

1 City Hall Plaza, Ellsworth, ME 04605

ARBOR COMMISSION

Regular Meeting

Monday, October 7, 2024, 8:15-10:15 AM

MINUTES

Present: Mary Blackstone, Teresa Davis, Iain Drummond, Casey Hanson, Jaime Lambert, Tabatha White

Staff: Charlie Pearce, Caleb Pelletier

Regrets: Jay Barnes

1. Call to Order. T. White called the meeting to order at 8:23AM.

2. Adoption of Minutes of September 9, 2024

Moved T. Davis/seconded J. Lambert, Unanimous

3. Staff Comments or Clarifications

The City's budget for the 2024-2025 FY re planting and park maintenance is \$50,000 (up from \$17,000). We need to have figure for how much has already been spent from that budget so that the Commission can respond to A. Wilson's request that the Commission provide guidance on priorities for how the money should be spent. T. White noted, for instance, that there is a need for tree pruning at Merrill Park.

The Commission welcomed Caleb Pelletier to the meeting. The City is supporting him in enhancing his credentials with respect to tree care. T. White asked him to provide his CV so that members of the Commission can get to know his background in the areas of tree care and landscaping. M. Blackstone noted that there is a pressing need for the City to identify an individual who will be responsible for supervising the Community Tree Steward. It must be an individual whose job description includes supervision, and they need to meet with the Steward weekly as part of the terms of the agreement. The program is calling for supervisors to sign up for training sessions now. Brian Moon in Public Works may be the most likely person to undertake this supervision.

M. Blackstone asked about the process for setting up a Tree Trust similar to the existing Cemeteries Trust Fund. It was suggested that Nate Moore be contacted to provide input on this.

C. Pearce noted that the City is moving ahead on appointing Cemeteries Board. The City is also currently advertising for a Deputy City Manager, and that person may take on more responsibility for working with the Arbor Commission and city beautification more generally. At the moment there are plans to spruce up City Hall landscaping. A second meeting with community groups regarding civic beautification is being planned, and it is hoped that increased revenue from downtown parking and other sources will help enhance beautification efforts.

4. Citizen Comments —None.

5. Report from City Council

C. Hanson will request that the two recently received grants be on the Council agenda for October. C. Pearce will announce the two awards and T. White will provide further detail. In advance of the Council meeting, a draft press release will go to M. Condon for release by the City this Friday.

6. Action Items completed/in progress

- **Debrief on public education event:** Beech leaf disease presentation—The event was recorded and is now on the City's website under Arbor Commission with an item on FB linking to it. Both the Ellsworth American and Fox/Channel 7 followed up on the event with articles. The event revealed that the Commission needs its own zoom account for hosting its educational events. The next talk should be on invasive trees.
- **Staff/Commission Project Management Committee** (M. Blackstone, T. Davis, I. Drummond, C. Pelletier, T. White, C. Hanson)
This Committee met with C. Pearce, M. Condon, and N. Moore and had a useful discussion about financial accounting and tracking in-kind staff and volunteer hours as part of that accounting. In the absence of A. Wilson from this meeting the main agenda item of determining a calendar for work to be accomplished in conjunction with the two grants received had to be postponed. I. Drummond set up an account on Zoho so that the Commission can at least set up a tentative calendar of activity, but it will need to be coordinated with the work schedule of Public Works staff.

In consultation with C. Pelletier, a tentative schedule involving the Public Works crew in the digging of nursery trees (Nov 4) and their planting on High Street with volunteers (Nov 5) was sorted out. M. Blackstone noted that it will be important to incorporate the digging and planting of the memorial tree at Knowlton Park within this schedule. It will be critical to purchase the digging spade first. M. Blackstone will ask J. Barnes to provide a link so that a quote can be obtained for that purchase. T. White will provide C. Pelletier with the list of materials needed for the planting: seafood compost, mulch, stakes, etc. Volunteer hourly documentation sheets will need to be available for signing at the work site, and a press release calling for volunteers on November 5 will need to go out no later than October 25.

M. Blackstone noted that there will also be some need for winter prep work at the nursery before we get too far into November. Some trees require staking. She noted as well that while the majority of trees planted in spring 2024 did exceptionally well, all of the mountain ash experienced a sudden blight which caused all of the leaves to turn black.

M. Blackstone reported on the successful application to the Community Tree Stewards program (run by the state's Conservation Corp) since the previous Commission meeting. There is a pressing need to identify free or low cost housing for this

individual for January-November 2025, and to identify the individual who will be supervising them.

This Project Management committee will meet on the last Monday of each month 3:00-4:00PM (next meeting Oct 28).

- **Commission membership**

It was agreed that C. Hanson will be put forward for membership on the Commission.

T. Davis will ask Megan Facciolo and I. Drummond will inquire at Bar Harbor Banking and Trust about possible interest there. M. Blackstone will ask if Frenchman Bay Conservancy has an interest in participating.

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

Discussion was deferred to the next meeting.

- **Forest Management Plan** (Blackstone, T. Davis, J. Barnes, T. White)

Discussion was deferred to the next meeting.

7. Commission Work Plan/Agenda for 2024-2025 relative to Commission Budget

This will be the primary focus of the next meeting.

8. 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 2025
- Finalize City of Ellsworth Forestry Management Plan (first full review by Commission October 2024)
- Plan Public Education Programming for 2024-2025 (Chestnut Program, April 2024; Beech Leaf Disease August 2024; other on White Pine, to remove or not?)
- Arbor Day/Maine Arbor Week 2025 Activities (?)
- Other

9. Member Comments/Other Business—None.

10. Next Meeting: Nov 4, 2024 8:15-10:15AM.

11. Adjournment 10:28AM

M. Blackstone moved/C. Hanson second. Unanimously approved.