

City of Ellsworth
1 City Hall Plaza, Ellsworth, ME 04605
ARBOR COMMISSION
Regular Meeting
Monday, October 2, 2023 at 8:00 a.m.

MINUTES

Members Present: Chair Tabatha White, Vice Chair Mary Blackstone, Jay Barnes, Teresa Davis, Casey Hanson (Councillor), Jamie Lambert, Amy Reisman, Sandy Walczyk,

Member Regrets: Iain Drummond, Albert Harmon

Staff Present: Maura Condon

1. Call to Order and Introductions

Chair T. White called the meeting to order at 8:14AM, and the meeting began with a round of introductions.

2. Adoption of Minutes of August 29, 2023

Moved S. Walczyk/ Seconded C. Hanson to adopt the minutes of August 29, 2023.

The motion was approved (7 in favor, 0 opposed, 1 abstention).

3. Housekeeping

a. City Council representation and staff support

M. Condon reported that staff support will be shared between herself and Matt Williams. C. Hanson will be the Commission member from City Council.

b. Confirm Regular Meeting Time

Member availabilities were reviewed and the first Monday of the month at 8:15AM remains the best date/ time. When this date conflicts with a holiday the meeting will be moved to the second Monday at the same time. It was noted that we have a lot of work to do in a short time. We may want to consider setting up subcommittees to move things along faster (to be considered at the next meeting), but members agreed that meeting for two hours in future could be a more efficient use of volunteer time.

c. Minute Taker

C. Hanson asked if a staff member could take minutes. M. Blackstone noted that if staff do the minutes that will involve time they will not be able to devote to other city business. T. White asked if there was someone on the Commission willing to take notes. M. Blackstone agreed to do the minutes on an interim basis.

d. Remote Participation Policy

Members reviewed the Recreation Commission's Remote Participation Policy and determined that it can easily be adapted for use by this Commission. M. Blackstone noted that it will be important for this Commission to encourage and facilitate citizen participation in our meetings. It was agreed that it will be important for there to be a standing agenda item for citizen comments and that the Remote Participation Policy allow for citizens as well as commission members to participate in meetings remotely with two business days notice to the Chair. The adapted policy will be brought to the next meeting for approval.

e. Review Rules of Order

Ideally agendas and associated meeting materials will be circulated via email at least a week in advance. Commission members should let the Chair know in advance if they will be unable to attend a meeting. Roberts Rules of Order will govern meeting proceedings.

S. Walczyk asked if the Commission could set up a google.doc site for storing its meeting materials and any written work in progress. M. Blackstone noted that this would be especially useful as the Commission begins to work on the City's Forestry Management Plan, but it could also be useful for smaller documents as well. M. Condon will check to see if such a site would be an allowable option for the Commission.

4. Review Current State of Community Forestry Initiatives

Members began reviewing the summary document which outlined current responsibilities and activities relating to forestry in the community.

a. City of Ellsworth

Upon reviewing the summary relating to the City's current roles and responsibilities, members requested more information:

- What is the current scope of tree and related landscaping work undertaken by the City?
- What is the amount of the budget allocated for this work?
- Who is responsible for doing the work and what is the nature of any related contracts?
- What have been the expectations associated with maintenance and landscaping projects?
- What City departments and staff members are responsible for overseeing tree/landscape planting and maintenance?

Given the expertise represented on the Commission, members would expect to be involved in budgeting, determining expectations associated with contracts, overseeing maintenance and planning for trees and landscaping. These responsibilities should be reflected in any revision to the Tree Ordinance.

Members expressed concern that the automatic appointment of the City Manager as Tree Warden does not acknowledge the need for an arborist's expertise in that position. They also noted that the involvement of multiple departments (Planning, Public Works, Code Enforcement, City Manager's Office) means that there is a lack of coordinated and focused attention on the care of our trees, parks and green spaces. C. Hanson noted that with a transition to a new City Manager and shifts that may be occurring in the area of Public Works with the vacancy in that department, the timing was perfect for making changes in the assignment of a tree warden and generally improving the management and planning relating to our trees and parks. M. Blackstone noted that the City has been talking about the development of a Parks and Recreation Department for years and citizens consulted through Green Planning were very much in favor of such a department. It would not need to be a large department in order to better coordinate planning and maintenance, and such a department would relieve the pressure on other units whose staff lacked necessary expertise but must regularly take time away from their primary responsibilities to address trees and landscaping.

