

1 City Hall Plaza, Ellsworth, ME 04605
ARBOR COMMISSION
Regular Meeting
Monday, August 5, 2024, 8:15-10:15 AM
MINUTES

Present: Jay Barnes, Mary Blackstone, Teresa Davis, Iain Drummond, Casey Hanson, Jamie Lambert, Tabatha White

Regrets: Sandy Walczyk

Staff: Mike Harris, Amanda Ray, Adam Wilson

- 1. Call to Order** --Chair Tabatha White called the meeting to order at 8:20AM
- 2. Adoption of Minutes of July 1, 2024**--Moved C. Hanson, Seconded M. Blackstone, Approved unanimously.
- 3. Staff Comments or Clarifications**
 - The Chair welcomed M. Harris, A. Ray, and A. Wilson, and congratulated M. Harris on his appointment as Director of Public Works
 - M. Harris indicated that he is interested in a productive partnership with the Arbor Commission. He is not an expert on trees, so he will need to lean on the expertise of this commission.
 - A Wilson reported that the City has cancelled its landscaping contract with an outside business and is picking up the responsibility for this internally with the money set aside for the contract being repositioned to support this effort. A new crew hire, Caleb Pelletier, has interest and expertise relating to tree care and landscaping. The City will support him in raising his qualifications so that he can be licensed for herbicide/pesticide application and become a licensed arborist.
 - M. Blackstone noted that training money could be made available through the IRA grant money.

- T. White glossed the nature of the IRA and Project Canopy Planning and Education grants that the Commission applied for.
- M. Harris noted that the City needs a comprehensive right of way map for a host of reasons and that he is going to press for getting this done.
- A. Wilson reported that tree cages and grates have been removed at the corner of Main and Water Streets. We need to ask permission to do the same for the trees at Rooster Brother. T. Davis will speak to the business owner to get permission and report to T. White and A. Wilson.
- A. Wilson asked that the Arbor Commission provide a list of things that need to be addressed by the City.
- The City Manager is planning to have another consultation with organizations involved in city beautification.

4. Citizen Comments --none

5. Report from City Council

- C. Hanson provided an update on her meeting with C. Pearce, and M. Williams. She asked the following questions:
- Can the Commission get a response on the Tree Warden job description? This is to be passed on to A. Wilson for a response. M. Blackstone noted that it will be important to schedule a follow up meeting with Wilson.
- Who is the staff person who will meet regularly with the Commission? M. Williams should be that person because of the need to coordinate with plans to revamp High Street.
- How can the Commission have a representative added to the Technical Advisory Committee that advises the Planning Board? There seemed to be a willingness to add a Commission member to this team.
- Does the City want to put up the Tree City USA flag? M. Harris took the flag to do this.
- Can we get a response to the proposed Tree Ordinance? It will be important for the relevant Commission members to make an appointment with M. Williams to discuss his response to the ordinance.

- C. Hanson also reported that the Arbor Commission was somehow missed in the list of Commissions renewed by Council in July, but the Commission members will be brought forward for renewal at the August Council meeting.

6. Action Item Reports/Decisions

- Memorial tree planting (M. Blackstone/T. White)
- A granite marker with the inscription in the stone is the preferred mode of marking memorial trees.
- Given that we don't currently have a memorial/gifted tree planting program in place, the planting of this first memorial tree will probably cost us money, but by the time the memorial planting takes place in November we need to have a memorial tree planting program in place so that the program can be advertised and so that costs are covered by the memorial donations.
- The next public education event will be in September and address Beech leaf disease. It will involve the following panelists: Dr. Beth Brantley, NH Bartlett and Aaron Bergdahl State Pathologist, Forestry Service (who may also speak about Emerald Ash Borer). The speakers will appear via Teams. There is good news with respect to the long-term prognosis for beech. It appears that injections can be effective in counteracting the disease for trees of varying ages 10" dbh and greater. We need to be looking for pioneer trees that appear to withstand the disease.
- For the time being the Commission's regular meeting time and date will remain the same.
- Although Commission membership will be renewed as it currently stands in August, we need to plan on filling three vacancies as soon as possible. S. Walczyk is unable to continue on the Commission due to her new job commitments.
- Overall Commission Work Plan/Agenda for 2024-2025 relative to Commission and Public Works Budgets. As requested by A. Wilson the Commission needs to provide guidance and input on what the Public Works Department should be doing with respect to tree maintenance and planting in the current budget year. The Commission also needs to situate this within its own overall work

plan for the year and its own budget. This should be an agenda item for the next meeting.

- A Staff/Commission Project Management Committee needs to be struck and begin meeting regularly to develop a timeline and work plan to oversee and integrate the regular maintenance and tree care funded through the city budget, the Project Canopy Grant initiative and a potential Urban and Community Forestry grant. From the Commission the individuals on this team will be M. Blackstone, I. Drummond, C. Hanson, and T. White. It is imperative that EVERYONE on the Commission as well as staff members keep a careful count of days/times/volunteer hours (at meetings, in preparation for meetings, in undertaking tasks/projects outside of meetings). The City's accounting staff should develop a form to facilitate this.

7. Committee Reports

- **Tree Ordinance/Tree Warden Job Description** (I. Drummond, J. Lambert, T. White)
- Updates on Tree Ordinance and Tree Warden Job Description feedback
- It will be important for this committee to review the draft ordinance and tree warden job description in light of 2025 budget decisions, resulting staffing and the planned training of a current staff member to take over some of the responsibilities of a tree warden. The Committee will request Caleb Pelletier's cv.
- The Committee will make an appointment to meet with Adam to discuss the tree warden job description.
- With respect to the ordinance it was agreed that the ordinance will reference the Forestry Management Plan where both the sections and appendices will contain details that can be more easily updated in the plan vs the ordinance. For instance, fee scales for charges for the damage or removal of City trees, details relating to planting parameters, specific recommendations for private plantings with implications for the UDO will appear in the Forestry Management Plan and only be referenced in general in the ordinance.

- **Forest Management Plan** (Blackstone, T. Davis, J. Barnes, T. White)
- This committee has not convened in the past month due to the unavailability of some members, but will reconvene in the fall. The current draft sections of the plan are available on the google drive and input is welcome.

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

- Budget Proposals for 2025 (submitted and presented to Council April 2024; follow up communications/meetings with City Manager necessary in light of Fall budget review)
- Project Canopy Grant Application (submitted May 15, 2024/received)
- Inflation Reduction Act Urban & Community Forestry Grant (submitted May 15, 2024; results pending)
- Revised Tree Ordinance (sent for consultation in May; finalize for submission to Council **September 2024?**)
- Tree Warden Job Description (March 6, 2024 to City Manager/Council; resent after arrival of new city manager; resent July 2024)
- Submission of Arbor Day Proclamation to Mayor (proclaimed February 12, 2024)
- Submission of Tree City USA 2024 application (submitted December 2024)
- Community Tree Nursery Input on Ordering & Planting for 2026
- Finalize City of Ellsworth Forestry Management Plan (first full review by Commission December 2024)
- Plan Public Education Programming for 2024-2025 (Chestnut Program, April 2024; Beech Leaf Disease September 2024; other on White Pine, to remove or not?)
- Arbor Day/Maine Arbor Week 2026 Programming/Activities

9. Member Comments/Other Business

10. Next Meeting: Sept 9, 2024 8:15-10:15AM. Possibly at Harbor Park.

11. Adjournment 10:16