

CITY OF MOUNT VERNON, NEW YORK
TREE ADVISORY BOARD
MINUTES
OF
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 30, 2021, 4:00 pm

ATTENDING

Advisory Board Members:

Eveline Feldmann, Chair
Marlene H. Wertheim, Vice Chair
Vincent DeVito, City Tree Surgeon
Henry May
Marlon Molina

Other Attendees:

Councilwoman Janice Duarte
Ms. Taneisa Walters, Deputy City Clerk
Ms. Janee Bedford, Assistant Corporation Counsel
Elias S. Gootzeit, Office Support

AGENDA

- Update on the Environmental Justice Grant from the Arbor Day Foundation proposal
- Role of the TAB in future grant applications

SUMMARY

The Meeting began at 4pm on September 30th at 4pm.
All members of the Advisory Board were present via Zoom.

Discussion:

Ms. Feldmann proposed to utilize this meeting to “clear the air” regarding the grant proposal process that just took place.

Mr. Molina reported that the Arbor Day Foundation Grant for Environmental Justice was submitted on time. It included an allocation of 50% for trees over the 2-year term of the grant and 60% of the remaining allocation for the Youth Bureau and Community Education. The focus of the grant is to expand the green canopy of the city into areas with few or no trees. He explained that the City has its own policy on how they submit grants and would like the Tree Advisory Board (TAB) to become comfortable with the process. A response from the Arbor Day Foundation is expected by the end of October.

Ms. Feldmann expressed the concern that not all members of the Board had a chance to grasp its vision and what was put forth in the Tree Ordinance (TO) and TAB Rules of Procedure and that, perhaps production of the grant was premature. The TAB became an official entity only several weeks into the grant preparation, making education about the TO, the TAB and Tree Escrow Fund difficult. Time was short and in the grant preparation was insufficient attention paid to collaboration with environmental experts and existing tree-involved community groups. In addition, the Mount Vernon Tree Escrow Fund, established by the Ordinance for this purpose, was not selected to be the repository for the grant funds. As a result, Mount Vernon CitizenTree decided to absent itself from participating in the current submission.

Mr. May questioned the choice of the Youth Bureau, an unknown agency, as the recipient and administrator of the grant.

Ms. Wertheim added how the inclusive work sessions we held for tree legislation and first community tree planting provided success and should continue to be a model for the TAB in achieving new things.

Ms. Feldmann reassured the group that there will be many tree-related grants available in the future and hopes that we will all be able to approach new concepts in a more collaborative way. TAB is already beginning its educational mission and is preparing for an in-service presentation with DPW and the Building Dpt.

Mr. Molina went on to say that there is a capacity to do the work required within the structure of the City departments. He sees the TAB role as important because it attracts participation and sets standards but, there needs to be someone else who is legally responsible and has the ability to get the work done.

Mr. DeVito invited TAB members to meet informally during the coming week to get to know one another and exchange arboricultural knowledge. He shared that he is looking to replace trees with hardwood trees throughout the community. He stated that there are no more ash trees left and suggested that the City evolve the tree list, looking for a dense canopy of 3 to 7 feet, looking for “more trunk before letting it go to branch.”

Mr. DeVito asked, once we had all achieved the objective of today and addressed the issues raised by this first tree grant, that we put the past behind and then focus our attentions on what is ahead.


Eveline Feldmann, Chair

10/07/2021

Date

October 5th, 2021
CITY OF MOUNT VERNON, NEW YORK
Tree Advisory Board
AGENDA for Thursday, October 7th, 4:00 P.M.

Review and approve meeting minutes of 9/16 and 9/30

Continue to discuss form and presentation content/materials for TAB in-service education.

Discuss any updates on technology/e-mail addresses

Arbor Day Foundation Tree City USA resubmission