

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Avon Tree Commission
Held in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Building
On Wednesday, November 8, 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; Leisa Wetzig; Certified Arborist, Richard Varga (Non-Voting Member), Anthony Moore

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE AVON TREE COMMISSION HELD WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 11, 2023

A motion was made by Mr. Smith and seconded by Ms. Wetzig to dispense with the reading of the minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Avon Tree Commission held Wednesday, October 11, 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 ARBOR DAY 2024 – Ms. Laurenzi

Ms. Laurenzi asked what the Arbor Day date was for next year and Mr. Moore said it is always the first Saturday in October.

Mr. Smith stated that unbeknownst to each other, he and Ms. Berges went to the “Not So Spooky Halloween” event which was the Saturday after our Arbor Day. There was a torrential rainstorm going on that day but the petting zoo was an excellent set up there. All the vendors were set up along the Storybook Walk and they all had their own little tents. It drew the parents with their kids over there and he thought that was a really good idea.

Mr. Moore stated that Ms. Laurenzi knows the woman who has that zoo so she is going to contact her. Unless anybody has an objection, he thinks it would be a great thing to have the zoo at Arbor Day. Ms. Wetzig said that she liked having the tables and tents near the woods. Mr. Smith said, yes, the vendors all had their own little tents and there were a lot of them all the way along the trail. He added that that is a way to get the families and their kids over to look at the Story Book setup because some of them may not even realize that is there. And it also spreads things out; it had the people moving around there.

Mr. Smith stated that the woman running the petting zoo is a Perkins Township police officer and she runs the canine unit. At the Halloween event she had pony rides but because it was pouring down rain, nobody was doing that. Ms. Laurenzi said that her operation is an animal rescue and Mr. Smith said, yes, her farm is an animal rescue place. She told him that she began rescuing alpacas and miniature horses, etc. and then all of a sudden people were asking if she could bring the animals to birthday parties, etc. and she started a business doing that. She said she gets booked up really fast so if we want her for next Arbor Day we have to book her now. He thinks that would be great for the kids.

M. Varga noted that there is not going to be a Duck Tape Festival anymore and he asked if there was some way that we can utilize some of the activities from the Duck Tape festival. We could collaborate with some of the people that were on that committee to try to bring more people in to Arbor Day because the Duck Festival drew a huge crowd.

UPDATE ON THE TREE RING PROGRAM – Mr. Varga

Mr. Varga stated that the company which did the tree ring for the City of Beachwood was bought out by another company and he has tried several times to talk to them but they never respond. So he went to Premier Signs, which the City has dealt with before, and asked them if they could help us out with this. They said that they could do a sign but they did not really understand the concept so we have hit a stone wall right now but we are still working on it. We know what we want and where to access the wood so we have that aspect. If anybody has any ideas or knows anybody that might like to help us with something like this signage, let him know.

Mr. Boccabella asked for some clarification about how the sign company ties in; he does not understand that. Mr. Varga said that the sign company for the City of Beachwood tree ring did the writing of historical facts, etc. on a sign for them. Mr. Boccabella said, so they put the text on the sign behind the plexiglass and mounted it? Mr. Varga said, yes, but in addition to a sign company, we also need to have someone who knows how to preserve the wood of the tree ring. There was some discussion about that and Ms. Wetzig suggested someone that they could contact.

UPDATE ON TREE CITY USA FOR 2024 – Mr. Varga

Mr. Varga stated that our application has to be in by December 1st and he thanked everyone for giving him all their activity times. Michelle Morahan in the Service Dept. has been coordinating all of this, collecting all the information and the data. He is going to meet with her tomorrow and they are going to send in the application on Friday. They do not see any problems in the renewal for next year because we have met the requirements far and beyond.

Mr. Smith stated that now, with the log sheet, it is a lot easier. We just progress through the next year and as we do things just fill in that activity on the log sheet. This time we had to sit and jog our minds as to what we did but now we can just fill it in. Mr. Varga stated that he has the log sheet on his computer if anyone wants extra copies or he can email everyone a template so they have it.

MEMBER COMMENTS

Ms. Berges stated that on November 2nd, we received an email from Urban Forester Matt Leiden about a grant that is coming up; actually there are two grants. One is funded through the Inflation Reduction Act with an application deadline of December 29, 2023. There is a lot of money available for this; it is funding from \$55,000 to \$500,000 for projects benefiting 100,000 or less in population. It says that projects must be completed by April 1, 2028. When we were first formed as a Commission, we talked about wanting to pursue grants and this opportunity is right here. She just wanted to see whether the Commission feels we should try to apply for some money. It can be used for all kinds of things: for planting trees, maintaining trees, training, etc. and she thinks we should consider it. Everyone agreed that the Commission should apply. Mr. Moore added, and if anything, it gives us the practice of going after grants so we could be more efficient in applying for other grants.

Ms. Berges asked how we move forward with this and Mr. Varga said that he would call Mr. Leiden and get more information and he will hopefully guide us in the right direction. Mr. Varga said that he and Mr. Smith wrote a grant the year before last. We did not receive it but we wanted to try and fill out an application. From what they saw with a lot of grants, it is all about having the right people and the right contacts and making sure you are doing the right things. There are little nuances throughout writing grants that you have to look for to make sure you cover every base and that helps. Ms. Wetzig stated that there are virtual workshops for writing grants and Mr. Varga said that they looked at a virtual workshop at one time. He said, so we will just move forward and get more information now that we all agree.

Mr. Traxler stated that he had an update on the seedlings that were given away on Arbor Day. He thought that we had about 20 trees left. He said that he planted about 13 of the seedlings at the new park and Mr. Varga planted some to replace the trees that did not make it that we planted the year before. Mr. Varga said, yes, he went over to Eagle Point and there were a few of the trees from last year that did not make it so he replaced those. So at Eagle Point right now we have seedlings from last year and this year so hopefully they all start growing and the Tree Commission can always take pride in them.

Mr. Smith reported that he got the City newsletter today and there was an excellent article on the Traxler Family Arboretum in there with aerial photographs, etc. There was also a nice article on Arbor Day and on the Cemetery restoration so it was a very good newsletter. He said he thinks it is very good that the public will get to find out what is going on.

Mr. Varga stated that he and Ms. Berges are going to be meeting with Urban Forester Matt Leiden by the middle of December to go over their Tree Academy homework assignments. He just wanted to let everybody know that they are going to be working on that together and they will report back. This is all part of being a Tree City USA and what the Urban Forester wants us to do, etc. so it should be very educational for us.

AUDIENCE COMMENTS

There were no comments from the audience.

ADJOURN

A motion was made by Mr. Smith and seconded by Ms. Berges 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 and the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted by Gail Hayden, Assistant Clerk of Council