

1 City Hall Plaza, Ellsworth, ME 04605

ARBOR COMMISSION

Regular Meeting

Monday, April 1, 2024, 8:15-10:15 AM

MINUTES

Present: J. Barnes, M. Blackstone, T. Davis, I. Drummond, C. Hanson, J. Lambert, T. White, S. Walczyk

1. Call to Order

2. Adoption of Minutes of March 4, 2024

Moved M. Blackstone, Second I. Drummond--Approved

3. Staff Comments or Clarifications. None

4. Citizen Comments. None

5. Report from City Council

C. Hanson will make sure that City Council is aware of the two budget related documents previously submitted to the City Manager. T. White will resend these documents to the new City Manager. It will be important for C. Hanson to emphasize the importance of our request for the consolidation of tree-related expenditures under one budget line. She was asked to reinforce the importance of our new commission receiving its requested budget and the need for the tree warden (using the proposed job description). See the next agenda item for further discussion.

6. Committee Reports

a. Arbor Commission 2024-2025 Budget Request to City Council (M. Blackstone, C. Hanson, T. White)

T. White will be prepared to present at the April 1 budget workshop relating to Public Works with emphasis on our second budget request for tree-related funding to be included in a single budget line in the Public Works budget. M. Blackstone will attend as well.

T. White will also be prepared to present at the April 29 budget workshop regarding the requested Commission budget, and other Arbor Commission members are asked to attend as well.

T. White has been attending meetings with the Recreation Commission on the subject of a Parks and Recreation Department. The Recreation Commission is

preparing a presentation for April 29 on that request. It was agreed that T. White should also speak to that issue on April 29 as well.

b. Tree Ordinance/Tree Warden Job Description (I. Drummond, J. Lambert, T. White)

I. Drummond reported that there has been no response to the Tree Warden job description by the City Manager. It needs to be resent to the new City Manager. The job description needs to be a focus for the budget presentation to City Council as well.

Regarding the draft tree ordinance revision, anyone who has not provided input on this document and wishes to should provide that feedback immediately. M. Blackstone suggested that the committee look at the format used for most recent ordinances and try to work within that format--including a summary of purpose at the beginning and breaking up sections into individual articles, etc. It was agreed that the next step would be to consult with the City Planner regarding the form and content of the ordinance in order to prepare it for a first presentation to Council.

c. Project Canopy Application (M. Blackstone, C. Hanson, T. White, M. Williams)
It is proposed that the City (with the Arbor Commission taking the lead) apply for a \$200,000 (no match) Inflation Reduction Act Urban & Community Forestry Grant with a focus on installing green infrastructure along an extended area around and along Card Brook (urban impaired stream) and between low cost housing just to the east of the brook and down to the bottom of Foster Street and its adjacent low-cost housing. We need to get information relating to right of way in this area and we need to talk with the City Planner to work out details as to exactly where we site plantings relative to any other planned work along High Street, Water Street or Foster Street. Green Ellsworth proposed a complete street remake of High Street so it will be important to determine where that possibility is in the planning process. The application has particular requirements including letters from stakeholders (the DOT will be one of those) and a plan or map of the planting area. S. Walczyk noted that she has GIS skills and might be able to help with that if she is able to have the information before the end of the month when she will no longer have access to a GIS account.

This large grant competition is likely to be stiff so we should also apply for the smaller grant competition--the Project Canopy Planning & Education Grant (\$20,000) or Planting Grant (\$15,000). People should think about what we can propose for one of these programs, and provide input to M. Blackstone. Note that the Planning & Education Grants can include some planting expenditures.

d. Forest Management Plan (M. Blackstone, T. Davis, S. Walczyk, J. Barnes, T. White)

Work on the Forestry Management Plan is progressing well with more material being added regularly to the text of the document and review at regular monthly meetings--the next one being scheduled for April 4.

M. Blackstone noted that she has had an inquiry from someone who wants to fund a memorial tree, and that is highlighted the need to have an established program, procedure and fund to facilitate such donations. She noted that the Forestry Management Plan can propose all of this, but in the interim the person who is interested in donating a tree (most likely a nursery tree) wants to see that tree planted this spring. How should we handle this and where should the tree be planted? The donor does not have a specific location request. Given that there is no City program in place, it was suggested that the Garden Club handle the donation, but the Arbor Commission can determine a location that promises best success. It was agreed that a park planting would be best in this instance--either Knowlton Park or Harbor Park. T. White will follow up to determine possibilities.

7. Arbor Day 2024 Public Activities/Observance

April 26 (Maine Arbor Week 2024—May 19-25, 2024)

The Commission has its first public event scheduled for Arbor Day with Mark McCollough, President of the Maine Chapter of the American Chestnut Foundation, coming to introduce the award-winning documentary *Clear Day Thunder* --which focuses on the history of the American Chestnut and efforts to reintroduce the tree and restore it after the devastating effects of disease. The Foundation will also have a display and sell chestnut tree seedlings at the event. The Arbor Commission should also develop a display for this event. Ideas were shared for what might be included in the display--especially disease prevention information. T. White will coordinate the contents of the display. Especially because the Arbor Commission is new and does not yet have a public following of supporters it will be important to have good promotion of the event. It is hoped that everyone on the commission will attend and promote attendance by others. M. Blackstone will put together a press release that M. Condon can use for promotion.

T. White asked whether the Commission should also organize a pruning demonstration for Arbor Day. She noted that trees at the Old Burial Ground are seriously in need of pruning and that would be a good city property to focus on. Marjorie Peronto had been in touch with T. White regarding a place to offer a pruning workshop and she had suggested the Old Burial Ground as a potential location. J. Lambert noted that it is really too late to be doing pruning this year. It

was agreed that to do such a workshop at this time would send the wrong message regarding timing for such activities. It was agreed that offering such a workshop at another time might be best.

T. White noted that second graders from EEMS will again plant the next batch of 100 trees at the Community Tree Nursery on May 16 (rain date May 20). In the past not all second graders have been able to participate because of uncertainty around having enough volunteers to help with the planting. With the Arbor Commission in place this year, it should be possible to enable all second graders to participate. Consequently, there will be no community tree planting scheduled, but instead there will be two Tree Stewards staking and mulching workshops on May 19 and May 25.

8. Work Schedule for Information (Timelines, Deadlines)

- A. Budget Proposals for 2024-2025 (submitted; next Council Workshop date, April 29)
- B. Finalize Project Canopy Grant Applications (May 15, 2024)
- C. Revised Tree Ordinance (?)
Tree Warden Job Description (sent March 6 to City Manager/Council; resent ?)
- D. Submission of Arbor Day Proclamation to Mayor (proclaimed February 12, 2024)
- E. Submission of Tree City USA 2024 application (done)
- F. Community Tree Nursery Input on Ordering & Planting for 2025 ?
- G. Finalize City of Ellsworth Forestry Management Plan (October 2024)
- H. Plan Public Education Programming for 2024-2025 (?July 2024)
- I. Arbor Day/Maine Arbor Week 2024 Activities (April 26; May 16, 19, 25, 2024)
- J. Other

9. Member Comments/Other Business

T. White noted that informal communications had been received from A. Harmon and A. Reisman indicating that they needed to resign from the Commission. C. Hanson observed that they each need to send a formal resignation to Council so they can vote to accept these resignations and initiate a process to fill the vacancies. M.

Blackstone noted that it would be wise to have people lined up as replacements because a reduction of two Commission members will affect the capacity of our committees to function given quorum limitations.

10. Next Meeting: May 6, 2024 8:15-10:15AM

11. Adjournment. Moved I. Drummond, second T. Davis. Approved.