M. Condon will endeavor to get some answers to the Commission's questions, and in the context of that information the Commission will review its initial response to the City of Ellsworth summary information and prepare a presentation to Council. In the interim C. Hanson will provide an initial report to Council concerning this initial discussion.

Commission members should review the remaining sections of the summary document (Green Ellsworth and its partners; Other Non-profits and organizations) and bring any questions they may have to the next meeting.

5. Possibilities for initial Commission “To Do” List/ Timeline

T. White drew attention to the long “to do” list for the Commission and noted that it should probably move some items to the top of the list as they are associated with short timelines:

—Provide formal input to Comprehensive Plan:

As the initial input phase in the context of in-person public consultation sessions is nearly finished (only the Natural Resources session remains to be done), we should seek a way to provide direct input relating to our area of focus. C. Hanson noted that everyone should fill out the online survey for Comprehensive Plan input, and it would be possible for the Commission members to attend the Steering Committee’s meetings on the 4th Monday of the month at 5:30PM. The specifics of the Commission’s input for the Comprehensive Plan will be an agenda item for the next meeting.

—Provide input and direction for upcoming grant applications:

With the upcoming new Project Canopy Funds (notice previously forwarded to all members) and potential short timelines, it is important that we carefully plan what we can propose to take maximum advantage of the large amounts of money that will be available. This will potentially involve two applications—one for a larger and longer term project and one smaller one-year project for the usual Project Canopy program. The latter is due in mid February, but it is not yet clear when the deadline to apply for the new funds will be.

—Provide input to City Council on the tree warden position, a Parks and Recreation Department and 2024-2025 budget for trees (as noted in item #4 above).

Other “to do” items include:

—Provide direction and support for the Community Tree Nursery

(Upcoming work: mowing, tilling, planting, winter prep & ordering for next spring)

—Develop and request Arbor Day Proclamation

—Complete application for Tree City USA renewal

—Clarify mandate and revise ordinance

—Develop Community Forestry Management Plan

—Secure funds for baseline Canopy Coverage Assessment

—Develop plan for public engagement and education

6. Citizen Comments

None.

7. Member Comments

T. White noted the Community Tree Nursery tree planting on October 7 (rain date October 8) at 1:00PM at the Jordan Homestead Preserve on the Bayside Road. Everyone was encouraged to participate and/or encourage others to do so.

8. Staff Comments

None.

9. Adjournment.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:20AM.

**Proposed
Remote Participation Policy
City of Ellsworth Arbor Commission**

Pursuant to 1 M.R.S. § 403-B and after public notice and hearing, the above-named body adopts the following policy to govern the participation, via remote methods, of members of the body and the public in the public proceedings or meetings of the body. Remote participation will not be by text-only means such as e-mail, text messages, or chat functions.

Requirements.

A. Members of the City of Ellsworth Arbor Commission may participate in meetings of this body remotely when the following conditions exist:

- i. Inclement weather;
- ii. Travel;
- iii. Illness; or
- iv. Other unforeseen circumstances, as approved by the Chair or Vice-Chair.

B. The public will be provided a meaningful opportunity to attend via remote methods when the interested individual or individuals communicates their desire to do so to the Commission Chair or a supporting staff member at least two business days in advance of the meeting. Relevant contact information shall be provided on the Arbor Commission page of the City's website. The public will also be provided an opportunity to attend Commission meetings in person unless there is an emergency or urgent issue that requires the entire body to meet using remote methods. [Reasonable accommodations may be provided when necessary to provide access to individuals with disabilities.]

