



CITY OF MOUNT VERNON

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Tree Advisory Board (TAB) **MEETING MINUTES** September 15, 2022, 4pm

A **REGULAR MEETING** of the Tree Advisory Board) was held on Thursday, September 15, 2022, 4:16 pm via zoom. The meeting was livestreamed on facebook.

Attendance

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

AGENDA

1— Housekeeping

Approval of Minutes July 21, 2022: Henry's motion was seconded by Marlene and the document was approved without any changes unanimously.

Approval Schedule Change: Two items in the Rules of Procedure were changed. Meeting frequency - from 2x/mo. to 1x/mo, on the third Thursday, and the quorum requirement from 4 to 3. Motion to approve by Marlon, seconded by Marlene was carried with all votes in favor. The updated document will be sent on to the Clerk's office for processing and posting.

Staffing changes: James Fordyce is replacing Jen Mastrogiorgio as the DPW tech assistant assigned to the TAB. We welcome him. We also learned that our legal consultation Anthony Alba is no longer with the legal dept. The TAB will have to put in a request for legal assistance replacement from Corporation Counsel.

Meetings: The Chair stated a preference for meetings to continue in hybrid form since zoom allows for the sharing of material and easier access for volunteering citizens. At question is whether a hybrid meeting requires a quorum to be in-person, as is the case with the land-use boards. Marlon will look into the matter and let the chair know. Securing the Memorial Room as the regular meeting place: Chair will put in request to City Clerk to make this standing arrangement for each month, on the 3rd Thursday, also specifying the need for hybrid capability.

2— Fall Plantings

Mapping: The Chair facilitated a presentation of GIS Mount Vernon maps never visualized before. She introduced Mount Vernon's satellite data of tree canopy coverage and created a combined map view with the historic investment classification map. The demonstrated correlation of canopy map and redlining map serves us needed awareness of areas with severe lack of trees for a new databased forestry planning practice.

Trees through Power Program: NY Power Authority Trees Offer - The Chair alerted DPW of the opportunity, which is offering to buy one tree, get one of the same free, up to 15 trees maximum (30 in all). The Tree Fund would cover the cost of \$1,965 for 15 White Swamp Oak trees. The TAB is awaiting confirmation that the order was placed. Vinny will look into this and inform us of the arrival date of the trees, if it has been done.

Fall Tree Order: TAB and DPW would like to plant 50 to 75 trees this fall season. The goal is to (eventually) supersede the numbers of trees taken down per year, which now comes to at least 100.

September and October are the ideal planting months. Vinny alerted us that he has other responsibilities at this time that will compete with these plantings, putting in mums with the Parks Dept. and other projects. There are a lot of trees in need attention due to storm season. Code 53 (the ordering of utility markings like gas and water lines before you can dig) has to be done and the planting must follow within 10 days of those markings. This will need coordination and careful planning. As was done in the past, volunteers are needed to assist. DPW workers would instruct them, then leave them to complete the work of filling the soil, sweeping and watering. To be determined if this can be done on a weekday. DPW would be dealing with overtime if planting days were on weekends.

Suggestions were made regarding sources for volunteers; names from the list compiled at Arbor Day '22, STEAM, DSWA and other students, Boys & Girl Scouts, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority (They have a new international mandate to focus on the environment with the task of planting 3,900 trees over a period of 3 years), Westchester Latinos Unidos, is very keen on planting as well. Further, the 2017 4th Ave Corridor Study engaged merchants through economic development and revitalization with beautification, landscaping and increasing safety.

Also, to be decided is a planting plan. It was agreed that it would be more efficient to select 2-3 areas (blocks) where multiple trees would have an impact. TAB and DPW will combine their lists of people and community groups that made requests and will confer with Commissioner Bush. In creating a planting plan, we must be mindful of environmental justice, not overlooking areas that haven't had the where with all to come forth in expressing a desire for trees, making an effort to engage the local residents in the process. Mapping done by Eveline of those Arbor Day sites, to which she will add Vinny's list; that, along with overlays of heat, canopy and redlining, will help us navigate.

