

1 City Hall Plaza, Ellsworth, ME 04605

**ARBOR COMMISSION**

Minutes

Monday, March 4, 2024, 8:15-10:15 AM

**MINUTES**

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

Regrets: A. Reisman

Staff: M. Condon

**1. Call to Order by Chair, T. White**

**2. Adoption of Minutes of February 5, 2024.**

Moved C. Hanson; Seconded I. Drummond; Unanimously approved.

**3. Staff Comments or Clarifications (M. Condon)**

**What is the budget workshop schedule? When should the Commission plan to be present?**

The Commission's Budget request will be considered by Council at the April 29 workshop. Given the Commission's requests relating to the Public Works budget Commission representatives may also want to be present for that as well (April 1), but a maximum of four people from the Commission can attend any one of these sessions. C. Hanson advised that anyone who speaks should keep the presentation short and to the point (15 mins max).

C. Hanson suggested that regarding the formation of a Parks and Recreation Department, the Commission should make a formal presentation to a City Council Meeting.

C. Hanson encouraged the Commission to let her know about anything it wants to come to the budgeting table for consideration.

**4. Citizen Comments—none.**

**5. Report from City Council (C. Hanson)**

C. Hanson reported that she is hopeful and excited by the hiring of Charles Pearce as City Manager. He will start a 3 year contract on April 1, but he will be attending all budget workshops in advance of that.

As City Manager he will be in charge of any restructuring of departments and staffing.

**6. Committee Reports**

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

It was agreed that the Tree Warden job description is ready to circulate for input from the City Manager (and for inclusion in the budget process). The job description should also be made available to Council in the context of budget decision making. The job description will be associated with the revised Tree Ordinance that Council will be asked to approve.

It was note that the fully revised ordinance needs to be comparatively simple and streamlined with the details being provided in the full Forestry Management Plan. The committee should review the current format for ordinances (including headings for articles) and Matt or Elizabeth should sit with the committee as it puts it together into a final form.

All Commissioners should review and comment on the draft ordinance before the next meeting given that we have agreed on a May deadline for having on initial draft to circulate beyond the Commission.

**b. Arbor Commission 2024-2025 Budget Request to City Council** (M. Blackstone, C. Hanson, T. White) —documents attached

M. Blackstone glossed the contents of the Arbor Commission budget request (submitted on February 9) and the Arbor Commission requests re City tree-related budgeting for 2024-2025. (submitted February 12)

T. White noted that she will attend the Recreation Commission meeting on March 19, 8:30AM to see if there can be a coordinated effort to present to Council on the need for a Parks & Recreation Department.

**c. Project Canopy Application** (M. Blackstone, C. Hanson, T. White, M. Williams)

M. Blackstone reported that as home to a HUD Opportunity Zone, Ellsworth is eligible to apply for the \$200,000 (no match) Inflation Reduction Act Urban & Community Forestry Grant. After consultation with Jan Santerre who runs the program it does not seem that data collection would be a strong focus for this, but a focus on Card Brook, High Street area and adjacent low income housing area could be strong. Adjudication of the above is likely to be competitive. We should plan to apply for the \$20,000 Planning & Education Project Canopy Grant or the \$15,000 Planting Grant (both require cash or in-kind match)

Both grants will be adjudicated together this year (new deadline: May 15)

For the larger grant (which is a three-year grant) it may be necessary to budget for a project manager. It will be important to keep in mind, however, that especially given that we will have three years in which to complete this project and given the demonstrated success of (and Project Canopy preference for) hands on planting

projects involving community volunteers and city crew, budgeting to fully contract the project may not be the way to go.

We need to consult with Matt Williams and the DOT regarding any plans for complete street work and interventions relating to Card Brook.

This project could foreshadow improvements to Chapter 56 (UDO) code to demonstrate the value of greater attention to trees, especially in an area where there is 95%+ impervious surface

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

The Committee is making good progress with this plan. Its next meeting is on March 7.

## **7. Arbor Day 2024 Public Activities/Observance?** (our Commission's first)

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

T. White noted that we might want to offer a pruning demonstration or workshop around Arbor Day. Saturday April 27 might be best. Another possibility would be to offer a program on disease education.

M. Blackstone noted that the Maine Chapter of the American Chestnut Foundation might be interested in offering a screening of their film, Clear Day Thunder on Arbor Day. The EEMS has joined a program for starting chestnut tree seeds and more chestnut trees will be added to those planted last fall at the community nursery in May, so it would be way of profiling these projects. She will contact them to see if they are still available to do a program.

