

West Haven Tree Commission

Meeting Minutes

25 February 2016

FINAL

Present : John Haas, Chair
 Michelle Matteo
 Eric Herrington, Tree Warden

Absent: 3 newly appointed Commissioners – names unknown, as the Tree Commission has not been notified of any new appointments

Others None
Present:

Agenda: Attached

Attachments: Final Minutes from 19 January 2016 meeting
 Letter to Corporation Counsel, re. Tree Warden Conflict of Interest
 Updated WHTC Commissioner Biosketches

The meeting of the West Haven Tree Commission (WHTC / TC) was held on Tuesday, 25 February 2016, at West Haven City Hall, pursuant to notice given by Chair John Haas.

Mr. Haas called the meeting to order at 7:13 pm, noting that the persons listed above were present at the meeting. In the absence of our previous Secretary, Dr. Marra, Michelle Matteo served as note taker.

Public Session:

No members of public present.

Agenda:

The draft agenda was approved by all members present, and entered in the record (attached).

Secretary's Report:

No Secretary's report as the Secretary, Dr. Marra, was dismissed from the Commission by the Mayor's office. In the Secretary's absence, Ms. Matteo served as the temporary Secretary.

Minutes from the 19 January 2016 meeting were accepted into the record by unanimous assent of those present.

Old Business:

Strapping removal from Campbell Ave trees

- Discussion with the Tree Warden regarding the trees that have too tight strapping remaining on them. This tight strapping is limiting water and nutrient movement along the trees' trunks on virtually all of the newly planted trees on Campbell Ave. (as part of the Streetscape project). Tree Warden confirmed that he would still be releasing the strapping soon.

Other issues

- Main Street - Discussion of the small size of the tree pits. 4'x8' or 5'x10' pits were not applied. The TC is unsure of the reasoning, as the City previously used the larger 4'x8' or 5'x10' pits on the Campbell Ave Streetscape Project and is aware of the limitations of tree pits that are too small to adequately sustain a tree. Ms. Matteo recalls communication from former Acting Tree Warden Mark Paine that the planting pits could not be 5' x 10', but would be 4' x 8'. TC notes that the pits are much narrower than 4'.

New Business

Membership Status:

- Dr. Robert Marra was removed from the Tree Commission by the Mayor's office and 3 new Commissioners have been appointed, but the Tree Commission has no knowledge of the appointees. None of the new appointees were present at this month's meeting and the Mayor's office has not notified the Commission of either Dr. Marra's dismissal from the Commission, nor the 3 new appointees.
- Dr. Marra's status as a now former Commissioner has been noted in the meeting minutes and in the West Haven Tree Commissioners' Biosketches.

What Projects in 2016

- Grants Available for this year? – The Tree Warden confirmed that he would check with the City to see what upcoming grants are available to the TC.
- Arbor Day Planting – It is unknown if we have funds to purchase a tree for Arbor Day Planting, scheduled for our April 30, 2016 Arbor Day celebration. Tree Warden confirmed that he would check with DPW regarding funds and would confirm with DPW the suitable locations previously specified.

Funds for Planting

- Grants Available for this year? – Unknown - The Tree Warden confirmed that he would check with the City to see what upcoming grants are available to the TC (see above).

- Tree Warden will check with Mark Paine at the DPW to see what funds are in the 2 WHTC accounts (see above).

Action Items

See December 2015 Meeting Minutes for full list of Action Items that are outstanding.

- Grants for which the TW and TC should be applying;
- Vegetation Management Plan permit – ongoing request from WHTC for a copy of this permit;
- WHTC budget – ongoing request for information.

Tree Warden Report

General discussion of where UI is completing removals now as part of it's ETT. It was also noted that not all TC members are receiving the list of planned removals that the Tree Warden has been emailing.

Professional Updates

Upcoming Events

- UMass Community Tree Conference – March 8, 2016
- iTree Streets Webinar – April 20, 2016

Other Business

Bill proposed in CT Legislature – There is a bill proposed that would eliminate the public tree posting 'loophole' that the utility companies have been using to avoid having to post trees that are slated for removal.

Adjourn

The next meeting is set for 29 March 2016 at 7:00 pm, same location.

A motion was made and seconded to adjourn the meeting at 8:26 pm.

Attachments follow.

West Haven Tree Commission
Meeting Agenda

February 25, 2016

7:00pm

Type of Meeting: Monthly meeting

Invitees: Tree Warden, City of West Haven

Public Session

Secretary's Report: Approval of January 19, 2015 meeting minutes

Old Business

<Strapping removal from Campbell Ave trees

<Other issues?