Beyond the 30 oak trees through the NYPA tree purchase, species have yet to be chosen. To lead ourselves with "the right tree for the right place" Eveline will share a recommended tree species list George Profous, our DEC Regional Forester had provided to Mount Vernon a while back. We don't want this to get too complicated and we must stay realistic to what nurseries have left and available. There are time constraints so the TAB cannot wait until the next meeting five weeks away, on October 20th, if we want to propose a strategy and start realizing a planting plan. Therefore, the members of the TAB who can attend will get together on Wednesday, September 21st, to further discuss a proposal we can make to the Commissioner, so that the necessary actions can begin.

3— Reporting

3.1 Chair

TO Amendment: To date Corporation Counsel has not gotten back to the TAB concerning due process or making progress toward a referral to the City Council.

Marlon's 2 communications asking for a meeting between the TAB, the Corporation Counsel and any other relevant parties have gone unanswered. He advised the Chair to reach out again.

Tree Fund Comptroller Report: The Chair had called the Comptroller's Office/Jean Apollon to seek clarification of the Tree Fund narrative financial report that was submitted to TAB. Further contact will be needed to address questions that remain.

300 Nuber TAB Tree Report: The TAB responded with a detailed TREE REPORT to the 300 Nuber Ave. application seeking subdivision. We are unsure when Planning Board will continue with this hearing after applicant had requested an adjournment. Marlon was asked to notify our board when this application will next appear on the PB agenda.

Other: For the future it might be helpful for the TAB to create a form for people or groups that want to donate trees to the city.

3.2 Public Works

S4th Ave / tree delivery & planting date: DPW is following up on replacing the 6 cherries trees that had been reallocated. The grower is trying to locate some, and Vinny will inform the TAB when they are picked-up and it is time for finalizing their location and planting.

Other: The ash borer has destroyed 16 trees along Parkway South between Westchester Ave and Route 22. Vinny’s plan is to top them, where the damage is evident, leave the greenery for one year, then replant. His recommendation is for a Regal Prince Oak which is low maintenance and will serve as a vertical buffer replacement. A suggested funding source for the damage repair and re planting could be the Arbor Day Project application.

He is in receipt of an application for removal of 8 to 12 mature trees from the new owners of 39 Parkway East. The question arose as to whether overhaul plans of an estate property with intention to build a new garage would require any land-use board approval, i.e., ARB before landscape can be altered and a tree replacement strategy. Vinny will get back to the owner for further information.

Good news... MV now has a stump grinder!!!

3.3 Dept. Planning

Upcoming land-use applications: Marlon knows of no new land use applications for TAB review.

Comprehensive Plan WIP: The extension of the RFP deadline paid off and there are good applicants to be evaluated at the next BOE meeting. If a contract is signed by Oct., the community meeting process can begin. This will be a 2-year project. The PD has invited FCWC to mobilize their environmentalist to collaborate with MV and help form the process related to greenspace and sustainability. He emphasized that it is essential that the CP be based on community input.

Other: Legislation was submitted to the City Council to acquire GIS capability for the Planning Dept. It was approved last night. This ESRI contract will allow for software licensing & instruction for mapping of streets, hydrants, stores, greenspace, commercial and residential properties, DPW assets, etc. A dedicated GIS technician is written into the budget and can begin once the technology is installed.

3.4 Citizens

Neighborhood projects: We’ve added this segment since one of the TAB’s important missions is to take its message out into the community. We want to increase awareness of the great benefit of trees to having a healthy and beautiful city. By means of education our intent is to engage an active citizenry that wants to preserve, maintain, and add to our tree population.

Local neighborhood association are emerging with landscape visions for their communities. Chester Hill Park has begun to organize around renovations of Stuyvesant Plaza. DPW has made some modification in response. What remains is the need for a collaboration around the design to bring the project to a completion. Another neighborhood group is walking the streets identifying sites for tree plantings in the early stages of a rough plan.

4— Announcements

Next Regular TAB Meeting, Thursday, October 20th, 4 p.m.

On the occasion of the TAB’s first year of existence, a compliment was extended to Eveline Feldmann, our Chair. Recognized were her fine honed skills which she applies to the TAB’s work with great dedication. Since, she, along with the other 2 citizens, is a volunteer, at the very least, she was offered the compensation of accolades.

A motion to adjourn the meeting at 5:47 p.m. was made by Marlon, seconded, by Marlene.

A full recording of this meeting is accessible with this link:

<https://www.facebook.com/mountvernonny/videos/tree-advisory-board-meeting/547543547169386/>



Eveline Feldmann, Chair

10/20/2022

Date of Approval