

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Avon Tree Commission
Held in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Building
On Wednesday, May 10, 2023
At 7:30 P.M.**

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

PRESENT:

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

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE AVON TREE COMMISSION HELD WEDNESDAY, APRIL 12, 2023

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, April 12, 2023, and to approve said minutes as published, and the vote was: Ms. Berges, “yes”; Mr. Boccabella, “yes”; Ms. Laurenzi, “yes”; Mr. Smith, “yes”; Mr. Traxler, “yes”; Ms. Wetzig, “yes”; Mr. Moore, “yes”.

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

DISCUSSION OF A MASTER TREE PLAN – Mr. Varga

Mr. Varga stated that he just wanted to make reference to the fact that now that we are a Tree City USA, we have to start implementing a Master Tree Plan to keep the status of Tree City USA. When we have the meeting on June 1, 2023, with Stephanie Miller and Matt Leiden, the Urban Foresters, we are going to start discussing that particular aspect and how they want us to get involved and perform. Mr. Varga said that he has already started a tree plan but he wants the Urban Foresters to make sure that we are on the right process because we know that there is a lot involved as far as what we really need to do. In conjunction with that, Mr. Varga said that he also had an opportunity to meet with some law students from Case Western Reserve and they are interested in helping us with this tree plan as an internship. But before we do anything, June 1st is a very important meeting because the Urban Foresters are going to get more involved and give us a good floor plan for what we really have to accomplish in the future to maintain our status.

Mr. Boccabella asked if they already had a template or something that we can follow and Mr. Varga said what he has sent out to everybody are tree plans from different cities. Everybody approaches this differently and that is why he wants to make sure that when we meet with the Urban Foresters that we have specifics, that we are following the correct protocol. There is a lot involved as far as identifying all the trees and the canopy, etc. so that is why he thinks it is very important that all the City officials attend that June 1st meeting so that everybody is on the same page. Everybody knows that we as a Tree Commission need to have those resources which start this process moving forward.

Mr. Boccabella asked how long Mr. Varga thought that it would take to create a Master Tree Plan and Mr. Varga said that it will take some time but with all the technology we have available with all the different applications that we can apply, it has definitely made things easier so he hopes that we can do this within a year. He also has some resources and as he said, there are these Case students that want to help. He has researched it and he thinks that we can do this without too much difficulty.

DISCUSSION OF THE 2023 ARBOR DAY CELEBRATION – Ms. Laurenzi

Ms. Laurenzi said that she just wanted to hand out some points that we need to focus on and get some people working on for Arbor Day. The last sheet is a donation letter that she can send out. She wants to get the Avon logo and the Tree City USA logo on the letter and then she will send it out to businesses in the City of Avon.

Ms. Laurenzi noted that they agreed that the hours for Arbor Day would be 11:30 A.M. to 2:00 P.M. She was not sure if they wanted to have a theme or a message. They talked about doing that last year but did not really come up with anything so she just wanted to mention it again. Ms. Laurenzi said that she would go through this list and hope that we can get a couple volunteers to be the lead persons like we did last year. Ms. Laurenzi then reviewed the list and those who agreed to be the leads are as follows:

Welcome Table, Registration and Bag Give-Away – Ms. Laurenzi

Advertising and Notifications – Ms. Berges

Sponsors and Donations – Mr. Varga

Opening Ceremony – Ms. Laurenzi stated that this involves getting Mayor Jensen on board and maybe connecting with the School to see who can do the singing, etc. and making sure we have everything in order for the tree planting.

Mr. Smith said that he would contact the Choir Director at Avon High School and this year he would like the kids to sing more than the National Anthem because they were so good and he felt bad that they did a great job on one song and it was done. He said that he would like them to sing four songs, including the National Anthem. There was discussion about this and Ms. Laurenzi said that we fill figure out the details as we get closer to the day.

Mr. Smith said that he would also contact Curt Vigg to do his Neil Young tribute. He said that he needs to get him booked because he has a full band and they play all over NE Ohio. Ms. Laurenzi said that if nobody has any other suggestions, she thought that would be a great idea. Mr. Smith said that he would contact Mr. Vigg then but if for some reason he is booked that day, then he would find somebody else. Ms. Laurenzi asked Mr. Smith to let them know if he is booked because they might have some other resources.

Ms. Laurenzi asked Mr. Moore if he would contact Mayor Jensen about his part in the Opening Ceremony and Mr. Moore said, yes, that was fine.

Tree Planting, etc. – Mr. Varga and Mr. Traxler

Mr. Varga stated that, in conjunction with that, he was going to contact Kyle Birch, who does the YouTube videos, to come while we are planting the tree and doing the mulching so that could be another component to the YouTube video. Mr. Smith added that Mr. Birch could even take clips of the whole celebration and put it into a little film just to show people what our Arbor Day celebration is and to build interest for every year.

Ms. Laurenzi said that we are going to touch on the Bay Village Arbor Day in just a moment but she and Mr. Smith did talk about it and she thought it was great that they did some things with what not to do on the mulching, etc. She thought that was very helpful to have bad examples of things so she thought we could work that in somehow.

