

Oath of Office – Prior to the meeting, the Oath of Office was administered by John Gasior, Law Director, to Alex Boccabella for the unexpired term on the Avon Tree Commission ending December 31, 2024

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Avon Tree Commission
Held in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Building
On Wednesday, April 13, 2022
At 7:30 P.M.**

The Chairman, Ward 3 Councilman Anthony Moore, called the meeting to order.

PRESENT:

Commission Members: Mary Berges; Alex Boccabella; Shannon Laurenzi; John Schwartz; Matt Smith; John Traxler; Anthony Moore, Chairman; Certified Arborist Richard Varga (Non-Voting Member)

Law Director John Gasior

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE AVON TREE COMMISSION HELD WEDNESDAY, MARCH 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, March 9, 2022, and to approve said minutes as published, and the vote was: Ms. Berges, “yes”; Mr. Boccabella, “yes”; Ms. Laurenzi, “yes”; Mr. Schwartz, “yes”; Mr. Smith, “yes”; Mr. Traxler, “yes”; Mr. Moore, “yes”.

The vote was 7 for and 0 against and the Chairman declared the motion passed.

DISCUSSION OF TREE COMMISSION BUDGET

Bill Logan, Finance Director of the City of Avon, stated that Mr. Moore had asked him to come by and talk about the budget for the Tree Commission. He said that one of the stipulations for becoming a Tree City USA is to spend \$50,000 for what is called the Community Forestry Program and that \$50,000 is based on population at \$2 per capita. The 2020 census population for the City of Avon is approximately 24,800 so we just rounded it up and put \$50,000. in the 2022 budget for the Tree Commission. When the Tree Commission was formed, we set up this line item for \$50,000 in the General Fund. He said that he has looked over qualified expenses that Mr. Varga provided that we can use against that \$50,000, and after looking this over, we can use a lot of things that the City has already been doing year after year such as branch pickup, leaf pickup, wood chipping, etc. We track all that activity by hours worked in our Street Dept. and that will more than cover the \$50,000 that is in the budget for this year. He knows that the Commission has an Arbor Day planned and some other activities, and we can certainly take those sorts of expenses out of this \$50,000 as well.

Mr. Moore asked about the expense process for Arbor Day and Mr. Logan said that he would prefer that when purchases are made for Arbor Day or whatever it might be, the Commission members come through the Finance Dept. In other words, he prefers that the Finance Dept. makes that purchase directly rather than having one of the Commission members making a purchase and being reimbursed. When we make these purchases, we always provide a sales and use tax exempt form and even though purchases might be minor we still use that every time. We are exempt from any State sales or use tax. So that is one of the reasons we prefer it to come through the Finance Dept. but he will be happy to work with the

Commission. He can put them in touch with our accounts payable clerk at the right time and we will make sure it flows smoothly.

Mr. Gasior asked Mr. Logan if he had an account set up so that at the end of October or November when we are going to be applying for this Tree City designation, we are going to be able to certify in some way how much money we spent toward that \$50,000. Mr. Logan said, yes, they will keep a spreadsheet and purchases for Arbor Day as well as the expenses for leaf pickup, etc. will all run through this one line. They will have a schedule laid out that shows the hours and the weeks worked by the Street Dept. There will be plenty of expenses that can go against that. Mr. Gasior said he just brings this up because he knows that come October, we are going to try to be putting everything together for this Tree City designation and we are going to have to show that expense in some way, shape or form. It may be just a spreadsheet signed by Mr. Logan. Mr. Logan said he would supply whatever is needed; he would have copies of invoices, etc. He said again that we will have no problem spending the \$50,000.

Mr. Varga stated that also, when we are here volunteering our services for meetings or going out to do projects, that is also taken into consideration for our budget and we need to keep track of our time. Just try to document it to some extent and if we can use it, that would be great. Mr. Logan said, yes, we need those sorts of expenses. He said that tracking their time would probably be a good idea even going into next year as their momentum builds. Tracking the amount of time spent on this endeavor may come in handy down the road for submitting for grants and things like that.

