

MINUTES
City of New Castle Tree Advisory Commission
Zoom Meeting August 3, 2020 – 4 p.m.
New Castle Town Hall

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

Also Present: Ron Vukelich

Mr. Antonio called the meeting to order 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 July 6, 2020, meeting as amended was made, seconded and unanimously approved.

OLD APPLICATIONS

1016 Clayton Street – Annita King

Ms. King submitted an Application to have three to five Swamp Maple trees in the bike path off 10th and Delaware Streets behind her house pruned.

The Commissioners did not have an opportunity to inspect the trees before the July meeting and the Application was tabled until the August meeting.

Mr. Antonio stated that Mr. Furio Casale, Code Enforcement Officer, had been contacted and was going to look into ownership of the trees; however he has not yet heard back from him. It was noted that the trees are not on Ms. King's property. Ms. Baldini stated that the amount of pruning required is a concern, particularly on the largest tree, and suggested that an arborist be contacted to inspect the trees in question. During discussion, it was suggested that the City inspect the area to determine the amount of work that needs to be done on the bike path.

A Motion to have the City inspect the condition of the trees in the bike path near 1016 Clayton Street was made, seconded and on vote was unanimously approved.

NEW APPLICATIONS

54 East 4th Street – Nancy Coning

Ms. Kim Burgmuller stated that the subject tree was trimmed last year; however, branches are still brushing against her house.

Mr. Maddox and Ms. Baldini both inspected the tree and they observed that the branches brushing against the house and hanging over the gutter require trimming. Mr. Savitch recommended that the tree be aggressively trimmed to ensure the pruning will last for a few years. Mr. Maddux noted that if the City does the work there will be minimal cost involved; however if the City cannot do the work an outside crew will have to be contracted, which will result in a higher cost to the City.

The relationship between the Tree Advisory Commission and the City was discussed, and it was recommended that the Commission offer to consult with the City for any City tree work that is proposed

in addition to work that is recommended through application to the Tree Advisory Commission. During discussion, it was recommended that the Commission do a walk-around in the City to make a list of trees that require work and prioritize the need.

A Motion that the Commission confers with the City to inspect the tree at 54 East 4th Street for aggressive trimming of the subject tree without affecting how it looks and how it will grow was made, seconded and unanimously approved.

OTHER BUSINESS

Tree Advisory Commission Roles and Responsibilities

There was discussion regarding the role of the Tree Advisory Commission and how it can advise and support the City with regard to tree maintenance and with an eye to having trees pruned on a regular basis in a manner that is harmonious with the viewpoint of the Commission. Mr. Antonio opined that City workers who do tree maintenance are currently on a limited schedule. It was also suggested that the Tree Advisory Commission could offer guidance to City workers in the performance of tree maintenance work.

After discussion, it was recommended that the City's list of any outstanding tree work be reviewed by the Commissioners and that the Commissioners then do a walk-around and add trees to the list for consideration by the City. Mr. Antonio will contact Mr. Barthel to obtain the list of outstanding tree work, and to ascertain his willingness to meet with two Commissioners to discuss recommended tree work and the Commission's proposed plan to partner more closely with the City for tree maintenance. Ms. Baldini confirmed that Mr. Vukelich could also attend the meeting with the City Administrator since he is not a Commissioner.

Crepe Myrtles

A phone call was received regarding Crepe Myrtles and it was determined that the issue is being handled.

Bowling Alley Parking Lot

The Commissioners reviewed the plant schedule for the proposed landscape plan for the new parking lot on 3rd Street. In discussion of the loss of river view it was noted that in previous public meetings the loss of river view was not as big a concern as shielding the neighboring properties from the parking lot itself. It was noted that there is a considerable height difference between some of the species; however, it was also noted that there is probably an aesthetic plan for the placement of the trees that takes into consideration their height. It was also noted that Sweetgum nettles can be very dirty and messy, which could cause a nuisance in the parking lot if they are planted too close. It was agreed that the tree species, placement, and maintenance were all very important factors to consider and Ms. Baldini suggested that more information be obtained and recommendations be made regarding those factors. Ms. Baldini will contact Mr. Jeff Bergstrom to obtain more details on tree placement and offer to provide the Commission's opinion and expertise.

Mr. Savitch reiterated the importance of the Tree Advisory Commission being involved in not only the day-to-day maintenance of City trees, but in proposed new landscape plans for commercial sites.

Johnson Way / Centerpoint Industrial Park

The Commissioners reviewed the proposed alternative landscape plan for the Centerpoint Industrial Park. Ms. Baldini stated that she was not in favor of the Loblolly or Virginia Pine that are being proposed in the alternate landscape plan. Ms. Baldini opined that it appears the owner of the industrial park is desirous of replacing the thick tree/vegetative buffer removed for construction; however, the plan only reflects one row of trees/shrubs. It was noted that larger and more defined plan documents are necessary to get a

better idea of what is being proposed before the Commission can make any recommendations. Ms. Burgmuller stated that the alternative landscape plan would be presented to the Board of Adjustment in August, and the Commissioners could offer their opinions during the public comment period. It was agreed that sufficient buffer was necessary to block the site from the neighboring properties.

Mr. Savitch and Ms. Baldini will attend the Board of Adjustment meeting and Mr. Antonio recommended that the Commissioners review the planting list and provide input to them prior to the August 19th Board of Adjustment meeting. Mr. Savitch and Ms. Baldini will present recommendations to the Board of Adjustment as representatives of the Tree Advisory Commission during public comment.

Ms. Burgmuller will share any additional documentation received from the Applicant prior to the Board of Adjustment meeting. She noted that input can be submitted via email if attendance at the meeting is not feasible.

MISCELLANEOUS

Next Meeting

The next Tree Advisory Commission meeting will be held on Monday, September 14, via Zoom at 4:00 pm.

Lantern Fly

Ms. Shannon recommended that an inspection of the industrial parks be made for the Tree of Heaven with respect to the Lantern Fly. Discussion of the Lantern Fly will be added to the September Agenda.

There being no further business to discuss, a Motion to adjourn the meeting was made and seconded. On vote, the Motion was unanimously approved and the Meeting adjourned at 5:45 pm.

Kathy Weirich
Stenographer