

MINUTES  
City of New Castle Tree Advisory Commission  
March 6, 2023 – 4:00 p.m.  
1 Municipal Boulevard

Members Present: Sheila Shannon, Chair  
Scot Savitch  
Carl Benson  
Rick Starr

Absent: Wolcott Davis

Also Present: Furio Casale, Code Enforcement Officer  
Ron Vukelich  
Norman Lehr

In Ms. Shannon convened the meeting at 4:00 p.m. Roll call followed and a quorum to conduct business was declared.

**Minutes**

A motion to approve the Minutes of the February 6, 2023, meeting as presented was made, seconded, and unanimously carried.

**Roberts Rules of Order**

Ms. Shannon stated that going forward Roberts Rules of Order for a Small Group will be followed during TAC meetings. Ms. Shannon explained the basic rules to be followed.

**Election of Chair**

Ms. Shannon proposed that the TAC consider a formalized process for choosing a Chair. She recommended that a Chair be selected by vote and that the Chair act as liaison to the City Administration. She further suggested that a new Chair be elected to begin duties at the April 2023 TAC meeting.

A motion was made to approve a formal process for the election of a Chair and to elect a Chair for a term of one year beginning April 2023:

- A Chair shall be elected annually each March by a simple majority vote of the members present.
- The annual term shall begin with the April TAC meeting.
- Any member can nominate themselves and any member can vote for themselves.
- If a member is nominated, that member must formally accept the nomination and state that they are willing to serve.
- The Chair may serve more than one term if nominated and re-elected.
- The Chair will serve as the liaison with the City.

As part of the motion Ms. Shannon nominated Mr. Carl Benson to the position of Chair of the TAC beginning in April 2023. On vote the motion to approve a formalized process for the

election of a Chair and elect a Chair (Mr. Carl Benson) for a term of one year beginning April 2023 was unanimously carried.

Ms. Shannon thanked Mr. Savitch for his assistance during her term as volunteer Chair.

### **Old Business**

#### Application 2023-01 – Progressive Club – 116 West 3<sup>rd</sup> Street

Ms. Shannon reported that Mr. Casale researched ownership of the tree and confirmed that it is a City tree. Mr. Casale explained that he inspected several trees at the property and was unsure exactly which tree was referenced in the application; however the three trees he inspected are all City trees. Mr. Savitch stated that he did not see any issues with any of the trees. Mr. Starr concurred that none of the trees looked particularly damaged and did not see a tree that matched the description in the application. Mr. Benson opined that the application refers the Ash tree, which is the middle tree of the three trees in question. After discussion it was agreed not to take any action at this time and to place the Ash tree on the City Tree Watch List.

A motion to add the Ash tree located at 116 West 3<sup>rd</sup> Street to the City Tree Watch List was made, seconded and unanimously carried.

In response to a question from Ms. Shannon, Mr. Casale stated that if the limb(s) of a City tree overhang a private property line, the homeowner may trim any branches that overhang. He added, however, that his preference is to have an application for trimming submitted and that the City do all pruning/trimming of City trees.

In response to a recommendation from Mr. Starr that the applicant be notified in writing of the TAC decision, it was noted that the application does not identify who the applicant is. After discussion, it was agreed that when the applicant is identified they will be informed of the TAC decision.

**ACTION: An Ash tree located at 116 West 3<sup>rd</sup> Street has been added to the City Tree Watch List.**

#### 2023-06 – Lynn Steinbrunner – 908 Clayton Street

Ms. Shannon reported that she contacted Ms. Steinbrunner and informed her that the tree in question is not a City tree and that she may have the tree removed as long as the contractor has a current license with the City. She also informed Ms. Steinbrunner that a permit to have the tree removed was not necessary.

**STATUS: Application 2023-6 is closed.**

#### Application 2023-03 – 411 Delaware Street

Mr. Casale reported that the subject tree is scheduled to be removed on March 14<sup>th</sup>. Stein Tree Service will remove the tree and grind the stump. The rain date for removal is March 15<sup>th</sup>. During discussion Mr. Casale noted that Delaware Street will be blocked off for several hours when the tree is removed.

