

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Avon Tree Commission
Held in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Building
On Wednesday, March 9, 2022
At 7:30 P.M.**

The Chairman Pro-Tem, Mary Berges, called the meeting to order.

PRESENT:

Commission Members: Shannon Laurenzi; John Schwartz; Matt Smith; John Traxler; Chairman Pro-Tem Mary Berges; Certified Arborist Richard Varga (Non-Voting Member)

Law Director John Gasior; Clerk of Council - Barbara Brooks

ABSENT:

Commission Members: Greg Mateyka; Chairman Anthony Moore

CORRESPONDENCE

The Clerk said that she had no correspondence.

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE AVON TREE COMMISSION HELD WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2022

A motion was made by Mr. Smith and seconded by Ms. Laurenzi to dispense with the reading of the minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Avon Tree Commission held Wednesday, February 9, 2022, and to approve said minutes as published, and the vote was: Ms. Laurenzi, "yes"; Mr. Schwartz, "yes"; Mr. Smith, "yes"; Mr. Traxler, "yes"; Ms. Berges, "yes".

The vote was 5 for and 0 against and the Chairman declared the motion passed.

DISCUSSION OF A LIBRARY PROGRAM ABOUT NEIGHBORHOOD FORESTRY

Donna Kelly-Sprinkle, Branch Manager of Avon Public Library, stated that she was really happy to be there to share about this program. One of her librarians, Ken Edsel, came up with this and shared it with her and they passed it on to the Library System and they thought it was an awesome program and wanted to be involved. It is a program called "Neighborhood Forest" and is a non-profit organization that was formed a little over 10 years ago by a young man and he gained sponsors and uses that money to purchase trees and distribute them to children all across the U.S. So we thought this was pretty cool and we signed up the whole Library System. On the home page of our Lorain Public Library System website, which is lorainpubliclibrary.org, you will see a picture of a little panel there that says "Neighborhood Forest - Free Trees for Children" and if you click in there you will be able to get all the information about it and register for your own children or children you know to get a tree. They have to register before March 15th.

Ms. Kelly-Sprinkle said that she was the coordinator for her branch so she gets an email every time somebody applies for a tree and the Avon Branch alone has 90-some kids that are going to come and get free trees and we still have a week left. So she has a list and around Earth Day, they will be sending the Avon Branch Library the right amount of trees and then we will get a couple volunteers together to help bag up the trees and we will pass them out to the kids as they come in. We will send them an email telling

them their trees are here and to come and pick them up. And they also get instructions emailed to them on how to plant and care for their tree. We advertised this program all on the internet; we did not make any flyers. Ms. Kelly-Sprinkle said that she asked the gentleman in the organization when they would announce what trees we would be getting. They select trees that are appropriate for your area of the country and he said that would be in early April. So that is the program and we are doing it for the whole Library system and it is so simple that we will probably do it again next year.

Mr. Smith asked if there were any local people that donate money to this program and Ms. Kelly-Sprinkle said that if you go to the website, there are opportunities to donate and there is information about the names of the sponsors, etc. She said that if the Library felt like they were going to be heavy users of this they might share that information with some local businesses and say we benefit from this program and urge people to donate. Mr. Smith stated that if the Avon Tree Commission possibly obtained some grant money, they could donate to the program and asked about that. Ms. Kelly-Sprinkle said that anybody could donate. She thought that they are well funded, but they do ask on the website. And they also give parents the opportunity to purchase an extra tree for \$10.00 when they are getting their child's free tree. She said she thought that it costs \$5.00 to provide a child a tree so if you are buying a tree for \$10.00 you are actually allowing another child to get a tree. She said that the reason she shared this program is because when Ms. Berges stopped in the Library awhile back, she had told her about the Avon Tree Commission which she had not been aware of and then when the Library was deciding they were going to do this program, she felt she should let Ms. Berges know.

Ms. Berges asked if there was something that the Tree Commission could help her with and Ms. Kelly-Sprinkle said, yes, since it is still another week that the kids can register, feel free to promote it. Also, she said that she was at another meeting that Mr. Moore was attending and he asked where the children would plant the trees and she said, probably in their yards. Then she had the thought that if there were areas in the City that needed trees then maybe there could be some kind of a partnership to encourage families to get together and plant their free trees in a certain place. That is a possibility that we could do something like that.