M. Condon noted that April 21-27 is National Volunteer Week so it would be a good time to focus on building some kind of volunteer group interested in supporting our reforestation efforts. An informational component explaining what volunteer opportunities are available might be combined with the American Chestnut presentation

T. White noted that historically, EEMS 2nd graders have helped to plant trees at the Community Tree Nursery during Maine Arbor Week. We have not been able to accommodate all of the 2nd graders in previous years, but this year if we can get enough volunteers we should try to include all 2nd graders. Hopefully some Commission members will be able to help.

M. Blackstone noted that given the fact that Chestnut trees have taproots, the sooner we can move some of the larger chestnut trees to locations on conserved land where they can have a permanent home the better. They will need to be protected from deer browsing. S. Walczyk said that there would be some good locations on Meadowbrook Lands and BHHT would be happy to have them.

## **8. Work Schedule for Information (Timelines, Deadlines)**

- A. Budget Proposals for 2024-2025 (submitted; Council Workshop dates April 1 & 29)
- B. Finalize Project Canopy Grant Applications (deadline May 15, 2024)
- C. Revised Tree Ordinance (May 2024)
  - Tree Warden Job Description (March 6 to City Manager/Council)
- 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 2024
  - T. White working on these and will email selection
- 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 1, 2024)
- J. Other

**9. Member Comments/Other Business—none**

**10. Next Meeting: April 1, 2024 8:15-10:15AM**

**11. Adjournment. 10:15AM**

C. Hanson; I. Drummond

## **City of Ellsworth Funding Application FY 2024**

Name of requestor: Ellsworth Arbor Commission

Address: 1 City Hall Plaza, Ellsworth, Maine 04605

Phone: [your phone number]

Email: [do you get the mail from our official city email?? if not I'd give your address as well as the official one]

1. Amount of funds requested \$11,000

2. Purpose of funds

The establishment of the Ellsworth Arbor Commission marks an important milestone in our city's commitment to urban forestry and environmental stewardship. With our mission to promote the health, preservation, and growth of Ellsworth's urban forest, we have eagerly embarked on our first year of operations with the intention of making a meaningful impact on our community. Our proposed budget will support a range of activities and initiatives aimed at addressing the priorities our nine volunteer members have embraced:

- A. Tree Planting and Maintenance: Funding for the purchase of trees, planting supplies, and equipment to expand and maintain our urban tree canopy. (\$5000 to be more than matched by a Project Canopy Grant and volunteer/non-profit contributions)
- B. Street Right-of-Way Data Collection: Allocation of resources to collect comprehensive data on Ellsworth's downtown street right-of-ways to determine the city's ownership and identify city owned trees and suitable planting locations along streets. This data will inform future tree planting initiatives and help optimize the distribution of trees within the urban landscape. This is essential work as otherwise we have no idea what street trees are the responsibility of our Commission and the City. (\$5000 to be more than matched by funds being requested by the Planning Department)
- C.. Education and Outreach: Resources for educational materials, workshops, and community events to engage residents and raise awareness about the benefits of trees and urban forestry. (\$1000 to be more than matched by volunteer contributions, non-profit partnerships and Project Canopy grant funds).

4. Number of Ellsworth residents served: 8,824 (all)

5. Total annual budget: \$11,000

6. Percentage of administrative costs to total budget: \$0 administrative costs

7. Will you be receiving matching funds and if so from where? Yes.

The City of Ellsworth is eligible to apply for all three levels of the state administered federal Project Canopy Grants. We will be applying for two of these grants: 1) a Planning/Planting grant of \$20,000 requiring a further \$20,000 in funds and in-kind support from the City, local non-profits and volunteers, and 2) an Urban and Community Forestry Assistance Grant of \$200,000 (no matching funds required—but the grant will not support key data collection and some

other critical initiatives we need to undertake to finalize the city's new Forestry Management Plan). We will most likely receive only one of these grants.

8. Other forms of funding: Volunteer, donor and non-profit contributions, especially Ellsworth Garden Club, Green Ellsworth and Frenchman Bay Conservancy investments in the Community Tree Nursery from which we will be able to draw some trees for proposed plantings. All of this can be counted toward matching funds for Project Canopy Grants.