Mr. Varga asked Mr. Logan if he was familiar with the Memorial Tree Fund that we have? Mr. Logan responded that he was a little bit; that fund was established long before he started working for the City and it is run by the Parks Dept. It is a situation where our Parks employees will plant a tree in one of the parks for a deceased relative. He believes the way it works is the resident would purchase the tree through our Parks Dept. and the Parks Dept. will then supply the labor to plant the tree but Mr. Logan said he was not exactly sure where these trees are planted. Mr. Varga said that he has been working with Clare Harasimchuck, the Recreation Coordinator, on this and she said they have not really established anything since 2009. Mr. Logan stated that every year one or two trees are planted; the program is not well known. Mr. Varga said, yes, and that is why we are going to put it on our website so it hopefully becomes better known. We are going to do more than memorial trees; we are going to offer tree plantings for graduations, retirements, or any special events. The Parks Dept has never raised the price since 2009 and he does not know how that budget is going or how it is working. Mr. Logan stated that it is minimal. Mr. Varga said that he and Ms. Harasimchuck decided that the price has to be raised. Also, he said that Mr. Traxler came up with a new recommended tree list which was great and Mr. Varga found new people to make the memorial blocks for the plantings. So he just wanted to let everyone know that they are working on it. Mr. Logan said that was great and if there was any way that he could help to let him know.

Mr. Schwartz stated that, in regard to Arbor Day, it is hard to plan without a budget. He asked Mr. Logan what would be the best way to do this; could they come up with an arbitrary budget, run it past Mr. Logan and see if that is feasible? The amount of \$600 was mentioned for the Arbor Day budget but it is hard to do anything on \$600. The total can easily get up there but yet he does not want them to be shooting for the moon. Mr. Logan said that it would be great if the Commission could show him a tentative budget sometime well before they are ready to start making purchases. He has talked with Mr. Moore a little bit about it and expenses should be whatever they feel is fit for what they want to accomplish for that day.

Mr. Moore stated that, concerning the tracking, although he thinks they are going to have enough to spend on without having to use their volunteer time, he would hate volunteer time taking time away from trimming trees or something like that.

Mr. Logan stated that we are not going to need the Commission's time to go against this \$50,000. Again, between our leaf pickup and our branch pickup, that more than covers the \$50,000 but what he is saying is that he would like to see these sorts of expenses, such as Arbor Day expenses, come through this \$50,000 and then when we get towards the end of the year, whatever we need to offset that \$50,000 we would allocate from leaf pickup, branch pickup, etc.

Mr. Traxler said that he thought only a certain percentage of the amount spent for tree removal, chipping, etc. could be used toward the \$50,000. and who would be keeping that record? Mr. Varga stated that there is a plethora of things that we can use towards the \$50,000. He noted that when Lescher Tree comes into the City and removes trees we can allocate that 100% and he thinks that last year we spent \$12,000 or \$15,000 alone with Lescher Tree removing trees in the City. And then there is the branch pickup and a percentage of the leaf pickup. Mr. Logan added that our leaf pickup and branch pickup total \$200,000 to \$300,000 with all the labor, the time spent, the machinery used, etc. so as he said, we will not have a problem covering that \$50,000.

Ms. Laurenzi said the way she sees it is that they will use their expenses for all the things that they are doing and then kind of backfill with the City expenses, those things that are happening anyway. Her thought is that especially for their application this year, she would like to present a well-balanced budget with some expenses for the City, for their Arbor Day meetings and their hours and all the other things added into it to show that they have been working hard and spending that money wisely. She sees all of their work, whatever that may be, and the spending for Arbor Day and projects, as being most of their expense toward the \$50,000 and then backfilling with whatever service they need to from the City that they have already been doing. She added that, on that same note, she will kind of have a budget by June 6th on what she thinks they are going to need for the Arbor Day.