Mr. Schwartz asked what month they would start moving on this program. Ms. Kelly-Sprinkle said that they came on it late; this was their first year of doing it and she was not sure when they opened up registration but maybe in January. But the Library just started it and only had about a month for people to register. Next year, if the Library does it again, they will start earlier in the year as soon as registration opens up. The word is getting around better than she thought; they sent information to the schools and day cares, and to social media and word got around. Mr. Schwartz said to let them know especially for next year and that way the Tree Commission can help promote it.

UPDATE ON AVAILABLE GRANTS – Matt Smith

Mr. Smith stated that Mr. Varga gave him some materials and one that caught his eye was an organization called the Native Plant Society of Northeastern Ohio and they open up their grant in the summertime. He does not know exactly what month but the President of the Society said she would contact him. They offer grants up to \$500. and that would be something he thought that if they received, they could possibly give to this Neighborhood Forest program. Also, he has been told that there is an environmental group at Avon High School with the students and he needs to find out about that because grants up to \$500 might be something the students could use for purchasing trees or wildflower seeds, etc. so he is working on that.

Mr. Varga stated that, in conjunction with that, the Ohio Tree ISA also has educational grants that we could apply for through the City or the High School and those grants are up to \$2,500. He just got the information last week saying these grants were now available and last year they only had two applications for an educational grant. Mr. Smith asked Mr. Varga to give him a copy of that material as he wants to find out about this group at the High School.

UPDATE ON ARBOR DAY ACTIVITIES – Shannon Laurenzi

Ms. Laurenzi said that she does not have a lot to update. She just started an outline to follow as far as getting everything organized and getting things off the ground. One of the things that she wants to do is to go to a couple Arbor Day celebrations at the end of April in a couple cities around here. She thought that would be a good way to get some ideas. So she does not have anything really to report right now but she is looking to get some involvement from the community and the schools. Likely we will get a tent and tables and she is going to get some costs. She will reach out to the organizers of the Christmas tree lighting ceremony and see where they rented some of that or what things might be available from the City. She guessed that Mr. Mateyka will no longer be a member of the Commission, per his email of today so if anybody else wants to step in and help her with Arbor Day, that would be great. Also, she did get over to the Aquatic Center to get the layout of what we will be able to do there with tables and crafts for kids, etc.

Mr. Varga said they could meet with Clare Harasimchuk, Recreation Coordinator, at the Aquatic Center as she has some ideas about where to hold things and where to plant trees, and wants to go over that with us. Mr. Varga noted that the City of Hudson won the award last year for their Arbor Day activities for the State of Ohio so that might be a good city to look into. He said that he would make himself available to also go there for that. Mr. Schwartz said that he has a background in outreach so Ms. Laurenzi should feel free to reach out to him for help and they might be able to bounce some ideas around. He said he was assuming they were all going to have a hand in Arbor Day one way or another. Mr. Smith offered his help as well. Ms. Laurenzi said it was great to be expecting help from all of them. We have some time to see what we want to do. Mr. Varga said that he keeps getting correspondence for Arbor Days and he will send those along to Ms. Laurenzi to get some ideas.

CONTINUED DISCUSSION OF THE TREE COMMISSION PAGE OF THE CITY WEBSITE – Mary Berges

Ms. Berges said that everyone should have received with the agenda and the minutes what she put together as the initial submission for the Tree Commission page on the City website. The nice thing about this page is that they can add to it every week or every month. She just wanted to get something up there as quickly as we could and then add to it as we go along. She said she looks forward to their input - what they thought about it, what they would like to see added or anything they would like to see changed.

Mr. Varga stated that he has been involved with the Parks Dept. for the Memorial Tree Planting and they want to put this on the website. He said that he and Mr. Traxler came up with a tree list for this tree planting because, in their opinion, it was fairly generic as far as the tree species. So they modified the list with trees that were more specific and native. The other thing they were thinking about doing was instead of just planting a tree as a memorial, we would expand that to planting trees to commemorate a special event. Ms. Harasimchuck also asked whether we might include on the website and in the memorial tree brochure, information about donating a memorial bench. He and Mr. Traxler are going to work on this flyer that the Parks Dept. had and then once they get that together, they will send it to everybody for their input. The other thing is, the Parks Dept. usually does a small plaque that is inscribed for the memorial

and they were working with a company in Indiana that was charging them \$80 for this little brick. Mr. Varga said, so he was going to go out to the engravers that he has been working with for the last 30 years and look into that for them. The other thing is, the Parks Dept. has not raised the price of a memorial tree in the last 10 years so he and Mr. Traxler are going to think about raising the price because the trees are way more expensive than what they are indicating. So they are going to put all that together for everybody and then they would like to see it go on the website after everybody approves it.

