

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

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

PRESENT:

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

ABSENT:

Commission Member: Chairman Anthony Moore

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE AVON TREE COMMISSION HELD WEDNESDAY, JUNE 8, 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, June 8, 2022, and to approve said minutes as published, and the vote was: Mr. Boccabella, "yes"; Ms. Laurenzi, "yes"; Mr. Schwartz, "yes"; Mr. Smith, "yes"; Mr. Traxler, "yes"; Ms. Berges, "abstain".

The vote was 5 for and 1 abstention and the Chairman declared the motion passed.

UPDATE ON SEEDLINGS FOR ARBOR DAY – Mr. Traxler

Mr. Traxler stated that they were able to find all the seedlings and we are getting 50 ironwood and 50 red oak. He said that the invoice will not be coming until October and he asked if when he receives it, he should forward it to the Finance Director and Ms. Berges said, yes, he should do that. Mr. Varga said he thought it would be a good idea to have printouts with the trees with descriptions, telling how they grow, etc. to give to the people along with the seedlings.

DESIGNATION OF "OFFICIAL" CITY OF AVON TREE – Mr. Varga

Mr. Varga stated that he was out at Kline's Nursery in Painesville and was talking to Bill Hendricks and said that he would like to have a tree that has the colors of the City of Avon and Mr. Hendricks mentioned a native hybrid called "Hearts of Gold." It is very interesting because it has purple flowers on it like all the redbuds before the leaves come out and then it has heart-shaped gold flowers all season long. So you have the purple and then you have the gold and the nice thing about it is that it holds its color really well during the heat and the dryness during summer. He said that, also, Mr. Traxler had thought about a sour gum tree as a designated tree. Mr. Varga said that he will get more information about the "Hearts of Gold" tree that everyone can read and then we can decide later on if we really want to do an Avon tree. Right now he was just throwing out ideas.

The question was asked what the purpose was of a City tree? Mr. Varga responded that the idea was that nobody has one and we can actually have a designated City of Avon tree like the buckeye is for the State of Ohio. So we thought it would be kind of neat that there is no city that has their own tree and we would be in the forefront as far as a city proposing something like this. Mr. Traxler added that we could have a tree that has historical reference for Avon or a tree that is really outstanding in its characteristics or one

that says that a nursery had propagated it, so there are different angles. Mr. Varga said, and that is why he wanted everyone to start thinking about it and he will get all the information or if anybody else has any suggestions for trees we can look at those. Mr. Traxler suggested that if we get maybe three trees that meet the criteria, we could open it up to the residents to vote on the trees at Arbor Day. Mr. Varga said that is a great idea because that way you get everybody in the community involved.

UPDATE FROM THE TREE AWARDS CONFERENCE – Mr. Varga and Mr. Smith

Mr. Smith said that he was really impressed with the people who did the presentations at the conference. Their dedication to getting trees planted in their communities and taking places that were pretty barren and bringing the trees back was just awe-inspiring. And it makes him feel good that we are in the incipient stages of doing those things here. Some of those people have been doing this for 25-30 years and he is just glad that we are started and following in their footsteps. Not only did they talk about trees but there was a woman who spoke about pollinator gardens for the monarch butterflies and that was really inspiring, too. He asked Mr. Varga to explain about the monarch garden at the Cahoon House.

Mr. Varga said that, at the conference, they said that you could have a designated monarch butterfly way-station and when he asked what was needed for that, he was told that most importantly you need the milkweed which we have at the Cahoon House. We have a bumper crop this year and then we have the trees and obviously we have the water behind the house, so we fit all the criteria to become a monarch way-station. We submitted an application for that and we are going to get a plaque to put in the garden at the Cahoon House that will say it is a designated monarch way-station. The garden also explains all the plants there that were used for medicinal purposes by the pioneers, so the whole idea behind the garden is to educate people.

Mr. Smith stated, and at the Tree City USA awards for Northeast Ohio, there were a lot of people there and it basically was people on commissions, doing the groundwork, and getting things done, and he was just impressed. And they gave away redbud seedlings at this event so we came away with seedlings. Mr. Varga asked Mr. Traxler if the seedling they would be getting would be in one-gallon pots and Mr. Traxler said, no, he thought they are in small tree pots. Mr. Varga said, but they would be in a liner so they are not bare root and Mr. Traxler said, no, they are a containerized plant. Mr. Varga noted that the nice thing about the seedlings that we are going to be getting is that they are more established and easier to plant. The hope is that they will survive for the people as opposed to the bare root; it is difficult to get a bare root plant to start growing. He said it was great what Mr. Traxler procured because people will have more of a success rate as a consequence and that will reflect back on our Tree Commission.

