

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Avon Tree Commission
Held in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Building
On Wednesday, July 12, 2023
At 7:30 P.M.**

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

PRESENT:

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

ABSENT:

Anthony Moore, Chairman

CORRESPONDENCE

Ms. Berges stated that Linda Heiden sent an article to the Tree Commission regarding "Mature Trees Available to Homeowners Through City Assistance Program" and that she also sent an article regarding "Tree Tips" that was printed in an Avon Lake Senior Center newsletter.

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE AVON TREE COMMISSION HELD WEDNESDAY, MAY 10, 2023

A motion was made by Mr. Smith and seconded by Mr. Traxler to dispense with the reading of the minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Avon Tree Commission held Wednesday, May 10, 2023, and to approve said minutes as published, and the discussion was:

Ms. Wetzig noted that the last name of Kyle Birch should be spelled with an "i" and not a "u".

The vote to approve said minutes as corrected was: Mr. Smith, "yes"; Mr. Boccabella, "yes"; Ms. Laurenzi, "yes"; Mr. Traxler, "yes"; Ms. Wetzig, "yes"; Ms. Berges, "yes".

The vote was 6 for and 0 against and the Chairman declared the motion passed.

DISCUSSION OF THE 2023 ARBOR DAY CELEBRATION – Ms. Laurenzi

Ms. Laurenzi said she handed out to the members a donation letter as well as a donation spreadsheet that she would also email to Mr. Varga in Excel format.

Ms. Laurenzi then reviewed some of the items for Arbor Day as follows:

Ms. Laurenzi said that the first thing she wanted to discuss was the banner and the right process to get approval to spend the money. She said that last year the City was pretty lenient as far as the process but she wanted to get the approval to spend about \$150 to do the banner. There would be one large banner and possibly one or two other smaller banners. She said she just wanted to make sure they were all ok with spending that amount and then she would work around that number and get the official approval. And she would send out an idea for the banner before it is purchased. Someone asked about having the Library do the banner and Ms. Laurenzi said, yes, those services at the Library are brand new and she will look at it. She has looked at Office Depot but she will definitely look into the Library and ask about pricing and what the abilities are there. Someone suggested that the City might have a contact that they use.

Ms. Laurenzi stated that she had asked Mayor Jensen about the banner awhile ago and the response was that they had never done any banners for a specific group. She said that she will get it all pulled together and get some pricing and check with the Library. Mr. Varga said that he was not sure exactly what they are going to receive on September 22nd for their rewards in Beachwood. Ms. Laurenzi said that she was guessing that they have to purchase the Tree City USA banner; she does not know if that comes automatically from them. She said that from something she read she believes it was something we have to purchase and she asked Mr. Varga to look into that.

Ms. Laurenzi stated that the next thing is that she wants to do a giveaway bag that will say "Avon Arbor Day 2023/Tree City USA" and it will play off from the banner; it will look similar to the banner however we decide to do that. She asked how many bags they thought they needed, about 250? She said that she is going to have to buy them in bulk. Ms. Berges said that if the bags are kind of generic and do not have dates on them and we have leftovers, we can use them for the next year. Ms. Laurenzi said that she guessed she was looking to put the year on the bags so we could add our accolades on it each year and some of the sponsors for each year could be on it. Someone asked if we had an official attendance number from last year and Ms. Laurenzi said not that she was aware of and maybe 250 bags are too many. Ms. Wetzig stated that they need to get more advertising out and maybe a sign on the corner of Detroit Road and Rt. 83 because of all the traffic there. Ms. Berges said that the sign in front of the Post Office is going to be replaced with an LED sign and it might be done by late summer so that would be perfect for them to advertise there. Mr. Smith asked about advertising on the marquee sign at Crushers Stadium and Ms. Laurenzi said they could look into it.

Mr. Smith stated that they were talking about getting some small generic signs, saying "Arbor Day, the 1st Saturday in October" to put at the major intersections and by all the entrances to the schools and maybe the churches. Mr. Traxler noted that we would have to get approval from the City to do that and everyone said, yes. Ms. Berges noted that the important thing is to collect the signs afterwards so we could re-use them.