UPDATE ON TREE COMMISSION PAGE OF THE CITY WEBSITE

Ms. Berges stated that the Tree Commission page is now on the City website and has the things that we discussed at last month's meeting. There are some links and today she got final approval review of frequently asked questions, so we can get that on there as well. Also, there were some links that we talked about at the last meeting that she will ask Ms. Seighman to add in the next couple of days. And then we are going to add information about Arbor Day. In the first page, it says that our Arbor Day is going to be in November so we are going to add why we are doing it in November because that is a better planting season than in the spring. Also, she and Mr. Traxler and Ms. Laurenzi met to talk about the descriptions of the trees but they were working on the format so once that is agreed upon, then that will be put on the web page as well.

ARBOR DAY

a. UPDATE ON ARBOR DAY FOR AVON – NOVEMBER 5, 2022

Ms. Laurenzi stated that she did not have any significant updates. National Arbor Day is coming up on April 29th and Earth Day is April 22nd and Mr. Smith has done some research on that. Ms. Laurenzi said that she put together a little Arbor Day survey and will email it out to everybody. She also has a list of all the cities that are Tree Cities that should be having Arbor Days and Mr. Smith will let them know. She said that she and Mr. Smith have done some research and could not find very many Arbor Day celebrations to go to. She was thinking she would encourage everybody to go to a different Arbor Day but she could only find two. They need to do a little bit more legwork on that but she will send everybody the survey so we can gather some of the same information about the Arbor Days so we can discuss it and

make sure we are on a good path and have a successful Arbor Day in November. So she will email that to everybody as well as the list of all the cities that are in the Tree City USA.

b. ARBOR DAY IN OTHER COMMUNITIES

Mr. Smith reported that he contacted the four communities in Lorain County that are Tree City USAs, which are Avon Lake, Elyria, Wellington, and Oberlin. He found out that Avon Lake is doing nothing with Arbor Day this year because of past COVID reasons; they did not know what was going to happen so they did not plan for anything. Elyria normally does a tree planting at one of the schools but again because of COVID, they are not going to do that this year but they did say that they are going to do a planting in one of the City's parks. The person he spoke to in Wellington said, no, they were not doing anything for Arbor Day. Oberlin said that they either do a tree planting at a school or at Oberlin College and this year on Earth Day they are planting a tree at Oberlin College and that is at 11 AM on Friday, April 22 and he and Mr. Varga are going to go and Ms. Laurenzi was thinking about it. It will be at the corner of N. Main and W. Lorain in Oberlin and anyone is welcome to go to it. Mr. Smith said that he also called Hudson; last year they were voted the Number 1 Arbor Day in the State. They do a whole week-long Earth Day celebration called "Green Week". They do a tree planting on Friday, April 22nd at the school but the big event is the next day, Saturday, at the City Hall. They are having a car show of electric vehicles, rain barrels, recycling methods, etc.; it is a very environmental week, culminating in that activity. He also called Mentor and they did not have anything definite planned; they said they thought there would be a tree planting at one of the schools and that was about it.

Ms. Laurenzi said, to follow up Mr. Smith's comments, she did not make phone calls but she did go to several Tree Commission websites to see if she could find anything on any Arbor Day celebrations in 2022 and there was nothing, although some of them listed previous activities. She asked that if anybody hears of anything, to please send her an email.

Mr. Schwartz stated that, even though it would not be actual Tree Commissions, there are tons of community groups within each community such as Oberlin Community Services. He has worked with them before. So maybe we should start doing a little searching outside of just Tree Cities because people celebrate Arbor Day; it just may not be the Tree Commissions that are doing it but there is probably a ton of information and ideas out there that we could borrow and from his experience, more often times than not, folks that put in all that work are more than willing to share what they have done. Ms. Laurenzi noted that the Metro Parks has several things planned on that day.

c. ARBOR DAY ACTIVITIES WITH THE METROPARKS

Mr. Varga said, as they all know, he has been communicating with the Metro Parks and in 2018, they had an Arbor Day program at Miller Nature Preserve. He talked to the new Director at the Miller Nature Preserve and she said that she wanted to partner with us for our Arbor Day this year. So he is going to set up a meeting with her to discuss that and he knows that Mr. Smith wants to go to that meeting also. The Metro Parks is doing a lot in the City so Mr. Varga wants to keep them in the loop. He thinks that the more we team up with the Metro Parks the better off we are going to be overall.