Mr. Schwartz stated that he was concerned with the species of trees that were listed and he was going to be a stickler for encouragement of planting native plants. He just wanted to stress that not only for local biodiversity, but for wildlife, storm water, all those kinds of things. Mr. Varga and that he and Mr. Traxler tried to go over all that so there was diversity on the trees that are planted and are adaptable to certain areas. Mr. Schwartz said, also, in regard to the bench, he would not have a problem in including the bench in it. Mr. Varga said that Ms. Harasimchuk asked if we could do that and he said that he would run it by everybody. Because right now the Parks are averaging only two trees a year that they plant through this memorial program but they are not trying to promote it at all so they feel that once it gets on our website hopefully there will be more activity.

Mr. Varga then brought up an email that he had received today from a local volunteer organization called the AT&T Pioneers. They are working with the Lake Erie Crushers on a new program called "Next Bat Up". This is a project where if the Lake Erie Crushers break a bat, the AT&T Pioneers will purchase and donate a starter tree and would like these trees planted on the Mercy Health Stadium property as a community service environmental beautification project. Mr. Varga said that we already have a list of trees so once we go to the site and see where they want to plant the trees, maybe then we can have a better idea of which trees would be more adaptable to that particular site. He said that he was going to follow up on this.

Ms. Berges asked if they could talk about that at next month's meeting. We could put that on the agenda. Mr. Varga said, yes. The Mayor called him and said he wanted him to go forward with this, but he just wanted to run it by everybody so everybody knows that we are going to be involved in that project.

Ms. Berges said, going back to the Tree Commission page on the website, maybe we should just take it quickly item by item. So the overview is that the Tree Commission was established by Ordinance No. 70-21 and consists of seven members, all residents. And as the purpose, she took that actually out of the Ordinance and then it states that the Tree Commission will also provide resource materials and information pertaining to proper tree selection and care. If that looks good, we can leave that. For additional resources, we could put tree FAQs which we would link to a separate page and so she put some examples and again, we can add to these. And then there are some links here such as a number of brochure topics and she was going to see if we could put a subset where we list what those brochure topics are. There is a link to Appendix A of Ordinance No. 90-21 which is the list of trees that we deemed were appropriate to plant in tree lawns and which ones we do not want to see planted anywhere. And then there is a link to ISAarbors.com that gives a lot of useful information, a link to the license plate information that Mr. Varga sent out two weeks ago, and a link to ArborDay.org. Also, Ms. Berges thought it was worthwhile to put something about the Arbor Day Celebration on November 5, 2022, just to give people a heads up on what we are going to be doing in November and she believes that is going to be in the City's newsletter as well. Ms. Brooks said, yes, she sent that to Ms. Pitasky and she said it would be included in the newsletter this time if there was room for her to fit it in; if not, it will be in the following newsletter.

Ms. Berges continued by saying, then she was thinking future editions of the website would include descriptions and pictures of trees because she knows they are anxious to put that out there. It is just a question of how long it will take to get the format and how we are going to link to that but she thought we could get this initial page up and running maybe next week and then work toward the other items. Arbor Day activities certainly would be put on here, the plant-a-tree program and the certificate, once that is finalized, would be put on here.

Ms. Laurenzi said that they could put the Neighborhood Forest program link on there even though registration ends March 15 for this year but going forward to put it on there. Mr. Traxler added, and it is probably beneficial to have a link to the Division of Forestry for urban foresters for the area, just in case folks would have additional questions for them; those are good resources. Mr. Varga noted that hopefully by April 1st, we will have our urban forester in place and as soon as he knows about that, he will let everybody know.

