

MINUTES
City of New Castle Tree Advisory Commission
March 4, 2024 – 5:00 p.m.
1 Municipal Boulevard

Members Present: Carl Benson, Chair
Art Walker
Alice Riehl
Scot Savitch

Absent: Wolcott Davis

Also Present: Norman Lehr
Ron Vukelich

Mr. Benson called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. Roll call followed and a quorum to conduct business was declared.

Minutes

The a motion to approve the January 8, 2024 TAC meeting minutes as amended and the March 4, 2024 TAC meeting minutes as presented was made, seconded and unanimously carried.

Old Business

Application 2023-35 – Alison Ellicott – Italian Memorial West 8th and South Street

Mr. Benson reported that the Red Bud trees have been removed from the Italian Memorial and the stumps have been ground. The Red Bud trees along the Markel Trail have also been removed, but those stumps have not been ground.

Application 2024-01 – (Original Application 2023-21) – Shannell DeBright – 912 Clayton Street

Mr. Delgado inspected the tree and feels that City staff will be able to prune the tree. The work has not been done yet.

Application 2024-02 – Samuel Calva Plata – 606 Frenchtown Road

Mr. Benson requested an evaluation on the tree; however, he has not received a response yet from Mr. Delgado.

STATUS: Follow-up with Mr. Delgado.

Brandywine Valley Services

Tree work at:

- 21 Holcomb Lane – Application 2023-34
- 111 Brylgon Avenue
- 510 West 11th Street – Application 2023-25
- 907 block of Gray Street
- Stump Grinding for eight trees that were removed (Application 2023-18 – 130 East 4th, Application 2023-19 – 23 East 5th, Application 2023-27 – 50 West 4th, Application 2023-

29 – 520 Harmony, Application 2023-33 – 222 Chestnut, 148 East 4th, 222 Delaware, 208 Delaware)

Mr. Benson noted his understanding that the only work that has been completed is the stump grinding. He will follow-up on the other tree work.

STATUS: Follow-up on tree work

Budget Report from Ms. Riehl

Ms. Riehl reported that she contacted Ms. Delgado and was supplied with details on the status of the TAC budget:

Monies spent:	\$13,201.45
Payments pending:	\$ 5,006.00
Amount remaining:	\$ 8,195.00

Ms. Riehl will report on the budget each month.

A discussion of the total amount of grant funds received by the TAC ensued. Mr. Benson noted that the request to increase the TAC budget to \$25,000 was not approved, and that request will be resubmitted to City Council.

Mr. Benson noted that he received a statement from Gateway Garden in the amount of \$5,131.00 that has not yet been submitted to the City, which would reduce the amount remaining that Ms. Riehl reported.

Mr. Vukelich noted that of the \$13,201.45 spent, \$9,000 went toward tree removal and pruning and the \$3,945 went to Antonio Tree Service for tree pit preparation. Mr. Benson noted that information is important as justification for the increase in the TAC budget.

Article for The Weekly

Ms. Riehl reported that she wrote an article for The Weekly about the recent tree planting that will be published in the April 10th issue. She opined this will also be useful during budget discussions. Mr. Benson noted that Council passed a Resolution requiring all Boards and Commissions to submit an annual report to Council of the past year's activities, and this information will also be important for the TAC report.

New Business

2024-03 – Mr. Cuenca – 1011 Washington Street

An application was submitted to have four trees pruned on the side front of his house. Mr. Benson noted that the Crepe Myrtles along Washington Street are impeding the view of residents as they pull out of their driveways.

Mr. Lehr stated that the trees are multi-stemmed and are more of a shrub form of Crepe Myrtle and he did not think pruning would be helpful. Mr. Vukelich noted that many of the Crepe

Myrtles are probably dead, and at least half of the London Plane trees have grown up into the wires. A discussion of why the trees were planted as they were ensued.

Mr. Savitch suggested that a member of TAC meet with the work crew trimming trees on site to ensure the work is done correctly.

Mr. Benson recommended that a member of TAC reach out to the property owner to see if having the Crepe Myrtle removed is acceptable. Mr. Lehr noted that both the Crepe Myrtles and the London Planes are inappropriate for where they are planted, and suggested that all of them be removed. Mr. Benson opined that ownership of the trees needs to be determined.

A motion to table Application 2024-03 until the May meeting was made, seconded and unanimously carried.

STATUS: Application 2024-03 was tabled and will be added to the May Agenda.

Mr. Benson will speak with Mr. Delgado and City Council and will reach out to past members of the TAC who may have an opinion about the trees on Washington Street.

Application 2024-04 – Ron Vukelich – 33 West 4th Street

An application was submitted by Mr. Vukelich on behalf of the property owner who recently passed away to have a Cherry tree removed at 33 West 4th Street. Mr. Vukelich suggested that the tree be replaced with either a Pink Flare or a Pink Mist Cherry tree.

