

MINUTES
City of New Castle Tree Advisory Commission
Zoom Meeting – June 7, 2021 – 4:00 p.m.
New Castle Town Hall

Members Present: John Antonio, Chairman
 Tom Maddux
 Sheila Shannon
 Judie Baldini

Absent: Scot Savitch
 Ron Vukelich

Mr. Antonio convened the meeting at 4:37 p.m. Roll call followed and a quorum to conduct business was declared.

Minutes

A Motion to approve the Minutes of the May 3, 2021, meeting as presented was made, seconded, and unanimously carried.

Public Comment

Rod Miller – 124 East 3rd Street

Mr. Miller requested clarification of the TAC decision to deny Application 2021-12. Mr. Miller stated he has numerous issues with the tree and at the very least it needs to be severely trimmed. He also asked if a resident can remove a street tree. Ms. Baldini noted that a report of current sewer line issues had not been reported to the Commission, and Mr. Miller stated he was not sure if tree roots were blocking the sewer line at this time. Mr. Miller stated his main concerns are: bird droppings on cars parked under the tree; the tree is high over the top of the house; the tree is leaning across 3rd Street; and he is concerned that the tree is destabilizing. He added that the City trimmed the tree approximately five years ago; however, the trimming was unsightly. Mr. Miller reiterated that his preference is to have the tree removed and a proper tree that will not uplift the bricks, interfere with the sewer line, and/or grow too tall be replanted.

Ms. Baldini explained that “chop-off” pruning is no longer being done in the City and that one of the TAC goals is to ensure that pruning is done properly. She suggested that the tree be inspected again by a Commissioner and concerns and options be discussed with Mr. Miller. Mr. Miller stated his agreement with that approach.

Mr. Antonio stated that Mr. Miller will be contacted by one of the Commissioners to set up a date and time to inspect the tree, and Mr. Miller was amenable to that course of action.

Ken Oppenheimer – 36 East 5th Street

Mr. Oppenheimer noted that a tree had been removed, and several weeks ago a crew arrived with a replacement tree. They attempted to plant the tree in the same spot as the removed tree; however they ultimately unilaterally decided to place the tree in another location. Several weeks later Mr. Oppenheimer realized the tree had been planted directly on top of his sewer line, and he

is concerned that tree roots will damage the terracotta piping. Mr. Oppenheimer requested that the tree be moved to the original location of the removed tree. He added that an old stump had been left behind when the tree was removed, and Mr. Barthel told him that the City had paid for the stump to be removed and if it had not been removed correctly, the City would have recourse with the vendor to have the stump removed correctly.

Ms. Shannon explained that approved trees have been specifically chosen to not have excessive down-root growth or to grow to excessive heights and recommended that a member of the Commission inspect the tree to determine the species that was replanted. Mr. Oppenheimer reiterated that the sewer line pipe is terracotta.

Mr. Antonio stated he will speak with Mr. Barthel regarding proper removal of the stump. Mr. Oppenheimer stated he would be agreeable to having the tree replanted in the location of the removed tree. During discussion it was noted that the location of the removed tree is next to the water line; however Mr. Guyer of MSC informed Mr. Oppenheimer that would not be a concern relative to replanting the tree.

Mr. Antonio summarized next steps:

- A member of the Commission will check with Mr. Vukelich to determine the tree species that was planted;
- Mr. Antonio will speak with Mr. Barthel about having the stump properly removed; and
- If it is determined that the tree can and will be removed and replanted, Mr. Oppenheimer will submit a formal Application for TAC documentation.

New Applications

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

An Application was submitted to trim branches leaning on cable and electric wires and that are too close to the home. This Application has been forwarded to MSC for review and comment.

Application 2021-15 will be tabled pending a response from MSC.

2021-16 – Thomas Moran – 520 Harmony Street

An Application was submitted regarding three trees at 521 Harmony Street along St. Peter's School. The Application states one of the three trees is dead.

A Motion to remove one dead tree at 521 Harmony Street was made, seconded, and unanimously carried.

2021-17 – Anna Burns – 6 West 5th Street

An Application was submitted to have a tree located at 406 Delaware Street removed and replaced, noting branches are in the wires, roots are uplifting the bricks, and two years ago roots grew into the sewer line.

Ms. Baldini opined that the Commission needed to have clear parameters regarding requests for tree removal based on previous or potential sewer line obstruction by tree roots. Ms. Shannon

noted that sewer issues from the curb stop to the home are the responsibility of the homeowner, and issues from the curb stop into the street should be reported to the County. During discussion, Mr. Maddux noted that uplifted bricks are the responsibility of the homeowner and Ms. Baldini stated that if the tree is healthy it should not be removed because of “potential” issues with the sewer line. She recommended that clear guidelines/parameters be established to aid in decision-making, and suggested that, although specific Guidelines should be handed down from the City, the Commission should work on developing a set of TAC Guidelines.

It was determined that branches are close to the wires, the house side of the tree is taller and the tree has been “v” trimmed, and there is one questionable branch; but the tree is healthy. The Application was forwarded to MSC for review and comment of trimming.

A Motion to deny the Application for removal of the tree was made, seconded and unanimously carried.

2021-18 – Janie Stephano – 26 West 6th Street

An Application was submitted to have tree limbs of a large Sycamore tree trimmed that are causing cable outages.

A Motion to approve pruning tree limbs of a large Sycamore tree was made, seconded and unanimously carried.

Old Applications

2021-10 – Ennio DiAlessandro - 38 West 7th Street

Ms. Burgmuller noted that Mr. DiAlessandro requested a status update of a tree that had been approved for removal at the April 2021 TAC meeting.

Mr. Antonio will check with Mr. O’Neal.

During discussion it was noted that having a master list of trees scheduled for removal or pruning would be beneficial in handling questions on status updates of work approved by TAC. Mr. Maddux is working on compiling data to mark trees that are scheduled for removal.

Application to be reviewed at July TAC Meeting

2021-19 – 172 East 4th Street – Kathy Walsh

An Application was submitted to have tree limbs pruned that are leaning on wires and the house roof.

Commissioner Comments

Crepe Myrtles

Mr. Maddux thanked those who assisted in pruning the Crepe Myrtles. Mr. Sam Seo directed the process and volunteers included: Kim Burgmuller, Sheila Shannon, John Stafford, and Tom Maddux.

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

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A motion to adjourn was made and seconded. On vote, the motion was unanimously carried and the meeting adjourned at 5:34 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen R. Weirich
Stenographer