

MINUTES
City of New Castle Tree Advisory Commission
July 7, 2025 – 5:00 p.m.
1 Municipal Boulevard

Members Present: Edward Ryan, Chair
Alice Riehl
Linda Suskie

Absent: Wolcott Davis
Art Walker

Also Present: Milt Draper, Code Enforcement Officer
Norman Lehr

Ms. Riehl called the meeting to order as Acting Chair at 5:00 p.m. Roll call followed and a quorum to conduct business was declared.

Selection of Chairperson

Ms. Riehl nominated Mr. Ryan as Chair of the Tree Advisory Commission. Mr. Ryan accepted the nomination and was duly appointed as Chairperson.

Minutes

A motion was made by Ms. Riehl to table approval of the minutes of the June 2, 2025 Tree Advisory Commission meeting to the August meeting. The motion was seconded by Ms. Suskie and was unanimously passed.

Old Business/Tabled Applications/Old Applications

Application 2024-09 – Patty O’Brien – 6th Street and Tremont Street – Remove & Replace

Mr. Ryan noted that the tree overhangs the neighbor’s house. He added that Ms. O’Brien would like the tree removed because limbs are falling and one limb is close to the house.

A motion was made by Ms. Riehl to approve appropriate pruning of the tree at 40 West 6th Street. The motion was seconded by Ms. Suskie.

During discussion it was noted that no action had previously been taken on this Application.

The motion was unanimously passed.

ACTION: Add Application 2024-09 to the City Tree List for pruning.

Application 2024-19 - Gregory Brown - 16 Dalby Alley - Pruning Request.

Ms. Riehl stated that the subject tree is on Trustee property and therefore is not within the purview of the City.

A motion was made by Ms. Riehl to deny Application 2024-19 due to the fact that the tree is on Trustee property. The motion was seconded by Mr. Ryan and was unanimously passed.

STATUS: Application 2024-19 was denied due to the subject tree being on Trust property. Application 2024-19 can be closed.

Application 2025-02 - Kevin & Robin Clineff - 37 W 6th St - Remove 2 trees.

Application 2025-07 - Wayne & Gwendolyn Delcoglin - 16 W 6th St - Removal & replacement.

Application 2025-15 - Michele.Tones & Paul Pavlichek - 110 W 6th St - Removal request.

Ms. Riehl stated that she wrote to the City Administrator and City Council President asking that Council address the matter of Sycamore trees on 6th Street. She added that \$10,000 was added to the TAC budget for removal of the trees; opining that is a tacit approval of the removal of the Sycamore trees. In her response, Council President Souder stated that Council did not vote on what trees to remove; noting her recollection that Council has never made decisions on what to plant or remove, and if insufficient funds have been allocated to cover all the work Council could consider making adjustments to the budget. Ms. Riehl also stated that she asked for a breakdown of how the TAC budget is broken down between TAC, Beautification, and Landscaping; however, she has not yet received a response. She added that \$40,000 was allocated to TAC in the budget.

Mr. Ryan recommended that a meeting be held with the City Administrator for clarification.

A motion was made by Ms. Riehl to approve the removal of trees at 37 West 6th Street, 16 West 6th Street, and 110 West 6th Street. The motion was seconded by Ms. Suskie.

Mr. Riehl stated that eventually the trees will have to be removed. Ms. Suskie noted that the City Code states that a tree “that is endangering or may endanger the security or usefulness of any public street, sewer, or sidewalk” may be called a public nuisance, and a public nuisance tree may be removed at the discretion of the City.

Mr. Ryan stated he was unsure of his position on the matter, referencing a letter from Mr. Delcoglin in which he stated that MSC informed him that he should contact Delmarva regarding wires that were causing an issue. Mr. Lehr noted that Delmarva owns the utility poles.

Ms. Riehl stated that she had Bartlett Tree inspect the trees and was informed that all branches would have been trimmed back 10’ from the wires before they would cut down the tree; opining that the additional \$10,000 added to the TAC budget would possibly cover the cost of removal. She reiterated that City Council has given tacit approval through the budget process.