Mr. Smith asked Mr. Schwartz to tell the Commission of his experience with getting seedlings to distribute to kids. Mr. Schwartz stated that there are a lot of groups out there that can provide seedlings; one of them is Project Planet and that is one where it was really easy to get the seedlings. You just contacted this agency and told them the number of kids at an event and they sent a whole bunch of redbuds or whatever the species was for that year. If we do not do that, since we are promoting our Arbor Day in November as the best time to plant trees, maybe we could budget to buy bare root seedlings from

nurseries. He was not sure of the availability at that time of year because seedling sales are going on right now but that should certainly be something that we look into. He thought the cost breaks down into anywhere between 45 cents and 70 cents a seedling.

Mr. Smith said he thought that it would be important to distribute trees to kids and to adults as well and everyone agreed. Mr. Varga said it would be more evergreen trees than deciduous in that time of year. Mr. Schwartz stated that in the future, they could do the bare roots seedling in the spring; just because we celebrate our Arbor Day in the fall, there is still Earth Day in the spring.

UPDATE ON TREE DESCRIPTIONS FOR WEBSITE

Mr. Traxler said that he and Ms. Berges and Ms. Laurenzi had met and they looked at the different options as far as laying out the tree charts. Ms. Laurenzi said that her question is, what are the best categories that we want to include, maybe the best five to ten categories. Her thought is to make this first chart pretty simple. She wants the trees definitely to come off from our recommendation list and some things like that. The spreadsheet that Mr. Traxler provided had so much information that we felt it was too much to provide to the general public. She asked if the Commission wanted to discuss the categories of what we might be looking for for the trees, the specific kinds of trees, and how specific we want to get.

Mr. Traxler agreed that the tree chart should not get overcomplicated. Someone asked what the thought was of how we are breaking it down, and Mr. Traxler said that one sample was the tree chart that he did years ago. Ms. Laurenzi said that she changed it a little bit and wanted to group some of the trees together in categories but just wanted to make sure that we are doing it with our recommended tree list. She said she would work on it a bit more and maybe they can either look at it on the computer together or sit down somewhere and move things around a little. Mr. Traxler said that would be fine; he will start the list and send her what he thinks is the most important and he will also send it to Mr. Varga. Ms. Laurenzi said they will share it at the next meeting and make sure that we agree on the format and the trees.

Mr. Moore asked how many trees are we thinking about putting on the list? He does not want to make it too short; if we put just six or eight trees and those are the only trees that get planted, we will not have a good variety of trees in Avon 20 years from now.

Mr. Traxler said they started with their list of recommended trees and then they had the five trees that he had recommended for the memorial trees and we can go anywhere we want with that. Once we define how many things we are going to have on the list, we can add the trees pretty easily. Basically all we have to do is to copy the tree chart that he did; maybe we start with that and then go from there. Mr. Moore said that he loves the idea and does not think any other city websites are doing anything like it.

Mr. Schwartz said, that in his mind, a property owner should be looking at the chart with the thoughts that they have a wet yard or a dry yard, they want a certain size tree, etc. and the chart should be made up that way. Granted, we should have information about types of soils, etc. but we could have it set up where it is kind of base line and then if they really want to get in depth with it, have that information available because with too much analysis, their brains will just turn off. Mr. Traxler said, yes, when he sold trees, he gave certain information for certain trees. We could start with recommended tree lawn trees and the next step would be that we would go to trees that you plant in your lawn – a wider variety and larger trees.

UPDATE ON AVAILABLE GRANTS

Mr. Smith stated that the one grant that he is interested in is from the Native Plant Society for Northeast Ohio, especially dealing with wildflowers. He would like to enhance the wildflowers by the History Walk which is located by the swimming pool and the children's playground. He and Mr. Varga staked out the area of the wildflowers there and have a display. The Native Plant Society does not start accepting applications until July so he will follow up then but that is what he is looking at for a grant right now.

