

MINUTES
City of New Castle Tree Advisory Commission
November 1, 2021 – 4:00 p.m.
1 Municipal Boulevard

Members Present: John Antonio, Chairman
 Tom Maddux
 Scot Savitch
 Sheila Shannon

Absent: Judie Baldini

Also Present: Ron Vukelich

Mr. Antonio 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 October 4, 2021, meeting as presented was made, seconded, and unanimously carried.

Public Comment

2021-15 – Ian Huntley – 128 East 4th Street

Mr. Huntley asked for clarification of the Application process. Mr. Antonio explained that the tree referenced in Mr. Huntley's Application had been added to the City's list of trees to be removed and those trees are being handled in order of receipt. Mr. Antonio added that he thought Mr. Huntley's tree was 8th on the list. Mr. Antonio will review the list and let Mr. Huntley know the status of his tree work.

2021-12 – Mr. Rod Miller – 124 East 3rd Street

Mr. Miller noted that there was a "tree event" on East 3rd Street that he wanted to discuss. He noted that he has been complaining about his Maple tree for several years, and during a storm over the weekend a large branch from a tree across the street and a branch from his tree came down that caused damage to other neighbors' homes. Mr. Miller expressed his anger with the City noting that when the tree damage was being cleared the workers cut his cable line and he was without cable power for several days. Mr. Miller noted that he was aware the budget for tree work is small, but added that he is also aware that there are grants available for tree work. Mr. Miller opined that the TAC should have access to budget funds to adequately handle required tree work. Mr. Miller stated that public safety is paramount and expressed his deep concern that his tree may cause additional damage.

Mr. Antonio stated he would speak with the City Administrator and have Mr. Miller's tree moved to the top of the list. He added that the Commission would look into securing grant funding going forward. During discussion Mr. Miller offered to bring funding up with both City Council and the Trustees and Mr. Antonio said he had no problem with Mr. Miller addressing the issue with Council and the Trustees.

Mr. Phil Gross – 13th Street

Mr. Gross thanked the TAC for the work being done to maintain the trees in the City.

Mr. Gross asked if there was a process in place to monitor the health of the City trees, and Mr. Antonio noted that there is no official program to monitor the health of the City trees, but that the TAC members have unofficially begun to look into trees that they observe are problematic. Mr. Gross suggested that when the TAC Agenda is publicized it include a phone number in the City office where residents can learn how to report tree issues to the TAC.

New Applications

2021-25 – Maureen Van Dyke – 53 East 4th Street

Ms. Van Dyke submitted an application regarding a tree on Harmony Street between 3rd and 4th Streets that was trimmed, but now all limbs are growing toward the house and scraping the house. Ms. Burgmuller noted that Ms. Van Dyke phoned the City office and stated that she was open to pruning or removal. Mr. Vukelich noted that the tree had been trimmed several times. Ms. Burgmuller also noted that Ms. Van Dyke stated MSC recommended that she contact Delmarva Power. After discussion it was agreed that the tree should be removed.

A Motion to have the Cherry Tree on Harmony Street between 3rd and 4th Streets removed was made, seconded, and unanimously carried.

2021-26 – Nancy Coning – 54 East 4th Street

Ms. Coning submitted an application requesting a tree be pruned, noting it is close to the house again and busses scrap the tree as they go by. Mr. Maddux inspected the tree and recommended that the tree be pruned.

A Motion to approve a supervised pruning of a tree at 54 East 4th Street as made, seconded, and unanimously carried.

2021-27 – Robin Clineff – 37 West 6th Street

Ms. Clineff submitted an application to have a Sycamore tree pruned because Ms. Clineff's neighbor, Arleen Hewlett, is concerned that limbs are too close to her house.

A Motion to approve a supervised pruning of a tree at 37 West 6th Street was made, seconded and unanimously carried.

Lincoln Street in Buttonwood

Mr. Antonio stated that the City had contacted him regarding a tree in the Buttonwood area, and he opined that it is not a street tree. Mr. Antonio noted that the tree had not yet been inspected.

Old Business

Mr. Antonio noted that an application had been submitted for removal of a dead tree and after the tree was removed the property owner questioned why the tree had been removed. After review it

was determined that a neighbor had requested removal of the tree. Mr. Antonio will reach out to the property owner and explain what happened.

Miscellaneous

Mr. Vukelich submitted a memorandum with a number of notations:

- He recommended a moratorium on approving new tree removal requests until the current list has been completed. Mr. Antonio stated he would meet with Mr. Casale to discuss the TAC's concern and see how work on the current list is progressing to determine the best path going forward.
- Three trees on Delaware Street should be removed: one at 406 and two at 500.
- The property owner of 519 Delaware Street wants her tree removed.
- Two *Carpinus betulus* at 300 Delaware Street are dying.
- The loan London Plane across from 600 Delaware Street should be removed.
- The dead tree by St. Peters and the DiAlessandro tree on the corner of 6th and Harmony Streets were removed.
- There are several large Sycamore trees that should be considered for removal.
- Mr. Vukelich asked for an update on the City watering trees. Mr. Antonio will discuss the watering needs with the City Administrator. Mr. Vukelich stated he would be willing to assist with funding the watering.
- Mr. Vukelich recognized those individuals who assisted with the planting of 43 trees this fall:
 - John Antonio – operator of Toro Dingo 30" auger
 - Robert Stafford – head of tree planting for 23 trees, soil preparation, and operator of 10" Ryobi auger
 - Carl Miller – head of tree planting for 20 trees
 - Bradley Altmiller – soil preparation, pit preparation, brick hauling and planting
 - Paul Dessarrio – soil preparation, tree preparation, brick hauling and tree planting
 - Mike McClay – soil preparation and tree planting
 - Chad Howell – loader operator for unloading and ferrying trees to pits
 - Carl Benson – soil preparation and materials mover
 - Robin of Stafford Enterprises – pit preparation, planting, hauling top soil and stone, and use of a pickup truck

Mr. Gross opined that the expertise and work of the TAC has made a huge difference in the City. He asked for clarification with the owner's responsibility and the City's responsibility, and a discussion was held of who is responsible for what and the varying opinions of the MSC, the City and property owners. Mr. Miller provided information on New Jersey's laws regarding tree responsibility. Mr. Vukelich briefly explained the efforts of the City, TAC and the Trustees.

Commissioner Comments

Information for Ms. Delgado

Ms. Shannon asked if Ms. Delgado had all pertinent information. Ms. Burgmuller opined that Ms. Delgado did have everything she needed.

Recognition

Mr. Vukelich offered more detail on the efforts of all the volunteers who helped with plantings in the fall and expressed his thanks for their labors.

Miscellaneous

Mr. Gross asked for clarification of the pruning process and Mr. Antonio explained the application process and the role of the TAC and the City.

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

A Motion to adjourn was made and seconded. On vote, the motion was unanimously carried and the meeting adjourned at 5:17 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen R. Weirich
Stenographer