Ms. Laurenzi stated that she had Ms. Berges as the lead on advertising, the Avon website, etc. and Ms. Berges said, yes, as soon as the schools were back in session, she will email them. Last year it was great because the school offices were able to distribute the notification via email to all the parents, and the daycare centers also had a way to send out the information. Ms. Laurenzi said, and maybe we can talk to them about posting some flyers on the doors the week of Arbor Day. She also has notes for the Library, the Post Office, and the Senior Center to get some signage. Not just yard signs but something they can post on a bulletin board or something like that and maybe that could be the week of Arbor Day or two weeks before. She asked Ms. Berges if she could come up with a number of how many posters they would need. Mr. Boccabella suggested also posting the information on the social site, "Avon in the Know."

Ms. Laurenzi asked Mr. Varga about an update on sponsors. Mr. Varga answered that he has already communicated with everybody that we had last year and they are on board and now that he has this sheet he will go around and give it to them. Ms. Laurenzi said, yes, and to other sponsors as well.

Ms. Laurenzi said that the next thing on her list is the Opening Ceremony. There is not much on that except to make sure that Mayor Jensen is available. We will have the anthem sung by the Avon High School Choir.

Ms. Laurenzi said the next thing she added to the list was the volunteers. She said that she put Ms. Wetzig down as the volunteer coordinator since she was already doing the Leos Club. We had a family that

volunteered last year and this year she thought we might have additional volunteers. We need to keep track of all that so she put Ms. Wetzig as the lead on it.

Ms. Laurenzi said, for the tree planting, she just needs to know what we want to do to pick the tree. Is it something that we want to pick; is it something that the City is looking for us to do? Mr. Varga said that they are looking for us to do it and he is trying to coordinate that with Recreation Coordinator Clare Harasimchuk because we are going to plant at the Aquatic Center and they have a lot of things going on there right now.

Ms. Laurenzi asked if there was any update on the Acorn Scavenger Hunt. Mr. Varga stated that he has been down to the Secret Arboretum twice in the last month and you know the amount of different oak trees they have down there. He said that he could get pictures like they have of oak leaves and acorns. And then we will have the counting of acorns in a jar as we did last year. Mr. Varga said that his intent is to go down to the Secret Arboretum again and get the samples and then he and Mr. Traxler and Ms. Wetzig can talk.

Ms. Laurenzi said that the next item she would like to discuss is the food. She knows that Tony Moore has had some discussion with the company that supplies the food here in Avon and she thinks that they will do it for Arbor Day if we want them to but they did not seem to be enthused about it and did not have much variety. She talked about it with Mr. Moore and they decided to open it up to the businesses in Avon and see if there was any interest. Mr. Varga said that he thought they also talked about a food truck. Ms. Laurenzi said that the food truck was a specific vendor and she thought that we would probably have to put some money up front. Mr. Varga said that the issue that we had last year with Inforno Pizza and the truck was the permit he had to get and certain other requirements. Ms. Laurenzi asked who issues the permit and Ms. Wetzig said they had to have a permit from the City and there is a list from the City of who is approved. Ms. Laurenzi mentioned that for the Christmas Tree Lighting event, there is free hot chocolate, pizza, etc. and she was hoping vendors might be generous with us.

Mr. Smith stated that Clint Gault, President of the French Creek Foundation, mentioned at the Landmarks Preservation Commission meeting held just before this meeting, that they are having their first "Christmas in July" in another week and a half and so maybe we should attend that and see what they do about food. Ms. Berges added that she thought that was being held at the Main Event.

Ms. Laurenzi asked Mr. Smith for an update on Entertainment and Mr. Smith said that he has contacted Curt Vigg and he said he will be there to play. He also spoke with the Avon High School Choir Director back in March and he said he would certainly be there and Mr. Smith emailed him in May just as a reminder with the date and time. He did not respond but Mr. Smith said that he will email him again at the end of August just to make sure. Ms. Laurenzi said that she has on her list that they will sing the National Anthem and then also do a few other songs that they would choose. Mr. Smith said, yes, that is what he told the Director, to sing whatever they feel like doing.