Ms. Berges stated that it would be fun to have the residents who get the seedlings take pictures of their trees a year later and we could put the pictures in the newsletter. It would just be kind of fun to see exactly what happened to those seedlings, the success stories.

Mr. Schwartz said, going back to the Cahoon House and the monarch way-stations, when he sees those stations, a lot of times they are partnered with the National Wildlife Federation as a certified backyard habitat and they provide you with really nice signage as well. You just have to have the components of food, water, and shelter with it so that might be something that the City can look into because the signage of both of them really looks nice together. For educational outreach purposes he generally sees them together. But it is a really powerful tool how Mr. Varga described people going to the Cahoon House and the education component.

UPDATE ON TREE CITY USA DESIGNATION – Mr. Varga

Mr. Varga said that he has been emailing and calling Regional Urban Forester Stephanie Miller, who is helping our current, retiring urban forester, but he has not gotten any response from her in the last week as she might be on vacation. Mr. Varga said is going to keep up on that communication with her to double check that we are going in the right direction to obtain the Tree City USA Designation. Also, Ms. Miller indicated to him in her last email that she was very interested in the City of Avon holding a Tree Academy in 2023. There is no other Tree Commission that has gone out of their way to give this Academy in our area. Once he hears something from her again, he will update everybody on everything.

ARBOR DAY ACTIVITIES – Ms. Laurenzi and Mr. Varga

Ms. Laurenzi said that she brought a few things with her tonight from the Arbor Day that she went to in TN. The first one was a scavenger hunt and the list had 9 trees on it for people to locate. She thought she would go over this with Mr. Varga and Mr. Traxler to see what trees we might want to list at the Aquatic Center for families to go on a little scavenger hunt and find the trees. The TN Arbor Day gave out nice recyclable bags, pens, recyclable paper, etc. and she thought we might want to consider growing a collection of things over the next few years for give-aways. She said that the scavenger hunt was a lot of fun and she thought it was a good idea. It took about 20 minutes to complete because it was over a large area. Mr. Smith noted that on the paper there, it gives little facts about the trees and he asked if there were signs up by trees with information and Ms. Laurenzi said, yes, there were. Ms. Berges asked how long the Arbor Day event was and Ms. Laurenzi responded that it started about 10 AM and probably went to noon. And the event was definitely geared toward families; there were a lot of climbing things and a food truck. She said that it might be a good idea for us to get a calendar out, to have a schedule of events so people know if they want to stay for certain things.

Ms. Laurenzi said that she felt that we are doing a lot of planning for our Arbor Day to have a solid agenda for what we want to do. We need to make sure we have all of the permits for the beer tent and all of that. She has been to a couple of things that have been right in front of the Aquatic Center on the driveway and she does not know if that is a good place for Arbor Day or not. The pool will be closed so that is not a problem; she does not know if we can open the pool area so that the bathrooms are available. Mr. Smith said that Mayor Jensen told him that the restrooms would be open because Mr. Smith specifically asked him that.

Mr. Varga noted that there is a shelter there already and he was thinking that we would use that with the tent in that area and all the parking is right there. There are always porta-potties but it would be nice having the Aquatic Center open also. Mr. Varga asked Mr. Smith if he was working on the beer tent with the Law Director and Mr. Smith answered, yes, he is just waiting to hear back from Mr. Gasior.

Ms. Laurenzi said that she just wants to make sure that the City knows we want to use the pavilion there. Mr. Varga said that Recreation Coordinator Clare Harasimchuk is in charge of that and she has told him that we have secured that area for Arbor Day. He said that we also have to think about prizes for the smaller kids. Ms. Laurenzi said that she was thinking about a donation letter to the local businesses. We could have a bag with “Avon Tree Commission” on the front and then if any of the local businesses made donations, we could put their names on the other side of the bag. If we decide we cannot do the bag because it is expensive, then we might set up a big banner that would thank the local Avon businesses that donated.

Mr. Schwartz said that, and as far as the kiddos are concerned, the Division of Forestry and the Forest Service has a tremendous amount of stuff for kids such as rulers, frisbees, bracelets, etc. that are pertaining to trees and they are always looking to give those out. Ms. Laurenzi asked Mr. Schwartz if he thought they would want to have a table or some presence at the event and Mr. Schwartz said yes, if we have our urban forester at that point, but there are also service foresters who cover a county so he will definitely ask. He said that he also reached out to Ann Shannon from OSU Extension for her to have a table as well; she has a lot of information to hand out. Ms. Berges asked if Lorain County Metroparks would be interested in having a table? Mr. Varga said he has been talking with the new Director at Miller Nature Preserve and will be contacting her again. He said that another thing is the food truck we discussed. He knows that Mr. Moore was going to look into that but he is not here tonight to report on that, so just as a backup, Mr. Varga will talk to a contact he has for a pizza truck.