UPDATE ON THE MEMORIAL TREE PROGRAM

Mr. Varga said he thought that he covered all of the issues with the Memorial Tree Program when he was talking to Mr. Logan about it earlier in the meeting. So they are working on the pricing for the trees and also about providing warranties on the trees and budgeting for that. He added that he provided the recommended tree list and he talked to the engravers at Milano's about the memorial plaques. Once he talks to Ms. Harasimchuck and gets some more clarification about funding, he will let Ms. Berges know and we can get it on the website.

Ms. Laurenzi asked what the current cost was of planting memorial trees and Mr. Varga answered, \$325. Ms. Laurenzi said that she noticed on the websites today that a lot of cities have those memorial trees and the price really varies, from \$200 up to \$1,000. Mr. Varga said, yes, it is all based on the size of the tree. Ms. Laurenzi said, so we could have some options where if somebody wanted a larger tree, they could choose one, and that larger one would come with a warranty. Mr. Varga said that maybe offering more options would result in more tree planting; we could say that a 1-inch tree could be done for \$250 or if you want a bigger tree it will be \$390. Mr. Schwartz said that he did not think that raising the price is going to increase interest. Mr. Varga said that the whole idea is that we have to look at the pricing because it has not changed since 2009. Mr. Schwartz asked Mr. Varga if he was worried that if we start promoting the program, then the price would become an issue. Mr. Varga said, yes, that is why he wants to make sure that all our bases are covered when we start promoting this and it starts catching on and all of a sudden we have 30 trees we have to plant. He wants to make sure that we are well within our budgets and everybody understands where we are. He added that once he gets something established with Ms. Harasimchuk, he would come back and present it to the Commission and we can all take a look at it and go from there. He will get the information and present it to everybody and we can all make a decision on what we want to do as far as pricing and warranty and options.

Ms. Laurenzi asked if there was a specific location where these trees are planted and Mr. Varga said, yes, there are three locations: Schwartz Road Park, Veterans Memorial Park, and Northgate Park. And we are going to have a fourth location which is the Aquatic Center. Ms. Laurenzi asked if there was a thought about making it one location? Mr. Varga said he was not sure; right now we have memorial trees in all three of those parks and it might be an issue where a resident lives near a park and wants to plant a tree right there where they live. Mr. Schwartz said he understood how a resident would want to do that; he wants a tree at Schwartz Road Park for his father. Ms. Laurenzi asked if the trees are in a specific area in each park and Mr. Varga said, not really.

UPDATE ON THE REGION 3 URBAN FORESTER BEING NAMED (LOLA LEWIS)

Mr. Varga said that he met with Lola Lewis at her office in Punderson Bay Park and they discussed how we are doing in Avon with the Tree Commission as far as Tree City USA designation and we are on the right schedule. She is more than happy to come and talk to us and Mr. Varga told her to email him whenever she feels comfortable with that because she just started her job three weeks ago and is very busy. Mr. Varga also talked to her about establishing the Tree Academy. He explained that there is a Tree Academy that is established for Tree Commission people specifically to attend to learn more about trees, how to organize and how to do urban forestry, etc. He talked to the Mayor about having the Tree

Academy here in Avon and the Mayor said it was a great idea so Mr. Varga communicated that to Ms. Lewis. She said that they are having a meeting in about two weeks and then she is going to get back to us about possibly having the Tree Academy in Avon. It would be a great feather in our cap to be sponsoring this State-wide event. Right now it looks like we are doing more than anybody.

Ms. Berges asked if there was a certain time of year that the Tree Academy was held and Mr. Varga said that it was held in October for four days, with a freshman academy the first day, and then sophomore, junior, and senior academies on the following days.

Mr. Moore asked if sponsoring the Tree Academy would help us go toward the list of items that we are doing for Tree City USA and Mr. Varga said, yes, it is part of the activities; there is a whole list of activities that you can acquire and that is well within the parameters of that. Now that he has had this meeting with Ms. Lewis and they have excellent communication going on, he is going to keep that open constantly and we will see what happens. Ms. Laurenzi said that she would like to suggest that the Tree Academy be held the first or second week in October. Mr. Varga said that Ms. Lewis only made reference to the fact that it was going to be October. Once he gets more information, we will go from there.