Mr. Moore asked Mr. Varga to take the microphone with him when he did the tree planting because last year for a lot of people, it was hard to hear. He said that he could hold the microphone for Mr. Varga while he was doing the planting.

Activities – Ms. Wetzig and Mr. Traxler

Ms. Laurenzi confirmed that they decided to do an acorn scavenger hunt this year and of course guess the number of acorns in a jar. Also, she said that Mr. Smith and Mr. Varga brought back some really neat activity books from the Bay Village Arbor Day and she has looked into getting us some of those books and thinks we will have some of those available. Mr. Smith said that he asked the City Arborist in Bay Village who paid for the activity books and he said the City of Bay Village. The Arborist ordered 100 in a box to get the discount.

Food and Beer Tent– Mr. Moore, Ms. Wetzig, and Mr. Smith

Ms. Laurenzi stated that this involves helping organize what kind of food items we have, the beer tent, and any food trucks that we might have or vendors, etc. We do not have anything yet but she knows Mr. Moore has talked to the Mayor about the involvement that the City has with a couple companies.

Mr. Varga noted that Bay Village had a food truck and he thinks that is definitely the way to go. Mr. Smith said that we lucked out last year with the pizza as the weather was so nice. If it had been cold and rainy that pizza situation would not have worked. For the Bay Village event, it was in the low 40's and sprinkling and that did not hinder that food; it was a perfect setup.

Tree Saplings – Mr. Traxler and Mr. Varga

Ms. Laurenzi felt that giving out tree saplings is something they should do every year if they can because it is such a great thing.

Mr. Traxler said that, yes, and he wondered if they should increase the amount of trees that they purchase? Mr. Varga said that they had 22 extra trees last year and he wants to donate 10 to the Avon Garden Club for their sale on May 20th if that is ok with everybody. The other 12 he planted at Eagle Point Park and they are all growing and they all look great. Ms. Wetzig asked how many trees they purchased last year and Mr. Traxler said, 200. Mr. Laurenzi said, so we should stay with that amount, hoping we have more in attendance this year.

Mr. Varga said that he had talked to Ron Larson, the owner of The Strip Steakhouse, and he said that he has all of these seedlings that he wants to give us. They are all different types of pines, so he will find out more about that but he did talk to Mr. Larson and said that, yes, we are interested. And then we can go from there as far as ordering extra saplings from Willoway. He said they are going to go to Willoway in advance and see if they can procure some of the saplings of our official tree for the City of Avon, the "Hearts of Gold". If we had some of those to give away, he thought that would be great also.

Grounds Set Up and Clean Up – Mr. Boccabella and Ms. Laurenzi

Mr. Moore noted that everyone will be helping with these and Ms. Laurenzi said, yes, everyone will have to pitch in the day of the event.

In regard to donations, Ms. Laurenzi said that she was going to put together a spreadsheet with all of the people to contact for the donations. She said that she wanted to do a bag this year and she thought they could do that with sponsor money. If someone sponsors more than \$200 either monetarily or with a gift card, etc., we will put their name on the bag. As long as we have it in by July 15th, we should be able to get the bags ordered. And this year, along with some of the gifts that sponsors donate, Ms. Laurenzi said

that she would like to do some gift baskets. She and Ms. Wetzig talked about that last year. The sponsors could drop off a gift basket or If they want to drop off items, we will put together some gift baskets.

Ms. Wetzig asked about the cost of having those bags made and Ms. Laurenzi said that she did not know yet; it depends on what bag we get. They are usually under \$2.00. Ms. Wetzig then asked where Ms. Laurenzi came up with that \$200 donation to have a name on the bag because in the Lions Club, she thought it was \$100. and was also \$100 for the VFW for their event at the golf course. She said she just wanted to make sure we are in the right donation range. Ms. Laurenzi then agreed with Ms. Wetzig to do the \$100.

REPORT ON ARBOR DAY CELEBRATION IN BAY VILLAGE – Mr. Smith

Mr. Smith reported that he and Mr. Varga went to the Bay Village Arbor Day celebration which was held at the Bradley Road Park in Bay. At that park there were baseball and softball fields, soccer fields, tennis courts, etc. and one of the reasons the arborists said they held Arbor Day there was because there would be all sorts of people coming for athletic events and would see what they were doing. But the problem was that day it was cold and rainy and all the athletic activities were cancelled. So their crowd was very sparse but the people that were there were very enthused with what was going on. They had one tent up and in it there was a table for Cuyahoga County Soil and Water Conservation District and a person was giving out flyers. Then there was a table set up by the City of Bay Village by their arborist and their Safety/Service Director and they were giving out materials. And those people were willing to give any information that you wanted there. The thing that Mr. Varga noticed upon entering was that they had a big banner and the banner was the Tree City USA logo which looks fine but he knows that we would like that modified with Ms. Berges' tree with the roots on it.