Signature of requestor: [Tabatha White, Chair]

Date: February 9, 2024

## **Arbor Commission Requests with Explanations for Line Items and Allocations in 2024/2025 City Budget**

As a new Commission, the Arbor Commission has placed a priority on familiarizing itself with the City's relevant budget lines and departments as

well as acquiring other types of data to help us understand the current state of the City's tree canopy and what trees along city streets and in public green spaces the City is responsible for. It would appear that various aspects of tree-related activities have from time to time been assumed by at least four different budgetary units: Public Works, Planning, Code Enforcement and the City Manager's Office. This has led to a situation where it is very difficult to determine what tree-related activities have been planned and undertaken in a given year, what funds and staff time have been allocated for these activities, and who was ultimately responsible for supervision, coordination and evaluation of the effectiveness of these activities and the expenditures of tax dollars and staff time. If only for practical reasons related to reporting for continued Tree City USA status and tree-related grant applications in future, we request that there be dedicated line items for 1) tree-related expenditures and 2) Arbor Commission allocations.

We note that in the past there has been a line item labeled "Parks, trees and cemeteries" under Public Works which results in a less than transparent situation as to exactly what the city has been budgeting/spending on each of those vital components of its green infrastructure—especially when the bulk of the previously allocated funds for the entire line item was for lawn care. As will be clear in the latter part of this explanation document, our Commission feels strongly that the City should establish a Parks and Recreation Department. We recognize that in the context of the current City Manager hiring process the restructuring implied by this request may be difficult to accomplish for the upcoming budget year, and for this reason we are providing a look at our projected budget requests for two fiscal years as follows:

## **2024-2025**

**Public Works Department (all tree-related income and expenses consolidated under**

**Public Works). 2024-2025**

**Projected Income (outside of tax \$) for 2024-2025:**

\$200,000 Project Canopy Grant

\$XXXXXX. Income from Cemeteries Trust Fund

**Tree-Related Expenses for 2024-2025:**

\$45,000. Tree warden (certified arborist) contracted for one year, possibly renewable

\$30,000. Contracted tree care (streets, parks—including public forest)

\$200,000. Tree planting/canopy makeover project (funding as noted above)

\$900. Arbor Day event/public engagement to build a team of volunteer tree stewards

\$11,000. Arbor Commission budget (see previous submission)

**2025-2026**

**Parks and Recreation Department** (consolidating previous relevant line items distributed in various corners of the budget)

**Projected Income (outside of tax \$) for 2025-2026:**

\$150,000 Project Canopy and other grants

\$XXXXXX. Income from Cemeteries Trust Fund



**Personnel Expenses 2025-2026:**

\$60,000. Department Director, ideally with credentials to be tree warden

\$40,000. Administrative support unless otherwise available within current staffing

**Tree-Related Expenses for 2025-2026:**

\$45,000. Contracted tree warden (certified arborist) or tree warden's assistant

(less if the department director is qualified to serve as tree warden while contracting out selected warden responsibilities)

\$30,000. Contracted tree care (streets, parks—including public forest)

\$150,000. Tree planting project, data collection and GIS mapping

\$900. Arbor Day event/community engagement

\$11,000. Arbor Commission budget (see previous submission)



\*\*\* OFFICIAL PROCLAMATION \*\*\*

WHEREAS in 1872, the Nebraska Board of Agriculture established a special day to be set aside for the planting of trees, *and*

WHEREAS this holiday, called Arbor Day, was first observed with the planting of more than a million trees in Nebraska, *and*

WHEREAS Arbor Day is now observed throughout the nation and the world, *and*

WHEREAS trees can be a solution to combating climate change by reducing the erosion of our precious topsoil by wind and water, cutting heating and cooling costs, moderating the temperature, cleaning the air, producing life-giving oxygen, and providing habitat for wildlife, *and*

WHEREAS trees are a renewable resource giving us paper, wood for our homes, fuel for our fires, and countless other wood products, *and*

WHEREAS trees in our city increase property values, enhance the economic vitality of business areas, and beautify our community, *and*

WHEREAS trees — wherever they are planted — are a source of joy and spiritual renewal.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Councilor Michelle Beal, Mayor of the City of Ellsworth, do hereby proclaim April 26th, 2024 as **ARBOR DAY** In the City of Ellsworth, and I urge all citizens to celebrate Arbor Day and to support efforts to protect our trees and woodlands, *and*

FURTHER, I urge all citizens to plant trees to gladden the heart and promote the well-being of this and future generations.

DATED THIS 12th day of February, 2024

Mayor: Michelle Beal