Mr. Smith stated that in regard to the music for Arbor Day, he had spoken to the secretary at the High School about a month ago and explained to her that we wanted any combination of the music groups to perform at the Arbor Day and she said she would email that to the choir director, the band director, and the orchestra director. The choir director responded right away just asking about things and so Mr. Smith has been in communication with him and he emphasized to him to please contact his two cohorts at the school and collaborate. Mr. Smith said that he would like to meet with all of them at some point to talk about this. The choir director asked if we would like to have one of his choirs sing the National Anthem and Mr. Smith said yes, singing the National Anthem right before the Mayor reads the proclamation for Arbor Day would be a great way to start the ceremony. Mr. Smith told him there is going to be a tent there so no matter the weather, the musicians can perform and said that he could make any combination or ensemble that he wanted of different musicians but we wanted students to be involved.

Ms. Berges said that she talked to Donna Kelly Sprinkle, Director of the Avon Branch Library and you know they have been great about participating in different activities with the City. So Ms. Berges mentioned Arbor Day and asked Ms. Kelly Sprinkle to just put it on her calendar and think about if the Library would like to participate and right away she said, yes, they would definitely do something. She will come back to us on it and Ms. Laurenzi can see how it fits in with the activities. The Library has the Story Time area right next to where Arbor Day will be located and then there is the Story Walk when they feature a book and the little kids can walk around so Ms. Kelly Sprinkle is also looking at that.

Mr. Varga stated that they have a lot of ideas for activities and need to put a tentative list together so they can all look at it and choose the ones they want. We can coordinate some of the activities to be at the same time. Again, we do not know how many people are going to show up so we have to start thinking about the activities and how we are going to proceed. Mr. Smith added that he thinks that Mr. Varga is right. He thinks there will be multiple activities going on simultaneously. Remember that we only have a three-hour block of time and it is going to go quick.

NATIVE SPECIES GRANTS – Mr. Smith

Mr. Smith reported that he was still waiting for the Native Plant Society of Northeast Ohio to post their 2022 grant application forms online. When he spoke with the President of the Society back in March, she said the forms would be online sometime this summer so he checks it every day.

Ms. Berges asked what this grant would entail and Mr. Smith answered that the grant is up to \$500 and the Society's focus is education or restoration. Mr. Smith said that he would like to get seeds for wildflowers to plant in the woods at the Aquatic Center. And also, Mr. Schwartz was telling him that he

had some connections with wildflowers. So Mr. Smith's plan is to add to the wildflowers at the Aquatic Center park and then every year keep applying for grants and use some of the seeds at the other parks as well.

MEMBER COMMENTS

Ms. Laurenzi stated that she just wanted to let everyone know that she, Mr. Varga, Mr. Smith, and Ms. Berges went to the City Council meeting on July 5th as the Council wanted an update on what the Tree Commission was doing. Mr. Varga and Mr. Smith did a great job on reporting all the activities and there was tons of positive feedback from the Council. The Mayor and Council members were thanking us and saying that they were very happy with all the things that we are doing and that we have planned and could not thank us enough. So it was really nice.

Ms. Laurenzi noted that in the Landmarks Preservation Commission meeting that was held just before the Tree Commission meeting tonight, they were talking about a live Christmas tree at the Aquatic Center. She thinks that is a great idea and the Tree Commission should definitely be involved in that somehow. Mr. Varga said that he was going to get that tree to plant for Arbor Day and would try to get one of a reasonably good size.

Ms. Laurenzi said that the other thing she wanted to mention was that Rocky River does a Christmas tree event where the local businesses buy in to decorate balled trees at City Hall and then later the trees are all planted somewhere in the City. That is food for thought going forward if we want to do something like that.

Mr. Smith stated that when they were at the awards ceremony for Tree City USA, the topic of pollinators and way-stations for monarch butterflies was very important. His brother, Tom Smith, who lives right across from where Avondale Golf Course used to be on Detroit Road, has a prairie that he maintains there for pollinators and he has invited the Tree Commission to come this Saturday at 3:00 P.M. for a tour. He said that Mr. Schwartz and Mr. Varga have already been there and Mr. Schwarz said that, in his work, he has to go and look at farmers' fields that get paid to plant this and maintain prairies and none of them look nearly as nice as Tom Smith's. His invasive species control is beautiful. It is a really well-maintained prairie and is worth a trip out there. Mr. Varga agreed. Mr. Smith said, and his brother does not expect citizens in Avon to have the large amount of prairie he has but he is encouraging citizens to plant even just a small plot on their properties with flowers for pollinators; it makes a difference. He has basically three different flowering seasons in his prairie and right now it is in the second one and everyone is welcome to come back in the fall because there are always different things blooming, and he also has all the prairie grasses, and all sorts of other things.

