



CITY OF MOUNT VERNON

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Tree Advisory Board (TAB) MEETING MINUTES

May 26, 2022, 4pm (Rescheduled from May 19, 2022)

A **REGULAR MEETING** of the Tree Advisory Board) was held on Thursday, May 26, 2022, 4:23 pm at the Memorial Room, City Hall and via zoom. The hybrid meeting was recorded.

Attendance

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

AGENDA

1 – Approval of Minutes

Minutes of May 5, 2022 motion by Henry, seconded by Marlon. All were in favor to accept the documents as is.

2 – Tree Removal Permit – needed tree ordinance modifications

There was a lengthy discussion about amendments to the TO which are needed before a tree permit can be produced.

Change 1, significant tree DBH size from eight (8) to NEW: ten (10) inches. / Change 2, delete language “no more than two trees exceed ten inches DBH”. / Change 3, to hold homeowner responsible for filing. Reduce permit price per tree to \$25. There were differences of opinion about the permit fee stated as \$75 per tree in the ordinance.

While most board members thought that a lower fee would encourage greater compliance by the public that is just learning about it, DPW Commissioner Bush is in favor of a higher permit rate. We compromised on \$50 per tree with Henry initiating the vote and Marlene seconded. / Change 4, refer invasive species and invasive vines to DEC identified lists of invasives. / Change 5, any additional typo’s can be corrected in the document.

The proposed revisions will now go to our legal adviser for review.

3 – Today’s guest Councilwoman Danielle Browne wasn’t present and will be invited to join us at our June 2 meeting.

4 – Reports

4.1 Chair:

- The TAB received calls and texts from the community about a sizable Oak on Gramatan being removed by Asplundh/ConEd. We were unable to provide answers being unaware of this beforehand. It would be good if the TAB can be advised of these intents so that we can allay public concerns.

- Chair had a check-in meeting with DPW Commissioner Bush. Discussed were the following: The Stuyvesant Plaza restoration on our agenda. Work is to be done there once the Gramatan circle renovations are completed. The new stump grinder equipment will arrive on June 16. It’s first job will be removing the stump in front of City Hall before moving on to grind the many stumps at Stuyvesant Plaza before reseeding is done./ The process by which the TAB would receive regular financial Tree Fund reporting. He will look into DPW accounting to send reports to TAB. The receipt of land-use tree reports. The Commissioner and the Director of Sustainability suggested that the Commissioner of Planning join the conversation with the TAB. / Still unresolved, short staffing issues which are affecting the TAB technical staff support and posting of notices, agendas, video links and minutes. / Clarification of the Tree Surgeon posting related to staffing opportunities. This is only an alert that the Surgeon has to update his arboricultural certifications and civil service class.

- The Chair and Vice-chair attended 2 NYS/DEC webinars and a FCWC member meeting. The webinars were “Public Trees and Public Health” (a health and planting study conducted in Louisville, KY) and “The Power of Storytelling in Grant Applications” (2 successful case studies). A potentially helpful piece of information – The Arbor Day Foundation TREE Proposal Site offers municipalities a chance to share possible projects with them for

comment and advise. / At the FCWC (Federated Conservationists of Westchester County) gathering many groups in their network made presentations in which they briefly summarized their past year's achievements, activities and issues. It was overwhelming to learn how much work is being done and accomplished concerning every aspect of climate change and the environment across the communities and our county government.

4.2 The Tree Surgeon/DPW updates: Vinny DeVito was absent.

4.3 Planning Dept. Representative updates: Marlon Molina reported that all land-use site plans that go to other departments will be forwarded to the TAB for review and comment at the same time. Those plans not referred out will be monitored for tree relevance and flagged and directed to the TAB. / Regarding pending sewer repairs, the Planning Dept. will seek TAB participation in considering the impact on trees. NYS has granted \$150 million towards this work. / Reflections on the Comprehensive Plan. Language will be included concerning maintenance and increase of tree canopy. The Dir. of Sustainability will be a part of the process. A question raised was, will tree experts/TAB have any input on language in regards of trees? Of equal great importance will be community engagement, meeting with neighborhoods looking at geographic diversity within the city. / He suggested that we meet with the grants team in the Planning Dept., along with the Commissioner, to better understand the dept., as well as how we would respond to grant opportunities. Members noted that since his arrival, Commissioner J.Rausse has not yet met with the TAB.

5 – Tree Planting Program 2022/23

5.1. Electronification of various tree planting lists. Consolidate the lists and mapping where to put trees will facilitate our planting objectives.

5.2. South 4th Ave. planting of 6 remaining cherry trees. We are waiting to hear from the City Clerk as to the BOE wishes. We still have the alternative of planting up the street or across the street.

5.3. Stuyvesant Plaza Park Restauration. DPW is involved with the beginning stages. Chester Hill Neighborhood Association is engaged and shared their newsletter.

6 – Announcements

- Next regular TAB meeting is scheduled for Thursday, June 2, 2022, at 4 p.m. It will be a hybrid meeting, livestreamed.

- Congratulations to DPW on acquiring new electric leaf blower equipment, setting a good example.
- We're in for another summer of above-average temps. Extreme heat is dangerous and people in neighborhoods that lack tree canopy and green spaces are at higher risk for heat-related illness. We're announcing an upcoming webinar that will help communities map heat that can help prioritize mitigation efforts (Ways Adapting to Heat) Title: Community Heat Mapping with Climate Engine. Speaker: Andrew Reinmann, Ph.D., CUNY Hunter College Date: Friday June 24, 1-2 pm. Registration: https://cornell.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_cFg6mfHVSO2C_jJQoqfZsQ
- The New York State DEC/NYSERDA Climate Action Council will hold 11 public hearings across the State to receive public input on the draft disadvantaged communities criteria (DAC) under the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (Climate Act) on Friday, June 10th, 2022 at 6:00PM at Grace Baptist Church, 52 S 6th Ave., Mt. Vernon.
- Henry May attended a NYS Audubon Society conference concerning the harm to birds caused by night-time lights, largely in urban areas. They are working on passing legislation that will reduce this hazard.

Meeting adjourned at 5:40, moved by Marlene, seconded, by Marlon. The recording of this meeting must get linked to the City's website.



Eveline Feldmann, Chair

06/02/2022

Date of Approval