Ms. Laurenzi said that she thought we would have the Choir sing the National Anthem, then have the Opening Ceremonies and then have them do their other songs. She would not want them to be waiting around to sing again. Mr. Smith agreed that they should do their songs before other activities begin. Ms. Laurenzi said, yes, even if it is in the background. They might have an audience but not necessarily sitting there watching them sing but have entertainment while we are doing some of the other things. If everybody thinks that is a good plan, just judging how things went last year.

Ms. Berges stated that this year the awards are going to be given in September in Beachwood and she wondered if we could do something with those awards as part of the Opening Ceremony at our Arbor Day. Ms. Laurenzi said she thought that was a great idea; that is when we get our official Tree City USA designation and the Mayor had told her to talk about our accomplishments over the last year. Ms. Berges said also, and she did not know if Mr. Moore had mentioned this, but it was at a Council meeting, that State Rep. Gayle Manning arranged to have a proclamation for the City of Avon achieving the Tree City USA designation. So Rep. Manning might be somebody too that we invite to the Ceremony if she is available and she could present the proclamation to the Mayor. Ms. Laurenzi said that she would ask Mr. Moore about that.

Ms. Laurenzi asked if they were going to do the same thing that they did last year with the tree saplings. Mr. Traxler said that the problem was to order them and he did that last year. Last year we had a problem getting purchase orders even though the trees were donated. So he would like to get that approved by the Tree Commission and vote on that. He believed that the amount last year was \$275 but to be on the safe side he thought they should say \$375 in case the trees cost more or the shipping is more. So he thought they need to approve that and then get the purchase order.

A motion was made by Mr. Smith and seconded by Ms. Wetzig to approve \$375. for the purchase of two varieties of tree saplings for Arbor Day, and the vote was: Mr. Smith, "yes"; Mr. Boccabella, "yes"; Ms. Laurenzi, "yes"; Mr. Traxler, "yes"; Ms. Wetzig, "yes"; Ms. Berges, "yes".

The vote was 6 for and 0 against and the Chairman declared the motion passed.

Ms. Laurenzi said for the grounds set-up and clean-up, she had herself, Mr. Boccabella and Mr. Moore on that committee and she got a great email from Mr. Boccabella about a month ago about what we ordered previously and some of the things we discussed about what we want to do this year. That is another thing that we probably need to get the approval for is the pricing so we can submit that purchase order for the total cost. She asked if they had agreed that they wanted to do more tents for this year. Last year they had two tents but did they want to do a third one this year? Everyone agreed that there should be three tents. Ms. Laurenzi said she was going to have Mr. Boccabella do an official proposal with the prices for three or maybe even four tents and a few more tables and then we can talk about it at the next meeting and vote on it.

Ms. Laurenzi said that she believed that was all she had as far as follow up for Arbor Day.

OVERVIEW OF THE TREE ACADEMY – Ms. Berges

Ms. Berges said that she and Mr. Varga attended the Tree Academy over a month ago and she asked Mr. Varga to talk about their sophomore class.

Mr. Varga gave out an outline of the sessions that they went through at the Tree Academy. He said that one of the things that is coming up in conjunction with this is the Master Planning Design. Urban Foresters Matt Leiden and Stephanie Miller are supposed to come to Avon and go over the Master Plan with us and get us started. Mr. Leiden and Ms. Miller indicated that they do not want any more than three people at this meeting, so who should attend? He said that he has to be there and he felt it was essential for Safety/Service Director Duane Streater and Planning Coordinator Pam Fechter to be there for the Tree Plan so that everybody is on the same page because eventually we will have to put this in front of City