Mr. Smith said that his brother made a video of creating a prairie and he said he would give it to Ms. Berges to put on the Tree Commission's website. When you start from ground zero, it takes to the third year to get flowers. Ms. Berges asked how old this prairie was and Mr. Smith responded that his brother's one prairie is 17 years old and the other one is maybe 3 or 4 years old.

Mr. Schwartz said he thought it is great that wildflowers are being included in this because even though we are a Tree Commission, wildflowers are another really powerful tool to encourage planting native species. He said that he has two plots; one is a small wildflower area in the garden and he also has a small box which is zero maintenance. It is probably year 3 for it and he thinks he has pulled like three weeds

from it. Mr. Smith said, yes, and if it were not there, the pollinators would have no nectar and pollen to feed on so every little bit counts.

Ms. Berges stated that she can see lots of possibilities here partnering with the Garden Club and with the Schools to maybe get them to have prairie gardens. Mr. Smith said that he is a retired biology teacher and years ago he spoke with the facility and maintenance employees at Firelands High School. Firelands School has tons of acres of land there and they rented most of it to farmers but Mr. Smith staked off an area and told them he would have them mow it every so often. He had it all filled with wildflowers and people could go out and do wildflower identification and he knows it was a big pollinator area and it was not difficult to do. He agreed with Ms. Berges that, yes, there are a lot of possibilities for the Tree Commission as we go along.

Mr. Varga noted that he has been invited to speak at the Avon Garden Club meeting in March. Mr. Smith stated that he is going to join Mr. Varga and anyone is welcome. Mr. Varga said that he would send everybody an email about the date of that meeting.

Mr. Traxler stated that it seems as if they keep talking about the activities for Arbor Day but have not started anything. Ms. Laurenzi agreed that August is getting kind of late; their next meeting is August so they are getting really close to the time. She thought that they should get a start and establish an agenda for it. Mr. Schwartz asked how difficult it might be to set additional meetings; do they have to put a notice in the paper? Ms. Berges said that Council has different committees and they just have to set the date, time, and place and the Clerk gives notice of that on the website and then when the meeting is held, it is recorded. It is a public meeting so anybody can attend, so the Tree Commission could do it that way and just say it is an Arbor Day sub-committee. Maybe we would say the committee is three people, but the whole Commission can attend. It is just a matter of picking a date and a time that works for everybody and then we let the Clerk know and she can send a notice out however it needs to be sent out.

After some discussion it was decided to call a committee meeting to discuss the Arbor Day activities. Ms. Laurenzi suggested that a small group of three or four of them could do some brainstorming and kind of get some details ironed out and then at the next Regular Meeting, approve some things. She thought that would be better than having a ton of people while we are trying to go through some of the things that are planned. The question was asked again of Ms. Berges if the public needed to be notified of the meeting and Ms. Berges, yes, she thought it would be through the Clerk of Council or if she is on vacation this week, then through the Assistant Clerk.

A motion was made by Mr. Smith and seconded by Mr. Traxler to establish an Arbor Day committee meeting to focus on the Arbor Day activities and events. The vote was all ayes and the motion was passed.

The meeting was set for Wednesday, July 20, 2022, at 7:30 in the conference room of Avon City Hall.

Ms. Berges said that she had two comments: one was to echo what Ms. Laurenzi said about the Council Meeting. It was very positive and it was just so encouraging to hear that positive feedback from Council, especially when you have a Council member who was not sure how much value the Tree Commission would have and just to hear him say that he is very supportive of us so that is kudos to everyone on this Commission and to Mr. Varga for leading the charge and getting us to a good place.

Ms. Berges said that her other comment was to note an article in the Westlife and she asked Mr. Varga to talk about that. Mr. Varga said that a reporter from Westlife called him and said that he heard through

an audio, the presentation that he and Mr. Smith gave to Council on the Tree Commission and it intrigued him and he wanted to do an article about us. So it was great to have a nice article in the Westlife on the Avon Tree Commission and this reporter said that he wants to do follow-up articles about us. So now that we have a communication with him, after another month or two, we can give him some updates and tell him more about Arbor Day, etc.

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 8:36 P.M.

Respectfully submitted by Gail Hayden, Assistant Clerk of Council