Ms. Berges asked Mr. Traxler if he knew when they might be able to have descriptions of the trees and Mr. Traxler said that he would like to talk about the format first. He said that he can give the information but maybe he could have a meeting with Ms. Berges to ask what she thinks. Ms. Berges said that she could meet just about any time. Mr. Varga said that he and Mr. Traxler have discussed this and Mr. Traxler had some great ideas and Mr. Varga thought it would be a good idea just to present what they are thinking. Ms. Berges suggested doing that at next month's meeting because really everybody on the Commission should hear that. Mr. Traxler said that he has a basic layout but there is probably a better way to present it on excel and he needs some help with that. Ms. Laurenzi said that she could help him with that. She said that Mr. Traxler could email her the information and then they could talk.

Mr. Schwarz said that people should be able to go to the website and say they want a tree that is either going to be big, medium, or small and they should be able to select that and then they be given a list of recommended species. We could have that listed and then from there have the associated pictures as we get them. That is one way. Mr. Traxler said we could definitely do that; what we can do is unlimited so we have to restrict it and that is basically where we start. We list a certain amount of trees and start there and then add to that.

Ms. Berges asked if everyone was in agreement on the initial page for the website and Mr. Gasior stated he thought just for the first part, the overview, it should say, "consists of seven members, all of whom are Avon residents and a certified arborist." Ms. Berges then asked if there was anything else and said otherwise, she would meet later on this week with Rose Seighman, the Mayor's Administrative Assistant, and they would get this up and running.

Mr. Traxler said he thought this is a fantastic start for the website page and once it is up there we will be able to visualize how we are interacting with the community.

Everyone thanked Ms. Berges for the great job on the website page.

TREE RECOMMENDATIONS – John Traxler

Mr. Traxler stated that they listed some trees that they thought could be used for planting in the parks and he briefly described them: 1.) a maple called "autumn blaze" which is a very fast-growing tree; 2.) a service berry. The service berry name came from the fact that they used that to honor someone's service when they planted that tree. Mr. Schwartz added that at the time it bloomed, that is when the ground

was thawed enough that you could bury your dead so they kind of used that as a marker; it is very fitting for a memorial tree; 3.) a scarlet oak which has a really nice fall color and is a little more adaptive to different types of soil; 4.) a crab apple which is nice for the birds and wildlife and is a tree that is very disease resistant; 5.) a wildfire, which is kind of his favorite tree. The wildfire is a native tree that does really well in wet soil or dry soil. Mr. Traxler said that they selected a lot of the trees for the fact that there is heavy clay soil and poor drainage and they wanted something that would do really well; and last, 6.) a heritage river birch which does well in either dry or wet soils. It is a very fast-growing tree and is very attractive.

Mr. Traxler said that he just printed this list today and they can make copies of it. Ms. Brooks said that Mr. Traxler could give her the list and she could email it out to everyone.

TREE CANOPY WEBSITE, TREE PLANNING AND PROGRAMS – Rick Varga

Mr. Varga referred to the City of Avon Tree Plan which he made in conjunction with the urban forester in Columbus and said that he had sent this out to everybody. He and the urban forester put this together because Mr. Varga indicated to him that this is our first year to be a Tree City so he said we have to prioritize what we need to accomplish first before we start planting trees and this is the program we put together. He asked if there were any questions from anyone.

Ms. Berges asked who would have responsibility for the first item on the Tree Plan, which was to inventory the trees, to identify dead or decayed trees for removal as well as the tree hazards. Would that be the Service Dept.? Mr. Varga said, no, he has already started that. He has identified all the trees at Schwartz Road Park that were dead and decaying and he went around and marked those and gave that list to Tim Loeser, the Streets Supt. and we will go from there.

Mr. Varga added that we do not want to go in there and just remove all dead trees because it is very important that we consider the wildlife. You have to be aware of the habitat that dead trees provide for birds and animals when you remove trees. That is why he is working with Mr. Loeser and recommending to cut just part of a tree when it is off the pathway so there is plenty of tree left for the habitat. So we tried to take all of this into consideration so we are not just going in there and starting to take things down; we have to make sure that we consider all the wildlife.

Mr. Smith asked Mr. Varga if he would be doing the same markings down at Veterans Park in that woods trail back there and Mr. Varga said, yes, as soon as he has talked with the Mayor about all this so we can keep proceeding.

Mr. Smith said that he was sure that the \$2.00 per capita requirement for Tree City USA goes to pay for the Service Dept. work. Mr. Varga said, yes, and that is why it is a win-win. Everything that we are doing on this Tree Plan list is going to be involved. The thing that is going to take quite a bit of time is to identify the tree canopy in the City. They have all these programs now to do that; it is not difficult but it takes awhile.