New Business

<Membership Status

--Commissioner biosketches and statements-of-interest

<What Projects in 2016?

---Arbor Day Planting

<Any Funds for Planting?

Tree Warden Report

Professional Updates

Other Business

Adjourn

West Haven Tree Commission

Meeting Minutes

19 January 2016

FINAL

Present John Haas, Chair
 Bob Marra, Secretary
 Michelle Matteo

Others
Present None

Agenda Attached
Attachments: DRAFT Minutes from 15 December 2016 meeting
 Letter to Corporation Counsel, re. Tree Warden Conflict of Interest
 WHTC Commissioner Biosketches

The meeting of the West Haven Tree Commission was held on Tuesday, 19 January 2015, at West Haven City Hall, pursuant to notice given by Chair John Haas.

Mr. Haas called the meeting to order at 7:28 pm, noting that the persons listed above were present at the meeting. Dr. Marra served as note taker.

Public Session:

No members of public present.

Agenda:

Ms. Matteo requested adding an item to the “New Business” section: a discussion of the posted West Haven City Council meeting agenda for January 11, 2016. With no objections, the item is entered into the draft agenda. The draft agenda was approved as amended by all members present, and entered in the record (attached).

Secretary’s Report:

Minutes from the 15 December 2015 meeting were accepted into the record by unanimous assent of those present.

Old Business:

Noting the absence of the Tree Warden at this meeting, the following agenda items could not be discussed:

- Campbell Ave Streetscape;

- Grants for which the TW and TC should be applying;
- Vegetation Management Plan permit – ongoing request from WHTC for a copy of this permit;
- WHTC budget – ongoing request for information.

Other Issues:

- Chair Haas reported that the letter dated 10 December 2015 to Corporation Counsel Amendola (attached) was mailed on that date, but the TC has received neither response nor acknowledgment of receipt.
- TC had a brief discussion regarding the absence of a Council liaison, and acknowledged the good work and service that previous Council Liaison Gail Burns provided for the City of West Haven and the Tree Commission.

New Business

Where Do We Go From Here?

- Brief discussion regarding the future of the Tree Commission.

Membership Status:

- Chairman Haas noted that the TC continues to have two open positions.
- Dr. Marra entered into the record a document titled “West Haven Tree Commissioner Biosketches” (attached herewith).

Projects for 2016:

- Main Street sidewalk replacement.
 - Tree planting was discussed. Ms. Matteo recalls communication from former Acting Tree Warden Mark Paine that the planting pits could not be 5’ x 10’, but would be 4’ x 8’. TC notes that the pits are much narrower than 4’.
- Arbor Day: 29 April 2016.
 - The Tree Commission will do a Saturday 30 April 2016 planting.
 - Possible locations:
 - Corner of Ocean Avenue and Platt Court: Bald Cypress.
 - West Shore Fire House, Abbott Park: Bald Cypress; Dawn Redwood; Tupelo.

Funds for planting:

- Unknown; Tree Warden not present to elucidate.

Tree Warden Report

Tree Warden Eric Herrington was not present, nor was the TC advised of his inability to attend. The TC notes that Mr. Herrington did not submit a Tree Warden Report to serve in his absence.

Professional Updates

Ms. Matteo reported on an iTree ECO webinar, occurring 20 Jan 2016, hosted by iTree (UNRI, USFS). Also noted was the iTree Street webinar, 16 Nov 2016.

Dr. Marra noted the CTPA Winter Meeting, Thursday, 21 Jan 2016.

Other Business: none

The next meeting is set for 16 February 2016 at 7:00 pm, same location.

Adjourn

A motion was made and seconded to adjourn the meeting at 8:17 pm.

Attachments follow.

West Haven Tree Commission

Meeting Minutes

15 December 2015

DRAFT

Present John Haas, Chair
 Rosemary Beloin, Secretary
 Bob Marra
 Michelle Matteo

Others
Present Eric Herrington, Tree Warden

Agenda Attached
Attachments:

The meeting of the West Haven Tree Commission was held on Tuesday, 15 December 15 2015 at West Haven City Hall, pursuant to notice given by Chair John Haas.

Mr. Haas called the meeting to order at 7:09 pm, noting that the persons listed above were present at the meeting. Ms. Beloin served as note taker.

Public Session:

Resident Gail Burns attended and passed along tree complaints.

Secretary's Report:

Minutes from the 17 November 2015 meeting were accepted into the record by unanimous assent of those present.

