



CITY OF MOUNT VERNON

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Tree Advisory Board (TAB)

MINUTES

A meeting of the Tree Advisory Board was held on **THURSDAY, OCTOBER 07, 2021, 4:00 pm, VIA ZOOM**

ATTENDANCE

Voting Members:

Eveline Feldmann, Chair
Marlene Wertheim, Vice Chair
Henry May, Member
Marlon Molina, Member, Planning Dept.

Others:

Taneisa Walters, Deputy City Clerk
Janee Bedford, Legal Advisor
Elias Gootzeit, Office Support (ad interim)
Janice Duarte, Councilwoman

Voting Members absent:

Vincent DeVito, Member, City Tree Surgeon

AGENDA

- Review and approve meeting minutes of 9/16 and 9/30
- Continue to discuss form and presentation content/materials for TAB in-service presentation
- Discuss any updates on technology/e-mail addresses
- Arbor Day Foundation Tree City USA resubmission

SUMMARY

Feldmann called the meeting to order at 4pm on October 7th, 2021. All were present via zoom.

The minutes of September 16 and September 30, 2021, were unanimously approved by the body.

The agenda for today's meeting is the Tree Ordinance In-Service education for the Departments at City Hall including the Departments of Public Works, Buildings and Planning Commissioners and later to include permit administration, enforcement, and component board operations and procedures and their members.

Draft Documents shared included a presentation slide of a tree ordinance overview, a Tree Advisory Board (TAB) overview, a flow diagram of the Tree Escrow Account and its use in pursuit of tree related programs and a preliminary flow chart of communication exchange between the departments and the TAB.

These draft documents were prepared by Advisory Board members in preparation for discussing with the Departments or the Corporation Counsel. In summary, the documents mirror the Tree Ordinance and how it may function to reach purpose. Feldmann and Wertheim presented the Tree Board Handbook from Arbor Day Foundation as key source material for the work.

Feldmann advised that access to tree related data was critical to the growth of the effort and its positive outcomes.

Molina sought clarification that the charts were produced for educating staff.

Feldmann clarified that the design of a data flow shows how the Tree Advisory Board is integrated in the decision-forming process.

Wertheim noted that the slides as presented at this meeting reflect a proposal that is not yet finalized.

Feldmann noted, however, that the charts would visualize what the ordinance describes.

Molina suggested that the TAB needed more time to digest the content and refine the slides before presenting them to the departments for implementation.

Wertheim suggested that the refinement of the comment should grow from the conversations that occur during the training events with the department leadership as a demonstration of the collaborative nature of the effort that the TAB is seeking to implement.

May suggested that the local citizenry similarly need to be included in such an educational effort so that their concerns and informational needs are also being met.

Feldmann agreed and responded that the first steps are to reach responsible entities at City Hall to start with an implementation of the ordinance, hopefully in a coherent manner.

Wertheim noted that there is a community group, that has contacted us and are waiting for a presentation once we are completing our meetings with the departments.

Feldmann noted that the purpose is to keep people healthy.

Wertheim added that we need to figure out how to plan out the steps. She suggested that the current meeting is not a decision-making time.

Molina suggested that the TAB should try to clarify its position in conjunction with the interpretation and implementation of the ordinance to the variety of city departments and boards that have the immediate responsibility within the city structure.

Feldmann agreed that the TAB needs an opportunity to sit with the various leadership people to verify best integration and see if the draft flow chart is a valid educational product. She requested that Molina provide the TAB members with existing land-use checklists of each entity that is affected by the tree ordinance. Functions of responsive entities to the TAB in the course of project reviews, deliberations, and implementation would need to read the ordinance and participate. Examples of key role functions would be Robert Galvin, Sylvia Bolivar; and others.

Wertheim suggested that the presentation would continue to be the subject matter for the next TAB meeting.

Molina suggested that a list of pre-formatted questions should be designed and delivered to the Department heads before the "educational session" is convened.

Feldmann acknowledged that Molina had the most insight into source material to reach those critical questions. However, we set out meetings twice each month in order to have enough time to compile material and a chance to review for progress.

Molina suggested that there are a lot of "development events" the scope and depth of which the TAB may not yet have a complete understanding.

Feldmann noted that Molina, as the Planning Dept. side member of the TAB, has the key role in facilitating the necessary information for better knowledge to land-use process connectivity to the TAB.

Molina reflected that he is a member of the Advisory Board, but as such, he is not providing a "staff function" to the TAB, and does not see himself as having that function.

May notes that Molina's questions need to be put forth and addressed. May notes, "There is a lot that I do not know. There is a lot that I do know. I would like to hear the issues and work through them."

Molina said he would work on the questions in order to determine how the Departments will best receive them.

Wertheim requested that each department should identify their current process.

Molina noted that the TAB and the departments need to merge the variety of other legislative and regulatory local, state and federal requirements with the demands of the tree ordinance in order to refine them into a coherent process within each executive branch function. Other sources of enactments and legislation that control other entities and departments have to be read together with the tree ordinance rather than as separate enactments that are independent of each other. Molina, thereby, suggested that the TAB needs to understand the limitations on the TAB's scope as it pertains to each department, and Board to Board conversations.

Feldmann noted that's why we are trying to gather and visualize things, and existing process checklists. She assures that the tree ordinance is grounded from within vs. established in a vacuum. It was developed and submitted via the Planning Board to the City Council through a collaboration of Mount Vernon CitizenTree with the Planning Board. It was first submitted to the City Council by Mr. Holmes, as Chairperson of the Planning Board at the time. Feldmann expects that the conversation will be expanded once we fully understand City Hall's work process and see the requirements.

Wertheim notes that a landscape plan will be necessary by each developer to provide.

May agreed saying that there should be language/verbiage that prevents damaging outcomes. There needs to be an assessment of what can and can't be done.

Feldmann noted that we should share the questions to collect and develop the presentation further.

Walters reported that the technology, the new City's Website *CMVNY.com* will be operational on October 14th.

Molina suggested that a "landing page" for the Tree Advisory Board on the website would be helpful.

Feldmann noted that the TAB is integratable under DPW but should be connected to the Planning Department, where land-use boards are housed as well. Perhaps later on, the TAB could build out the web location it is assigned to with additional appropriate and educational content.

Wertheim is requesting clarification as to where tree related permits will be processed and located on the website.

Feldmann requested a copy of recent final grant submission to the Arbor Day Foundation (deadline was September 30th). Because it is not being shared, only two of the five members of the TAB were knowledgeable of the final wording and concept of the grant.

Molina responded by noting that he made a request to Head of Corporation Counsel, Brian Johnson for the Law Department to determine the sharing of this internal document; if he could share "how the City is going after money".

Bedford responded that she would follow up to get guidance.

Gootzeit distributed a print-out scan of the online application portal with highlighted portions that still need to be completed. It is not due until December 31, 2021. The TAB will handle the completion of the document at a later date.

The next regular TAB meeting is scheduled for October 21st. Some TAB members keep themselves available if any informal gathering should occur on October 14th.

The date for the DPW setting the plaque-stone at the Hartley Park Swamp Oak will be Monday, October 25th.

Feldman took a motion to adjourn.



Eveline Feldmann, Chair

October 21, 2021

Date of Approval