MEMBER COMMENTS

Ms. Berges welcomed Alex Boccabella to the Tree Commission and said they were glad to have him. Ms. Berges then said that she had a question about Appendix A to the Tree Ordinance. It has the tree recommendations and it has the prohibited trees and one of the things we talked about early on was how we would get this information out to the nurseries and perhaps the landscapers, etc. We have not done that yet so she was questioning what was the best way to distribute these lists, particularly the prohibited trees so that the local nurseries know that we do not want these planted, especially on tree lawns depending on what they are.

Mr. Varga said that he has communicated with Willoway Nursery as the City has an account with Willoway and that is where they buy most of their trees. He discussed the tree list with Tom Demaline, the owner of Willoway and he also communicated with the nurseries out in Painesville. He communicates with them all the time and he set up accounts also with them and what we want to do on the website, making sure that if somebody is not sure where to purchase trees from a landscape perspective, they should contact us. He has a list of all of the nurseries in Ohio and a spreadsheet that has all the lists of all the trees that are grown in Ohio by all the nurseries, specifically the size and quantity. And we could put a link on our website to that list also.

Ms. Laurenzi said she thinks it is important for the local nurseries or landscape places to have the lists handy right there at their stores. Much as we would like people to check out our website, she does not think they are going to do that. Mr. Varga said that is a very good point and he asked about the developers planting trees in the tree lawns. Mr. Gasior stated that is part of our subdivision regulations, that they must plant one tree per subplot and we do specify trees that they are allowed to plant and those that they are not allowed to plant. He was not sure that it coincides with what we have in the Tree Ordinance and we may want to look at that.

Mr. Boccabella said that he would just like to tell everyone that he is looking forward to supporting the Tree Commission and helping Avon become a Tree City USA.

Mr. Schwartz said that a lot of the thought is about these tree lawn trees; however, when he thinks about trees, that is the last thing he thinks about. In his mind, it is the residents' education of native plants and increasing biodiversity and doing what they can on their property. And that is where he thinks we are

going to be most effective, is that educational outreach component. It is important for people to know that they can come to us to look for that information. He just wants to reiterate that educating the residents is going to be way more effective because the landscaper is going to plant what the landscaper gets a good deal on and that is just a fact. And Willoway is going to sell what the landscaper wants to buy. However, if the resident is saying they want a native tree or a certain tree, that is what they are going to plant.

Mr. Traxler said that he just wanted to say, he was glad to have Mr. Boccabella here and looks forward to having him on the Commission.

Mr. Varga thanked Mr. Boccabella for being there. He then asked if everybody had seen the page in the Avon newsletter about the Tree Commission? He noted that right there it talked about our website and so hopefully, that is a segway into promoting our Tree Commission.

Mr. Moore thanked Mr. Boccabella for volunteering his time for the Tree Commission and said that he wanted to thank everyone else as well; there is so much going on and he just wanted to thank everybody again for their time.

Mr. Moore said he also wanted to hit on a few other things. He said that his long range goal was to incorporate something with builders and what they were putting in on tree lawns so he would be interested in revisiting our Ordinance on that and seeing what we have and how we can improve that. Because we are always going to have development in Avon, although we are slowing it down as much as we can, but he wants to make sure that what they are putting in is going to be good for our region. The education of getting the word out, etc. is going to be really key.

Mr. Gasior stated that it is Chapter 1248.08 in our Codified Ordinances that covers trees in subdivisions and the only thing that is stated is, "Trees of a species that are resistant to damage and disease, and which do not cause interference with underground utilities, street lighting, or visibility at street intersections shall be planted on the tree lawn, one per subplot and a uniform species per street". That is not really telling us anything about permitted or prohibited trees, so perhaps we need to go to Council and make a cross reference there to permitted and prohibited trees in Chapter 1028 just to make it clear that we have a list of what is permitted and what is prohibited. Mr. Gasior added his welcome to Mr. Boccabella.

ADJOURN

A motion was made by Mr. Smith and seconded by Ms. Laurenzi to adjourn the meeting of the Avon Tree Commission, and the vote was all ayes.

The Chairman declared the motion passed and the meeting adjourned at 8:39 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Gail Hayden, Assistant Clerk of Council