



CITY OF MOUNT VERNON

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Tree Advisory Board (TAB)
MEETING MINUTES
January 20, 2022, 4pm

A **REGULAR MEETING** of the Tree Advisory Board was held on Thursday, January 20, 2022, 4:06pm via Zoom.

Attendance:

Voting members: Eveline Feldmann, Chair • Marlene H. Wertheim, Vice Chair • Henry May • Marlon Molina • Vincent DeVito, Tree Surgeon.

Others: Tanesia Walters • Jennifer Mastrogiorgio • **Guest:** Danielle Browne, City Councilmember

AGENDA

Approval of Minutes: Marlon Molina made a motion to accept the January 6th, 2022, Meeting Minutes, Marlene H. Wertheim, seconded. The document was approved unanimously.

Guest: Danielle Browne, City Councilmember and Chair of the Standing Committee Legislation & Public Works. After a warm welcome Councilwoman Browne was given background on the TO and TAB origins. She has made herself familiar with the TO, whose contents she declared will be foremost on her mind when she is engaged in relevant projects. In meeting with the TAB, she is seeking to understand the TO and how the TAB functions. She welcomes participating in meetings. Surprise guest: Derrick Thompson, City Council President made a screen appearance greeting us all and assuring us of his availability and with support.

Reports:

- TAB chair report: The Chair submitted a report of a meeting with Mayor Patterson-Howard which intended to link her up on the Tree Advisory Board's 2021 work achievements, the launch of the Green Renaissance, the work focus for 2022, and to offer our support of her vision, plan and strategy. The TAB priorities shared were in three points; 1) Implementation of Tree Ordinance, procedures, and enforcement, 2) Integration of the Tree Advisory Board into City processes, 3) Tree Escrow Account.

- Tree concerns referred to TAB by the community: Concern was reported to TAB via the City's SeeClickfix App reporting system of a removal of several significant trees at 153 Douglas Place. This property was sold less than a month ago. Mr. DeVito stated that there were 2 tulip trees. He established that there was no permit request, and he will speak with the landscaper regarding the condition of the trees. There were more trees taken down on the property; we don't have access to verify. Once we know more, the city's response can be determined. Mr. DeVito added that there is another such tree on the public side of the property which may have a disease. The question was asked what a new property owner would do if he/she wanted to re-landscape their site. A permit request would be in order. It was clarified that any permit applications would be the responsibility of the homeowner.

The Chair noted the tree ordinance intent is to conserve natural features and green infrastructure of our city when the trees are healthy, mature, and strong like these here seemed to be. We have been presented with a good example to guide us through the tasks: -for our ordinance to be accessed, -understood, -applied and -enforced. The August 2021 tree amendment needs to be made accessible and codified to serve as the guide it's intended to be.

- Staffing, workflow, technology: No new legal advisor has been assigned yet by corporation counsel. Codifying the TO is an outstanding task that needs to be addressed and requires the assist of legal counsel. Deputy Clerk Walters offered to reach out and speak with corporation counsel as to how to go about it.

Unfinished Business: Implementation of the tree ordinance and TAB integration

- Permit procedure: Review of DPW permit document

Ms. Mastrogiorgio, months back prepared a draft for REQUIREMENT FOR OBTAINING A TREE REMOVAL PERMIT based on the contents of the TO. Now, since related issues are coming up, is the time to review and complete it for use by DPW. The permit process needs to be discussed and installed.

- Reporting: Seeclickfix.com

As we spoke in the last meeting https://seeclickfix.com/web_portal/2cDmQJsn7gSAFG7XsyZHfbyF/report/category is the place to report. With the 153 Douglas Place example we can look at a possible solution for having a report go to the right person in City Hall. With the only category choice “fallen tree branches and street obstructions” we see a demonstrated need for an additional drop-down category, so i.e. “Tree law violations,” clear-cuts or excessive removals of trees or invasive species concerns can be assigned to a reviewing committee and code enforcement staff with access to a private property. Board member Molina advised that additional reporting categories can be handled by the Planning Dept. and legal counsel, and subsequently added to the drop-down menu. It was noted that code enforcement historically has been lax in MV. Contractors and landscapers have come to the city with no expectation of being monitored.

- 645 N MacQuesten Pkwy: We are awaiting requested project application documents from Board Member and Deputy Planning Commissioner Molina for the TAB to conduct a review for a determination, before any answers to the community’s tree replenishment questions in regard to a recent clear cutting of over 30 private trees and 4 mature public trees by the developer can be offered. Board member DeVito stated that the public trees were Maple trees (Crimson and Norway).

Tree Updates from our Arborist:

To date the storm prevention program has trimmed 51 trees, which resulted in no damage during this last storm in zones 1 and 11, where the work was done. The tree crew balances their pruning work between the north and south sides. With only 2 pieces of equipment, no stump grinder and 5 men, they have to put pruning effort on hold and focus on dead and diseased trees. Whenever possible they try to address any complaints within a zone they are working in.

New Business:

- Tree Ordinance Awareness: Educational Tools

We will need to create an informational TO guide handout to grow awareness and education. Tree Surgeon DeVito could use a handout in the field among his many contacts and to support discussions with stakeholders. It will take time to create and establish effective educational material. Current priority is to increase access, to the 8/21 TO amendment in our code, as well to put in place application, reviewing and enforcement mechanisms. Also, to be kept in mind, is the fact not all residents are computer driven and conventional avenues need to be made available too. To reach all property owners in the distribution of educational handouts, City Hall would include realtors, banks and landscapers for better information coverage.

Announcements: As Arbor Day is approaching, we can start to think about the TABs contribution to the planning. Next regular meeting will be Thursday, February 3rd, 4 p.m.

The meeting ended at 5:26 p.m.

A video of this meeting is accessible at <https://www.facebook.com/mountvernonny/videos/474325017593622/>



Eveline Feldmann, Chair

February 3, 2022

Date of Approval