Ms. Suskie noted that Mr. and Mrs. Clineff provided physical proof of the root system that other applicants did not. She added that the Code states that street trees are removed “only when it is determined by the City or on the basis of a tree report prepared by a consulting arborist that a tree shall be removed because it is dead, hazardous, or a public nuisance”. Ms. Suskie stated she would like to see more expert data regarding the state of the trees.

Ms. Riehl amended her motion to:

A motion was made by Ms. Riehl to approve the removal of trees at 37 West 6th Street, 16 West 6th Street, and 110 West 6th Street pending research stating that the City has the authority to remove the trees. The motion was seconded by Ms. Suskie and was unanimously passed.

STATUS: Applications 2025-02, 2025-07, and 2025-15 were conditionally approved pending further research.

Ms. Riehl will speak with Ms. Tantillo regarding an agreement.

Ms. Riehl recommended that the Commissioners make a plan for 6th Street.

Mr. Lehr stated that two recently planted trees on 6th Street are dead for unknown reasons. During discussion, Mr. Lehr stated that without tests, the cause of death cannot be verified; but there was no good reason for them to die overnight. During discussion it was noted that after the recent rain there may not be any evidence in the soil anymore. Mr. Lehr added that the surrounding grass was not damaged. He recommended that TAC not considering replanting in that section at this time.

In response to a question from Ms. Suskie, Mr. Lehr stated that in some cases the curbs have been altered to go around trees; however, the trees on 6th Street are so large and old that there is nothing that can be done.

New Business/New Applications

Application 2025-16 – Stephen Franklin – 315 Harmony Street – Pruning Request.

An application was submitted to prune branches that are scratching the upper window and touching the roof.

A motion was made by Ms. Suskie to approve the Application 2025-16 to prune a tree located at 315 Harmony Street. The motion was seconded by Ms. Riehl and was unanimously passed.

ACTION: Add Application 2025-16 to the City Tree List for pruning.

Application 2025-17 - Mark Lorenz - 59 The Strand - Planting request.

An application was submitted to plant a tree from the City Tree List on the site of the new Delaware Native Garden on Harmony Street adjacent to 50 The Strand. A discussion of how to proceed with the request ensued.

A motion was made by Ms. Suskie to approve a Permit for the Applicant to plant, water, and care for a tree at the Applicant's expense, subject to a consultation with TAC

regarding the appropriate tree variety. The motion was seconded by Ms. Riehl and was unanimously passed.

STATUS: Application 2025-27 is approved for the Applicant to plant, water and care for a tree at the Applicant's expense pending a consultation with TAC.

Mr. Ryan will speak with Mr. Lorenz.

Application 2025-18 - Jeanne-Marie Camac - 23 W 3rd St - Prune or remove and replace.

An application was submitted to prune or remove and replace a Redbud tree that appears to be diseased and that is slowly dying with dead and breaking branches, and whose branches intertwine with utility lines.

Mr. Ryan and Ms. Riehl both opined that the tree should be removed and replaced. Ms. Riehl opined that Public Works would be able to remove the tree. Mr. Lehr stated that he had not inspected the tree.

A motion was made by Ms. Riehl to approve the Application to remove and replace a tree at 23 West 3rd Street.

The motion was not seconded and the motion failed.

A motion was made by Mr. Ryan to table Application 2025-18 to the August meeting pending further review of the tree. The motion was seconded by Ms. Suskie. The motion passed with a vote of two (2) in favor and one (1) opposed.

STATUS: Application 2025-18 tabled to the August TAC meeting.

Application 2025-19 - Alicia Marchesani - 20 W 5th St - Removal request.

An application was submitted to remove a tree that the property owner was informed by utility pruners is half dead.

Ms. Riehl stated that she inspected the tree and saw nothing wrong with it. Mr. Ryan suggested that the tree be pruned rather than removed.

A motion was made by Ms. Suskie to deny Application 2025-19. The motion was seconded by Ms. Riehl and was unanimously passed.