Mr. Smith asked if the per capita spending would purchase that program and Mr. Varga said that we already have the program so that is not a problem. He received that program through the ISA, so there is a benefit in being involved in some of these associations.

Mr. Smith asked if we would be looking at the canopy for the whole City or just on City property? Mr. Varga said, the whole City so that we have a baseline that we can work with to show any loss in canopy and to say what we are doing to promote the canopy.

MEMBER COMMENTS

Ms. Laurenzi asked who was keeping track of all of the spending on all of these things that we are planning to do. She knows that we have to reach a certain amount of spending for Tree City USA and she was under the impression that it did not have to be actual dollars, that there were things like all of us being here at this meeting, etc.

Mr. Gasior said that we have a Finance Director and he assumes that any expenditures have to go through his office as purchase orders. Ms. Laurenzi said, not necessarily an expenditure; she just wondered if we need to put something in writing.

Mr. Varga stated, yes, that is very important because we can qualify our time here at this meeting and at least we have this documented because we are with the City and all the meetings are documented but when anybody is ever out doing anything, we have to qualify that, such as going to Hudson to look at their Arbor Day. Also, a Tree Academy is coming up and attendance at that would qualify. So, yes, we will have to keep track of some of those expenditures. That is a very good point.

Ms. Berges said, so going forward, if you spend time, for instance if you go to Hudson for their Arbor Day activities, you should keep track of the time that it takes you because in looking at the application for Tree City USA, they are looking at the hours that we spend. Not so much on the cost or the dollar amount, but the number of hours so we need to keep track of that.

Mr. Schwartz stated that it is going to be really hard to plan an Arbor Day if we do not have a budget for what we can spend. He does not know where we are with that so it would be nice to know our yearly budget even if it is for education.

Ms. Berges said that was brought up last month and we talked what our overall budget is for the Tree Commission which is that \$2.00 per capita but of that amount, she thought we would probably have to go to the Finance Director to say we would need \$500 or \$1,000 for Arbor Day activities and give him at least a general dollar amount of what we think we would want in case he would need to go to the General Fund or another account.

Mr. Gasior said, from what he understood when he talked to Mr. Logan about this back in November and December when we were trying to get our Tree City established, he was indicating to Mr. Gasior that there were certain expenditures that the City makes in Parks or the Service Dept. that he would be looking to include as part of that \$50,000 number that you need to achieve to become a Tree City USA. So he was not concerned at all about meeting that \$50,000 number just based on some of the things that take place in the City. You could probably put leaf pick-up in that number from a Tree City standpoint. He has a method of allocating the number of hours that a City employee spends on doing leaf pick-up and he can quantify it and then he would verify that that is part of our contribution toward that \$50,000. Now obviously if they are going to have to do certain things for Arbor Day that are going to require the purchase of materials from outside or the hiring of a vendor, etc. they will have to talk to Mr. Logan. Mr. Gasior thought they will have to get a purchase order if there is a vendor involved, and the vendor would have to sign a W-9, because we have to make sure we get their tax status. And then Mr. Logan would authorize

the expenditure. Beyond that, Mr. Gasior does not know exactly what they would be looking to do, but it is doable through the Finance Dept. Mr. Gasior knows that Mr. Logan appropriated the \$50,000.

Ms. Laurenzi suggested inviting Mr. Logan to a Tree Commission meeting and Mr. Gasior said, yes, it would be a good idea to do that and maybe sooner than later because that way you will have a better idea of how you are going to be spending your money, trying to prepare for these different events, the main one being the Arbor Day event. And also, Mr. Logan can tell you how he accounts for any grant money that the Tree Commission receives.

ADJOURN

A motion was made by Mr. Smith and seconded by Mr. Traxler to adjourn the meeting of the Avon Tree Commission and the vote was: Ms. Laurenzi, "yes"; Mr. Schwartz, "yes"; Mr. Smith, "yes"; Mr. Traxler, "yes"; Ms. Berges, "yes".

The vote was 5 for and 0 against and the Chairman declared the motion passed and the meeting adjourned at 8:26 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted by Gail Hayden, Assistant Clerk of Council