSI and the requirements for utility line clearance indicate if the work involves removing more than 25% of a tree, then the tree should be removed. Mr. Lloyd said that Zelcova trees are difficult to prune and should not be under utility lines. He suggested removing the trees and planting another species **for the future streetscape**. Mr. Robinson said the Tree Advisory Commission has \$5,000 in the budget set aside for planting trees. Mr. Lloyd stated that replacement trees should not be too costly since they would be smaller, about 25 feet or less.

Mr. Maddux made a motion to remove the Zelcova tree in question and start to remove the other Zelcova trees and look at possibly planting replacement trees. Mr. Lloyd seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

Mr. Lloyd thinks the utility company should fund this project.

Mr. Robinson talked about work the Municipal Services Commission (MSC) has been doing. He thinks the Tree Advisory Commission should meet with MSC and educate them on what this body is charged with doing. He suggested talking to MSC about removing certain Zelcova trees in their services areas and replace with a species that is more appropriate. It

would be a cost-effective measure for the long-term. Mr. Lloyd suggested talking with General Manager Pam Patone first.

Mr. Boyce offered to discuss with MSC. Zelcova trees were planted under power lines years ago, but going forward the Tree Advisory Commission has more appropriate tree species on the current tree list. Further, Mr. Boyce said we should learn about MSC's plans for underground lines before any planting is done.

520 Harmony Street – Request for removal of a tree (thought to be a maple tree). The homeowner wants a replacement tree and is open to making a contribution for the cost of the tree. The Tree Advisory Commission will select a small tree to accommodate the area; the sidewalk is not very wide.

Mr. Maddux made a motion to remove the maple tree at 520 Harmony Street. Mr. Lloyd seconded the motion. Motion was approved.

227 Chestnut Street – The tree is in bad condition; it is rotten at the bottom. Mr. Lloyd said the tree is in an area owned by the Trustees and is likely to be within the street right of way. If the tree is on City property Tree Advisory Commission will remove it. If it is found to be on Trustee property we can ask the Trustees to remove it. City Building Inspector Jeff Bergstrom will be asked to determine if the tree is within a street right of way.

Mr. Lloyd made a motion to remove the tree at 227 Chestnut Street if it is determined to be a street tree. The motion was seconded and approved.

Old Business

262 East Second Street – The homeowner is requesting removal of a large Sycamore tree. At last month's meeting the Tree Advisory Commission decided that an arborist should look at the tree. Jeff Stein determined the root system is fine and the tree is in good health. Mr. Robinson does not see any reason to remove the tree. Mr. Boyce asked if root pruning is needed to address any tripping hazard. Mr. Lloyd informed there is no sidewalk involved.

Mr. Boyce made a motion to deny the application requesting removal of a large Sycamore tree at 262 East Second Street. Mr. Maddux seconded the motion. The motion was approved to deny removal of the tree.

Route 273 Streetscape -- Mr. Lloyd inquired about the status of potential plantings along Route 273. Mr. Boyce will develop a plan; he has a street layout and pathway showing all utilities for Route 273. He needs to put the trees in their locations before making it available for review. The Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT) does not allow for removable objects like light posts and trees over 4-inches in diameter to be in the "clear zone." DelDOT defines the clear zone to be the area outside the travel way that is used as a recovery area for errant vehicles. Mr. Boyce said if the speed limit is reduced the clear zone gets narrower. The speed limit on Route 273 varies from 50 mph to 35 mph. He believes it should be 35 mph along that roadway, but City Council would need to make a legislation

action request to DelDOT from City Council. The Tree Advisory Commission could write a letter to City Council requesting the speed limit be changed to 35 mph along the length of Route 273 from the City to the Farmer's Market explaining the importance of speed consistency and the ability to have a clear zone that will allow planting along the length of Route 273 in and out of the City. There is more activity in the area with Penn Farm getting more use and the pedestrian walkway running parallel to the roadway; it is a matter of public safety. We would have more flexibility where to plant trees.

Mr. Lloyd made a motion that the Tree Advisory Commission submit a letter to City Council requesting the speed limit in and out of the City on Route 273 be reduced to 35 mph and explain the reasons for the request.

Discussion continued about the pedestrian pathway on Route 273 that DelDOT installed. Mr. Boyce informed that DelDOT will not do any landscaping; it will be the City's responsibility to plant and maintain any trees that are planted. Mr. Robinson has spoken to several Trustees about funding tree planting along the roadway. He believes there is promise in securing funds. No motion is needed. Mr. Boyce will prepare a draft letter for review.

New Castle Court House -- Two Zelcova trees have been removed. City Administrator Bill Barthel is waiting for an estimate on grinding the stumps. The City will remove the ball roots and replant with two elm trees. John Antonio found the species of tree to be replanted at a cost of about \$350 each for a 3.5 inch diameter tree. Ron Vukelich has people helping him plant trees in the City. Mr. Robinson spoke to Administrator Barthel about Mr. Vukelich doing the work. Administrator Barthel said a business license is needed. Mr. Vukelich now has a license and will handle planting the trees at a cost of approximately \$150 per tree. Planting should be completed in a couple of weeks. Ash tree – Administrator Barthel wants to leave the ash tree up until after the holidays. Mr. Robinson said the tree will be removed next spring.

Tree Projects -- Mr. Robinson asked everyone to give some thought as to what might be a good project for tree planting. Delaware Street coming into the City is an area in need of trees.

DelDOT's project in the South Street/Seventh Street area is done and sidewalks were put in. Going towards Dobbinsville several trees are not doing well. A question was raised concerning any plans for upgrades between the traffic island and Washington Street where it joins with Route 9. Mr. Robinson said there is nothing concretely in place.

About one year ago Mr. Boyce talked to City Council President Linda Ratchford and Administrator Barthel about a few areas in the City that has some median space that is wider than some median areas in Greenville. One of the areas is Dobbinsville. He thinks it would be good to put in some shrubbery and grasses to help with the gateway presentation into the City from the Route 141 corridor. Mr. Robinson said the west side is in need of trees. Mr. Lloyd said the Trustees have planted a lot of trees in Dobbinsville. At the new apartment complex there is enough space between the street and the construction to

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accommodate some form of streetscape, but only if a sidewalk is not put in. Mr. Lloyd said the Trustees plan on planting trees from Washington Street to Dobbinsville on the east side (river side) of the street. There are a lot of 'junk' trees that need to be removed along that stretch of roadway. The trees on the west side of the street are not doing well and should be removed.

Public Comments – None.

There being no further business to discuss the meeting was adjourned at 4:49 p.m.

Debbie Turner
Stenographer

(Stenographer not present at meeting; minutes transcribed from recording.)

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