C. Notice of all meetings will be provided in accordance with 1 M.R.S. §406 and any applicable charter, ordinance, policy, or bylaw. When the public may attend via remote methods, notice will include the means by which the public may access the meeting remotely and will provide a method for disabled persons to request necessary accommodation to access the meeting. Notice will also identify a location where the public may attend the meeting in person. The body will not restrict public attendance to remote methods except in the case of an emergency or urgent issue that requires the body to meet using remote methods of attendance. The body will make all documents and materials to be considered by the body available, electronically or otherwise, to the public who attend remotely to the same extent customarily available to the public who attend in person, provided no additional costs are incurred by the body. All votes taken during a meeting using remote methods will be by roll call vote that can be seen and heard if using video technology, or heard if using audio technology only, by other members of the body and the public. A member of the body who participates remotely will be considered present for purposes of a quorum and voting. This policy will remain in force indefinitely unless amended or rescinded.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY XXXX, 2023
Policy adopted by City of Ellsworth Arbor Commission

Current State of Community Tree Initiatives (Agenda Item #4)

City of Ellsworth:

Chapter 43— Tree Ordinance: https://www.ellsworthmaine.gov/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/ord43_Trees.pdf

Appoints tree warden

Arbor Day Proclamations

Pruning/removal of tree hazards within public spaces and right of way

Replacement of city-owned street trees

Contribution of a tree to each of the two GE pilot projects

City crew assistance with pilot project planting including watering commitment through 2024

Contracted care of some public spaces

Oversees Tree Growth Tax Abatement program

Development/expansion/care of Branch Lake Public Forest (in partnership with FBC)

Green Ellsworth Tree-related Initiatives in Progress

Since 2017 Green Ellsworth and its partner organizations (the City of Ellsworth, Ellsworth Garden Club, Frenchman Bay Conservancy and the Hancock County Soil and Water Conservation District) have initiated a number of projects to preserve and strengthen Ellsworth's tree canopy—and in the process raise the profile of the importance of trees to the extent that the City would ultimately appoint its Arbor Commission and provide more formal guidance to realize the vision communicated by its citizens in the green planning process. As with the entire Green Plan the tree sections of the Green Plan were intended to inform the current Comprehensive Planning process.

See the Green Plan Land Chapter at:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1C6ntxHqvdyYd86RDpPhIFFD0KDGmMhWR/view>
esp. pp. 84-85, 101-103 and Recommendations L-21 through L-25

GE has initiated the following projects:

Tree City USA since 2022 (GE)

Inventory and basic landscape survey for Ellsworth's public green spaces; see https://drive.google.com/file/d/1PFd4DpBY8wOSiat_UkysQFdTVUp_Bw99/view. (GE)

Street tree survey work in progress/COA map (link). (GE)

Native tree and shrub sales and give aways (HCSWCD, EGC)

Community Tree Nursery at Jordan Homestead Preserve (GE, FBC, EGC)

180 trees planted; @100 more to be planted fall 2023; 80 more in spring 2024
with school and community volunteer participation during Maine Arbor Week

Forested land conservation: Jordan Homestead; Spindle Preserve; Whitney Forest+ (FBC)

Public landscaping: Donald Little Park; Native Plant Demonstration Landscaping at St. Dunstan's Episcopal Church; smaller landscaping commitments at the Ellsworth Elementary

Middle School, the Old Burial Ground, Harbor Park, City Hall Plaza, Host Alley, etc (Ellsworth Garden Club)

Heirloom Tree ID, list, education and preservation (EGC)

Public Education/Programming (EGC, GE)

Two successful Project Canopy Grant Applications (GE, EGC, FBC)

Pilot Invasive species survey of River Walk (FBC, GE/EGC)

Pilot planting projects: City Hall Plaza, High Street

Draft Forestry management plan

Developing the beginnings of a citizen/volunteer group to assist with tree assessment and maintenance

Other non-profits and organizations

Maintenance of forested preserves and public spaces:

Birdsacre (Stanwood Wildlife Sanctuary)

Green Lake National Fish Hatchery (US Fish and Wildlife)

Meadowbrook Forest (Blue Hill Heritage Trust)

Mt. Calvary Cemetery (Catholic diocese)

Woodbine Cemetery (Woodbine Cemetery Association)

Woodlawn (Hancock County Trustees of Public Reservations)