



CITY OF MOUNT VERNON

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Tree Advisory Board (TAB)
MEETING MINUTES
March 17, 2022, 4pm

A **REGULAR MEETING** of the Tree Advisory Board was held on Thursday, March 17, 2022, 4:05pm via Zoom.

Attendance

Voting members: Eveline Feldmann, Chair • Marlene H. Wertheim, Vice Chair • Vincent DeVito • Marlon Molina.
Absent: Henry May. **Others:** Elias Gootzeit • Shayne Brooks.

AGENDA

Approval of Minutes

The March 3rd, 2022, Meeting Minutes were approved without any changes.

Reflections on NYS DEC Urban Forestry Presentation by the TAB Chair/Thurs., March 17

Those who were able to tune in felt it was a good summary of the TO/TAB history that reflected positively on our city and the effective role engaged citizens can play in making change.

<https://meetny.webex.com/recordingservice/sites/meetny/recording/c307c3438828103abf840050568146de/playback>

Arborist Report

Vinny will continue the connection made with Greenburgh's Aaron J. Schmidt, ISA –Deputy Commissioner/Community Development & Conservation to discuss the arborist licensing and a tree list applicable to Mt. Vernon. He talked about the considering of linden trees, which is a softwood, flexible, with a nice canopy and fragrance. DPW is still working on the removal of dangerous and dead trees. Forty have been downed to date. Now that they have the proper equipment (grapple truck) the unsightly tree trunks can be removed as well. He will share with us some pictures that illustrate why they had to be removed.

Arbor Day 2022 Planning

Planting & Event Location: Time constraints limit our ability to do the community outreach we would like to do. That is on our agenda for the future. We are listening what the neighborhood groups are coming forward with.

“Neighbors That Care” NTC Community group want to donate commemoration cherry trees along Graham School on South Columbus Avenue. Vinny advised that the cherry is too full to be on a busy road where they would be damaged by passing trucks and trailers. He suggested that the column-shaped pear would be preferable. Also, staging an event on Columbus would be problematic. NTC is amenable to doing this planting with the tree suggested by Vinny, at another time.

Brookside/Beechwood Avenues, near Willson's Woods are bare. They are near the train tracks which could pose a heat issue that trees would relieve. There is an active neighborhood group Marlene contacted.

Vinny noted that he has made a few contacts that would donate some trees, although not for Arbor Day. Marlon added that the Youth Bureau would gladly recruit young people for the event.

We agreed that some of us along with Vinny would make a site visit on Friday, 3/18, at 10 a.m. starting with Brookside Ave, and keep Thursday, 3/24 open for further location visits. Finding a suitable planting/event location is a high priority for the coming days.

Implementation of the Tree Ordinance

Reporting Categories: Currently the “Public Works Issues” related to the tree ordinance in the clickfix concern reporting tool are • Fallen tree branch/tree obstruction • Stump removal • Overgrown area needs cleanup. All are issues that can readily be remedied by DPW. The new list under discussion would expand the categories to include tree issues which may include violations and enforcement which may be more complicated for DPW; • Dangerous dead tree/tree stump • Tree branch/uprooting obstructions • Removal without permit (significant tree or tree on public property) • Mass tree removal • Serious damage to tree/excessive pruning • Tree request/empty tree well • Pest infestation/invasive vines.

The reporting program is run by the Planning Dept. Any adding of categories under the DPW section will need to be okayed by DPW. When receiving reports in that section of the program, DPW would be responsible for the collected information, following up, identifying a chain of command, and posting status reports.

There is another possible option: Adding to the current DPW reporting choices just one new category: “other tree issues”.

It was pointed out here that Anthony Alba, our legal support, provided the full, and more elaborate list of the issues, based on the TO, which will be a very useful catalogue for tree ordinance code enforcers, once they are identified, and as concerns would be reported.

What needs to be decided is which dept. will be responsible for TO enforcement. A motion was made by Vinny, seconded by Marlon, to table the matter for another time.

Tree Ordinance Modification: Permit guideline changes to the TO – significant tree measures 10”, permit required for one 10” – need to be marked-up in the TO document, then presented to the TAB for a vote, to then move on to legal advisor for flushing out throughout TO.

Land-use TAB integration

645 N MacQuesten Pkwy: Neighbors had been concerned about clearcutting there. TAB obtained the site plans to know what was approved in 2016 by the City. They took away public trees and the back buffer and intend to plant 4 serviceberry apples on the street and 4 October glory maples in the front yard. Vinny is okay with this and stated that the buffer area would not allow for easy tree access and maintenance. The TAB’s desire is that 645 would not end up looking as sparse as the other completed site at 525 and that the developer would consider adding more trees. Discussed was the option of drafting a letter to the developer making those suggestions. However, it is an awkward situation since the City has already approved the plan and we don’t want the developer thinking that the City is attempting to reverse its stand. We’ll work on a diplomatic draft for TAB and legal review.

1 Millington St.: Regretfully, two wooded lot canopies will be lost, at Millington and on a neighboring property (construction site on E 4th St). The TAB was given a site plan but has yet to receive an update that was further submitted to the Planning Dept. by the developer.

It appears that the TAB has yet to be acknowledged as a separate entity to be integrated into the referral process for recommendations, as per the intent of the Tree Ordinance, as was discussed in the last meeting. TAB is to get all proposals and updates automatically, along when they are submitted to Fire, Safety, Water.

A meeting with the Planning Commissioner and Administrator would be helpful here.

Further, what needs to be clarified is to where the TAB review is to be directed: A TAB recommendation letter back to the referring land-use board or added to the tree surgeon’s DPW comments and in addition for the TAB to present during the Planning Board public hearings.

Announcements

Next regular TAB meeting: Thursday, April 7, 4 p.m.

Location visits for Arbor Day planning will start on Friday, March 18, 10 a.m.

On Friday, March 25, the Chair and Vice-chair will be attending a **tree stewardship for resilience workshop**, sponsored by the NYS DEC Urban Forestry Council at the Queens Botanical Garden, to learn about the NYC Urban Forest Agenda, Biochar, species & selection, school tree nursery in NYC.

Pitch in for Parks, 2022 in Mount Vernon, Willson’s Woods will be on Wednesday, April 20, 8 p.m. A high-spirited community event, run by the Westchester Parks Foundation, a not-for-profit that engages the public to advocate for and engage in the 18,000 acres of Westchester parks and trails. Volunteers will paint, rake, prepare flower beds, remove invasive vines. Contact Mary Benjamin mbenjamin@theWPF.org

Arbor Day 2022 Community Tree Planting: Saturday, April 30th

Meeting adjourned at 5:57 p.m.

<https://www.facebook.com/mountvernonny/videos/542933667070092/>



Eveline Feldmann, Chair

4/7/2022

Date of Approval