Council. So if Ms. Fechter and Mr. Streator are at this meeting they are going to have a good overview of what we need to develop when it comes to this Master Tree Plan because we do have a unique situation in the City of Avon in that the City does not own the tree lawn trees. He does not believe that the Urban Foresters have ever come across a situation such as that so we have to see how they are going to look into this and how we are going to develop a plan. They want a plan not only for the trees but a plan for the maintenance of the trees. We are planting a lot of trees and doing quite a few with the Memorial Trees. The Memorial Trees have been a very good success for us but there is not a maintenance plan at all right now with the City as far as taking care of trees. For instance, the trees at the Aquatic Center have never been pruned and a couple of them now are dying off because nobody has ever taken care of them and that is part of the Master Plan that the Urban Foresters want to see for us being a Tree City USA. So that is why it is essential that Mr. Streator is at the meeting or someone from the Parks Dept. because they are the ones who take care of the trees and they have no idea right now because nobody has a plan. Mr. Varga said he is not sure when that meeting is going to be. He emailed Mr. Leiden last week and he has not heard back yet other than that the main Urban Forester in the State of Ohio has left his position and they are saying they are having a lot of problems because he used to coordinate everything throughout the State and they are running behind on a few issues. Once Mr. Varga finds out, though, he will email everybody right away and give everybody an update. So that is one of the most important things coming up besides Arbor Day as far as our Tree Commission.

Mr. Varga said, and also, we have been trying to work on the Tree Ordinance a little bit because we have had a lot of calls about new developments. There is a new development going in off from Schwartz Road and we have had a lot of residents call because the developers are taking down all the trees and they want to know what they can do about it. There is nothing in the Tree Ordinance right now that could curtail that but we are going to have a meeting with them and try to figure out what is the best approach. And then from there we will talk at the Tree Commission also because we already came up with recommendations for trees and that is what they want is to have us go there and say this would be the optimum tree for this particular scenario and where the tree should be planted. That meeting will take place in the next couple of weeks and he will let everybody know how it went. He said that, as a Tree Commission we started to do more with the Tree Ordinance but then it never went anywhere. We tried to develop something with buffer zones and staking trees, etc. and he tried to get a few other people involved but it was just a difficult process. We are working on that but as of right now nothing else has happened with the Ordinance. He added that if anybody ever has any ideas or input on the Tree Ordinance, we are always looking for that as the Tree Commission.

Ms. Berges stated that they had homework to do for the Tree Academy and she had passed that out to them. She said that it was an interesting exercise to go through to see where we are today as a community and use it as a benchmark; it allows us to go through and see where we are and what we want to focus on in terms of improvement. She suggested that when they have some free time, they go through it and see what responses they would make. Mr. Varga said, yes, if they could do that and then email it to Ms. Berges and himself, then in our next meeting they could go over it because they would like to see their views also.

Ms. Berges stated that a member of the Avon Lake City Council attended the Tree Academy and she passed this homework exercise out to their Mayor and Council members to see what their thoughts were. Mr. Varga added, and this is what we want. He thinks it is essential to have everybody look at this and fill it out because they will see what is involved in being a Tree City USA. So after they all fill it out, he wants to talk and see what they think about giving it to City Council so they can also get the full grasp of what is involved.

Debbie Clark, 32947 Porter Creek Way, Avon, Ohio, said that she was curious about the Tree Academy and how it was related to the Tree Commission. Mr. Varga responded that the Tree Academy is put on by the Division of Forestry, State of Ohio, and is in conjunction with Tree City USA. Once you become a Tree City USA, the training is part of the achievement process and they recommend as many people as possible take the sessions. We actually got a certificate for attending because we had to take quizzes every day to see how we were accomplishing all the data that they were giving us. So it is more of an education thing and it is recommended for Tree Commission members. We have to pay to attend but he does not think that members of City Council or the Mayor would have to pay. Ms. Clark asked how many went to the Tree Academy and Ms. Berges said just the two of them, she and Mr. Varga. It is a time commitment; it is during the day and it is two days so she thinks it is difficult for anybody who is working full-time to attend. Ms. Clark asked when the sessions are held and Ms. Berges said that the junior class is going to be in January because they postponed it and then the senior one will follow. She is not sure when they are going to start the next freshman class. Ms. Laurenzi said she believed it starts in the spring; every year they kind of start it in spring and then go through the year. Mr. Varga noted we are trying to get them to hold a class in Avon and have showed them the facilities that we have. Ms. Berges added, and the cost is \$50.