**STATUS: Application 2023-03 is closed.**

**Member Comments/Discussion**

DFS Grant – Mr. Benson reported that the grant application was submitted on time and he has not heard anything on the status of the grant application.

TAC Checklist Draft – Ms. Shannon reported that she added the Application Number, name of the reviewer, date, and physical location of the tree to the TAC Checklist. Ms. Shannon will email a copy of the revised Checklist to TAC members and Ms. Burgmuller.

Tree City USA – Ms. Shannon stated that Mayor Quaranta will present a Proclamation for Arbor Day at the March City Council meeting.

Ms. Shannon noted that several towns downstate have displayed their Tree City USA signs. Mr. Vukelich stated that he had two signs made identifying New Castle as a Tree City USA community. Mr. Vukelich provided information on the formation of the Arbor Day Foundation.

Mr. Benson noted the requirements for being a Tree City USA community:

- Maintain a tree board or department;
- Have a community tree ordinance;
- Spend at least \$2 per capita on urban forestry; and
- Celebrate Arbor Day.

Mr. Benson stated that TAC meets all requirements, with the possible exception of celebrating Arbor Day. He added that §210-15 and 16 contains Urban Tree Guidelines for the City of New Castle, noting that the TAC meets all requirements in the Code. Mr. Benson stated that New Castle has been a member of Tree City USA for 10 years. Mr. Vukelich opined that Arbor Day is celebrated sporadically.

Mr. Vukelich distributed a copy of the North Charleston Tree Protection Ordinance.

Ms. Shannon suggested that the City be consulted to determine what they are doing that would fulfill any Tree City USA requirements that TAC is not doing. Mr. Benson will follow-up with Ms. Delgado. Mr. Starr noted that the work being done by City staff in relation to tree work is not insignificant and would apply toward the \$2 per capital spend requirement.

Mr. Benson stated that he researched Arbor Day celebrations, and suggested that if the timing is right, an Arbor Day celebration could be combined with planned planting of trees in the City. As part of the event he suggested that small saplings could be distributed free or be made available to purchase for a nominal fee to promote the planting of trees.

Mr. Benson will reach out to Ms. Delgado regarding any City plans to celebrate Arbor Day, and if not, determine if they would be interested in having a celebration.

After discussion Mr. Benson stated that will contact the City Administrator regarding installing the Tree City USA signs at the City gateways.

**Miscellaneous**

London Plane Tree – Mr. Vukelich stated that a London Plane tree with a 4’ diameter and which is not fully mature is slated for removal in the City; noting that a London Plane tree was planted in front of the Booth House. He suggested that the tree in front of the Booth House could be removed and relocated, and a more appropriate street tree be replanted. There was discussion of whether the tree could, or should, be moved. Mr. Lehr noted that the tree is approximately 6” caliper, which would require a 60” ball if it were removed. Mr. Benson noted that the driveway at Penn Farm has a London Plane tree that is not healthy, and suggested that the tree in front of the Booth House could be moved there. Mr. Lehr stated that before a decision is made to move the tree the utilities should be identified. Mr. Casale concurred that MSC would need to mark utilities before the tree is moved.

Honey Locust Tree – Mr. Vukelich stated that the roots of a Honey Locust by the bank are too many and are above ground, which is uplifting the sidewalk. He stated he could submit an application to have the tree removed and have a more appropriate street tree planted.

Tree Friendly Community – Mr. Vukelich distributed information on the Delaware Tree Friendly Community Program, suggesting that the TAC might consider working toward being qualified as part of a 5-year Plan.

There being no further business to discuss, Ms. Shannon called for a motion to adjourn.

A motion to adjourn was made and seconded. The motion was unanimously carried and the meeting ended at 5:57 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen R. Weirich  
City Stenographer