Mr. Smith said that once they got into the park, they saw very big trees all freshly planted . They walked the whole perimeter of the park and this park obviously had hardly any trees at all to begin with. They must have planted 40 or 50 large trees throughout the whole park and that had to have been thousands of dollars. Bay's arborist said that money was acquired by a Cuyahoga County Urban Canopy grant through Tree City USA. Mr. Smith said he believed that they had worked on that for several years to get that grant. But he was just amazed at all the trees that they had planted there. And the trees had identification signs and it was really interesting. They also had a quick response code attached to each tree so you could take your phone app and hold it up there and identify the tree.

Mr. Smith said that they did a tree planting demonstration and it was a very large tree. He and Mr. Varga talked with the arborist a long time and he welcomed any of us if we wanted to meet with him at any time. All of the Bay Village arborists are very willing to collaborate.

Mr. Smith believes they would have had a larger turnout if the weather had been better, but that just made him think that for our Arbor Day, we probably want more tent setup in case we do get bad weather so people will stay.

Mr. Moore said that we could watch the 10-day weather forecast to think about a few more tents and he asked Mr. Boccabella how much time we would need to order them. Mr. Boccabella said that everything is based on availability, scheduling and manpower; you normally need 10 days out. Ms. Laurenzi said that she thought that they should definitely plan for three or four tents. Mr. Boccabella said that they had two tents last year, 20 ft. x 30 ft. side by side. Ms. Laurenzi felt they should plan for at least one more than last year. Mr. Smith stated that it was good with our tents that they had sides because at Bay village they

did not have sides and all their papers were blowing off the tables and they were scrambling to get everything.

Mr. Varga said one thing that Bay Village did that he thinks that we should do. We planted a container tree last year and they were planting a balled and burlapped tree so he thinks that this year we should plant one container tree and one balled and burlapped tree just to show the difference.

MEMBER COMMENTS

Mr. Smith stated that they had received an email from Clerk of Council Barb Brooks with information on a "Tree Campus K-12" program through Tree City USA. It just looks interesting and maybe is something to look at down the line in getting the schools involved and trying to get kids involved with the trees in Avon. He suggested that if they get a chance, they explore that and see what they think.

Ms. Wetzig said that she works in Avon Lake and through the schools, they had an arborist and the committee members come out for the 5th grade class to do a demonstration on how to plant a tree and they gave them all a seedling.

Mr. Varga stated that our Memorial Tree program is going gangbusters and he thought that we might want to consider adding our official tree of Avon, the "Hearts of Gold", to the list of trees that are offered. He talked to Recreation Coordinator Clare Harasimchuk about it and she was good with that. So he just wanted to make sure of what everybody else thought about it. Everyone agreed that it was a great idea.

Mr. Varga said that when they were talking to the arborist in Bay about collaborating with Avon, he also talked with Jennifer Fenderbosch, Councilwoman from Avon Lake, and she wants to have the three cities join to write a grant. She said that with the three cities going together, there is a great possibility of receiving a federal grant. He asked the Commission if they thought that we should pursue that and Ms. Laurenzi said, absolutely, and everyone agreed. Mr. Varga stated that Ms. Fenderbosch is going to call him and when she does, he will let them all know.

Mr. Varga reported that the Cleveland Metroparks Zoo contacted him; the person that is in charge of feeding all the animals wanted to know if the City of Avon was interested in donating tree branches that are left on the tree lawns to be chipped, to the zoo for feed for the animals. Mr. Varga said that he told the person that he had no idea of what he was looking for and so he set up a meeting with him to find out more about that. Once he finds out, he will let everyone know what is going on and if they think he should pursue it, he will. Everybody thought that he should. Mr. Varga said he does not know how it is going to go; he will talk to Street Supt. Tim Loeser and see what we can do.

Mr. Varga said that his last comment is the reminder that on Thursday, June 1st, the Urban Foresters are going to meet here and they asked if there is anything that the Tree Commission wants to put on their agenda. So if anybody has anything they want to talk about specifically, they can email him or Ms. Brooks and let them know. Ms. Laurenzi asked what the plan was for that day and Mr. Varga said that is what they are trying to put together because the Foresters are going to be here all that day. They are going to be here in Council Chambers at least until lunch and then after that, they want to tour the City. So we will go to the parks, travel around the whole City and maybe show them the Cahoon House with our monarch butterfly garden, etc. So if there is anything that anybody can think of as far as what they should be looking at or any specific questions for the agenda, he would like some input. Ms. Laurenzi noted that she saw the email from Ms. Brooks about that date but did not notice any agenda attached. Mr. Varga

said that there was not an agenda and that is why he is mentioning it now to have input before we put anything together. The Foresters will have their agenda but we want to put something together so we have specific discussions.

ADJOURN

A motion was made by Mr. Smith and seconded by Ms. Wetzig to adjourn the Regular Meeting of the Avon Tree Commission and the vote was: Mr. Boccabella, "yes"; Ms. Laurenzi, "yes"; Mr. Smith, "yes"; Mr. Traxler, "yes"; Ms. Wetzig, "yes"; Ms. Berges, "yes"; Mr. Moore, "yes".

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

Respectfully submitted by Gail Hayden, Assistant Clerk of Council