MEMBER COMMENTS

Ms. Laurenzi asked about the meeting on June 1st with Urban Foresters Matt Leiden and Stephanie Miller when they came and did the tour of Avon. Mr. Varga responded that Ms. Miller did not come as she was ill so Mr. Leiden was here by himself and did the best he could but unfortunately could answer only a few questions, being new to his position. Ms. Miller is really the one behind everything and knows all the answers and could really focus on certain subjects. So Mr. Leiden was put in a tough situation and did not have all the answers that Ms. Miller would have had. But we did take him around the City so we familiarized him with the Cahoon House, John Traxler's, the Miller Preserve and the Aquatic Center.

Ms. Laurenzi stated that there is a gentleman named Marc Dewerth who has a website, a Facebook page, called "Big Trees Ohio" and he is interested in coming to a Tree Commission meeting and talking to us about participating in Arbor Day. He is excited to help out and be a part of it so Ms. Laurenzi said that she will get some more information and we can have him come in and give a presentation.

Mr. Varga said that when he was at a tree seminar in Oberlin he spoke with someone from Bartlett Tree, which is a big company like Davey Tree and they want a stand at our Arbor Day. They were at the Bay Village Arbor Day and brought all kinds of information so they are a great resource.

Mr. Smith said that he and Mr. Varga were invited to a couple meetings at Willoway Nurseries about a month ago. They are going to do a Community Day on Saturday, September 9th. They want to give back to the community of Avon and they are modeling this event after some other big nurseries that they are affiliated with in the U.S. So from 9:00 A.M. to 3:00 P.M. that day, Willoway will be open to the public and they will be selling shrubs and trees to the public. Let's say a tree wholesale costs them \$10 and they sell it for \$25; they will then give \$15 to charity. And the Avon Schools will also benefit from this so it is going to be really a big event. The Avon Schools have a Walk-a-Thon which is a big fund-raiser and they are going to combine that with Willoway and have that all done there. And if any groups like the Girl Scouts, etc. want to set up a stand there to sell things, they can do that and keep their money. Willoway will provide the place. Mr. Smith said that he asked them what if it is raining and they have like an acre

under glass; it could be pouring down rain and you could accommodate thousands of people. They want to make this an annual event and it will be in conjunction with the Avon School Board.

Mr. Varga said he has talked to Safety/Service Director Duane Streater about this and we have it all set up with the Police Dept. about directing traffic, etc. Ms. Laurenzi asked if the Tree Commission could have a table at the event or some participation and Mr. Smith said that Willoway said that they are providing the property and the trees; anyone in the community that wants to participate can do so. Mr. Smith said that it is really excellent what they are doing and he just wanted to make everyone aware that it is going to happen.

Ms. Berges stated that they all know that we have an email set up for the Tree Commission. There was a comment made at the June 1st meeting about people being concerned with the pear trees being no longer available for sale and if they had to cut down their tree. She said that it made her think that we do not know as a Commission what kinds of emails are being sent to that email address and maybe we could have a summary of those. Ms. Laurenzi asked who is receiving the emails and Ms. Berges said, Mr. Varga and Mr. Moore. Mr. Varga said that the reason for that was that it was felt that it would be better if only one or two people received the emails so then they could respond; if everybody got an email nobody would know who was responding. Ms. Berges asked again if they could just get a short summary report of the kinds of emails that Mr. Varga and Mr. Moore are receiving. Mr. Varga said he thought what he would do is when he answers an email he will just send everyone the copy email and Ms. Berges said that would be good.

AUDIENCE COMMENTS

Debbie Clark thanked everyone for inviting her. She enjoyed it and learned things and she thought it was great the way they communicated with each other.

Ms. Berges said to Ms. Clark that they appreciated her interest. She thought that they all received a copy of Ms. Clark's email that was forwarded to them by Clerk of Council Barbara Brooks and they really did appreciate her comments.

Ms. Laurenzi added that Ms. Clark should consider herself invited to any Tree Commission meeting anytime. They are always open to the public. Mr. Smith said, and of course she was invited to Arbor Day.

ADJOURN

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

The vote was 6 for and 0 against and the Chairman declared the motion passed.

Respectfully submitted by Gail Hayden, Assistant Clerk of Council