ACTION: Application 2025-19 was denied and can be closed.

Mr. Ryan will notify Ms. Marchesani of the TAC decision.

Application 2025-20 - Diane Bristow – 46 E 3rd St - Pruning request.

An application was submitted to prune a tree that is resting on the roof and side of the house and is in the electrical lines.

A motion was made by Ms. Riehl to approve Application 2025-20 to prune a tree located at 46 East 3rd Street. The motion was seconded by Mr. Ryan and was unanimously passed.

ACTION: Add Application 2025-20 to the City Tree List for pruning.

Application 2025-21- Paul Guttenplan – 35 W 4th St – Pruning request.

An application was submitted to prune a tree that has several dead branches.

A motion was made by Ms. Riehl to approve Application 2025-21 to prune a tree located at 35 West 4th Street. The motion was seconded by Ms. Suskie and was unanimously passed.

ACTION: Add Application 2025-21 to the City Tree List for pruning.

Member Comments/Discussion:

A discussion on how to add a discussion item to the Agenda ensued. Mr. Ryan will be the main contact to request the addition of Agenda Items, which will be done by the 15th of each month.

Budget Report

The Commissioners discussed the Budget previously in the meeting.

Extended Watering Plan

Mr. Ryan reported that trees are being watered properly. During discussion it was noted that the two dead trees had watering bags, and Ms. Riehl suggested that something might have been put into the watering bags that killed the trees. Mr. Ryan noted that the two trees are noted in the Dirr and Warren Tree Book as being the hardiest, most drought resistant, street tree recommended. During discussion it was asked if the city insures its street trees.

Approved Applications/Action Items

A discussion of the process for Action Items to be handled ensued, during which it was noted that the previous Code Enforcement Officer notified Public Works and/or obtained bids for the pruning and/or removal of trees. Ms. Riehl opined that Approved Applications/Action Items are official as soon as they are entered into the record and they can be acted on before the minutes are approved at the next scheduled meeting. Ms. Suskie suggested that the Commission discuss a flow-chart/process with the City Administrator.

Discussion of new system for recording tree evaluations by Commission

Mr. Ryan stated that the Commission has the criteria for tree evaluation in place, and reviewed the checklist that Commissioners and Mr. Lehr will use when inspecting trees.

Discussion of new organizational system for record keeping

Mr. Ryan stated that Ms. Levine is currently working on a spreadsheet. Ms. Suskie proposed that the 2021 Tree Work Permit Log, the List of Trees Planted and Watered, and the Tree Inventory List be consolidated into one document that would also include:

- Tree species and variety

- Street address of tree location
- Date planted
- Watering schedule
- Date of last pruning
- Date of last treatment (if applicable)
- Date of removal
- Date of stump removal

A discussion of the most appropriate data to include in the document ensued. Ms. Riehl opined that the document should be updated by TAC and not by City Staff. She added that the document should be searchable.

Ms. Riehl opined that the disposition of every Application should be a priority.

Ms. Riehl also suggested that all Applications that have not been disposed of should be included on the Agenda as Old Business. Mr. Ryan suggested that recommendation be discussed with the City Administrator.

Arbor Day Tree

Mr. Draper stated that there is a Red Bud tree that was donated to the City that is in the City office, and asked what should be done with it. After discussion, it was agreed that the tree should be transferred to Penn Farm. Mr. Lehr will ask Mr. Vukelich to contact Mr. Draper to coordinate the transfer.

Tree Acquisition Sub-Committee

Mr. Lehr noted that the TAC had discussed establishing a Tree Acquisition Sub-Committee and asked for an update. Mr. Ryan stated that he had volunteered to be on the Sub-Committee and will reach out to Messrs. Davis and Walker to see if one of them would be interested in volunteering as well. He added that an order for 21 trees was recently placed for the fall to be planted on Delaware Street between 6th and 7th Streets.

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

A motion to adjourn was made by Ms. Riehl and seconded by Ms. Suskie. The motion was unanimously passed and the meeting adjourned at 6:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen R. Weirich
City Stenographer