A motion to remove a Cherry tree at 33 West 4th Street and replace it with an appropriate Cherry tree was made, seconded and unanimously carried.

STATUS: Add removal of a tree at 33 West 4th Street to the City Tree List.

2024-05 – Ron Vukelich – 605 Delaware Street

An application was submitted by Mr. Vukelich to remove a London Plane tree that is pushing up the sidewalk and is growing into the wires and the sewer. Mr. Vukelich noted that Mr. Octavia initially contacted Mr. Benson to have the tree removed. Mr. Benson noted that because the tree is growing into the wires MSC should be consulted.

A discussion of the best way to approach the work that needs to be done on this tree and possibly on the roots trees that were previously removed on the other three corners ensued.

A motion to contact Ric Delgado in reference to 605 Delaware Street and to see if MSC needs to be involved in the removal of the London Plane tree was made, seconded and unanimously carried.

STATUS: Contact Ric Delgado at Public Works to inspect the tree and advise if MSC needs to be involved in its removal.

Report from Mr. Vukelich

Mr. Vukelich reported that:

- Four (4) trees on the Tree List on the City website now require multiple clicks to access the tree page on the Schmidt website.
- Eighteen (18) trees were planted on April 5th: Eleven (11) on the West side, one (1) on the main street, and six (6) on the East side. An invoice for that work will be submitted to TAC.
- There are approximately 20 trees left at Penn Farm. Mr. Vukelich recommended that the Commission members consider how many and what cultivars they want to order either to grow or to hold for fall planting.
- During recent tree work on 4th Street, it was found that an electrical receptacle was installed on the tree. The work was completed, but the electrical receptacle significantly impeded the crew. The property owner would like another tree replanted. Mr. Vukelich suggested that TAC reach out to City Council to inform them of the situation and the potential hazard that installing electrical receptacles on trees can cause to work crews assigned to remove those trees. He further suggested that the City might want to pass an Ordinance regarding the installation of electrical receptacles on trees.
- 211 new trees have been planted, 76 of which need to be watered. Last year 80 trees were being watered. Mr. Vukelich noted that Annalisa will continue watering 22 trees between 5th and 6th streets.

Mr. Vukelich suggested that his list be verified by TAC. Ms. Riehl volunteered to inspect the West side. Mr. Savitch opined that he had already inspected The Strand.

Member Comments/Discussion

Gateway Garden Center Invoice

A motion was made to submit the invoice from Gateway Garden Center to the City for payment was made, seconded and unanimously carried.

Arbor Day Foundation

A letter was received from the Arbor Day Foundation notifying the City that for the 12th year in a row the City of New Castle has the honor to be declared a Tree City USA city. Taryn Davidson, Urban Forester with the Delaware Forestry Service, will visit the City office on April 18th at 1:30 p.m. to present the City with a Red Bud tree. Mr. Benson will attend the presentation and invited all TAC members to be present as well. Arrangements have been made to have the tree moved for immediate planting, or to be sent to Penn Farm.

Ms. Riehl will notify The Weekly of this event.

Mr. Benson reported that an Arbor Day Proclamation will be read at the April 9th City Council meeting. Mr. Benson will attend the meeting.

Tree Advisory Commission
April 8, 2024

A discussion of holding an Arbor Day Celebration in New Castle, a potential location to plant the Red Bud tree being presented to the City, and other potential plantings ensued.

A motion was made to approve holding an Arbor Day Celebration in the City of New Castle on April 26th and to plant a tree at the Briggs Memorial Bench in Battery Park. The motion was seconded and unanimously carried.

Mr. Benson will follow-up with Ms. Delgado to confirm that she will speak with the Trustees for permission to plant a tree in Battery Park and ask her to arrange for the tree to be planted by John Antonio.

Miscellaneous

Funding

Mr. Lehr suggested that the TAC research other sources of funding. In particular, he suggested that the TAC reach out to Senator Chris Coons who recently notified another Delaware municipality that they were awarded \$.5M in Federal funding for tree planting.

5th Street Library

Mr. Vukelich noted that he and Mr. Benson had been contacted by the Trust to have a large Oak tree removed at the 5th Street Library. They inspected the tree and provided pictures to Mr. Lehr. The roots from the tree have uplifted the tarmac and have gone into the foundation; and the Trust contends that they are causing a water problem in the basement of the Library. Mr. Benson noted that when the Trust contacted him, he asked that an Application be submitted; however, no Application has been submitted to date.

Mr. Benson will follow-up with Trustee David Baldini.

There being no further business to discuss, Mr. Benson called for a motion to adjourn.

A motion to adjourn was made and seconded. The motion was unanimously carried and the meeting adjourned at 6:13 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen R. Weirich
City Stenographer