Tree Warden Report

The Tree Warden reported that it has been quiet regarding tree complaints. He noted an issue with a tree on Nacca Road. Also, a Mullen Street resident wanted to remove a tree; however, the Tree Warden recommended only pruning. The Tree Commission asked that trees slated for removal, other than those deemed an imminent hazard, be posted, as specified in Connecticut General Statutes and the West Haven Tree Ordinance, so that the process is transparent and allows the public an opportunity to comment. The Main Street Project was also discussed.

Old Business:

Campbell Ave Streetscape Update – Issues with the planting pits, stakes and strappings, which are too tight, were discussed. It was noted that the specs were not followed.

Allentown, Route 1 – no update

Tree Complaints – Chase Lane and Shingle Hill were discussed. Numerous complaints were received regarding the removal of trees; it is unclear who did the removals. The Tree Warden spoke with Lewis Tree Service and was told that the trees were taken down in error.

Gail Burns passed along a tree complaint from the homeowner at 77 Oxbow Lane: a truck hit the tree, damaging branches. A tree at 154 Sawmill Road was discussed as potentially needing pruning; the Tree Warden will take a look.

Grants - The Tree Warden was asked to look into upcoming grants available from CDA, TD Bank North, and America the Beautiful.

UI/ETT Status - The Tree Warden reported on UI and the Vegetation Management Plan (Enhanced Tree Trimming). The Tree Commission asked (1) that the list of trees to be pruned/removed be provided to Commissioners as early as possible and (2) that any tree slated for removal be posted in accordance with state statute and the West Haven Tree Ordinance.

New Business – The Conflict Of Interest was discussed concerning Tree Warden Eric Herrington and his affiliation as co-owner of the city's sole contracted tree care provider, Herrington and Sons Tree Care, LLC. A letter will be sent to Corporation Counsel once approved by all Tree Commission members.

Ms. Beloin resigned from the Tree Commission effective 31 December 2015; her principle reason was the lack of cooperation the Tree Commission has received from the Mayor's Office. The Tree Commission expressed their gratitude for Ms. Beloin's work and enthusiasm for the Tree Commission.

Action Items:

The Tree Commission asked the Tree Warden for a copy of the permit concerning the Vegetation Management Plan.

The Tree Warden was asked to supply a current balance of our budget for this fiscal year and to see if we could purchase tree gators.

Professional Updates

No updates

A motion was made and seconded to adjourn the meeting at 8:54 pm. The next meeting is set for January 19, 2016 at 7:00 pm.

West Haven Tree Commissioner Biosketches

January 2016

John Haas

Chair

Mr. Haas is an Arborist with the Town of Greenburgh (NY) Parks Department. A large focus of his time is centered on hazard tree assessment throughout the town's parks, parklets and traffic medians. The position involves supervising the hired tree contractor's work in completing the pruning and removal list and overseeing various landscape projects within the Town's jurisdiction. Mr. Haas is an ISA Certified Arborist/ Municipal Specialist, has ISA Tree Risk Assessment Qualification and is a CT Licensed Arborist.

"I joined the West Haven Tree Commission to help look after and improve the City's tree resource which is an important part of its infrastructure."

Michelle L. Matteo, M.S.

Ms. Matteo is an ISA Certified Arborist and a Massachusetts State Licensed Forester. She completed her Master's work in Arboriculture and Watershed Science, focusing on watershed-wide impacts of buffering urban forestry practices. She has extensive experience with town and city boards, serving previously on Conservation Commissions, Aquifer Protection Committees, and Open Space and Recreation Committees, as well as conducting Urban Street Tree surveys. Ms. Matteo is a private consulting Lead Auditor for Forest Management, Procurement, and Chain of Custody, throughout the US, as well as assisting forest landowners manage their own lands.

"I joined the West Haven Tree Commission to help the City manage their urban forest and use my professional experience and knowledge to serve and work for the long-standing health and enjoyment of West Haven's urban trees."

Former Commissioner – note that between the time of the January 2016 meeting and the approval of the Jan 2016 Meeting minutes at the Feb 2016 meeting, Dr. Marra has been removed from the Commission by the Mayor's office.

Robert E. Marra, Ph.D.

Secretary

Dr. Marra is a forest pathologist with the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station. In addition to his primary research focus on the diseases of trees of both forest and landscape, Dr. Marra is also engaged in studies exploring the impact of wood decay on carbon sequestration in forests. Additional research projects include the genetics of fungicide resistance in the boxwood blight pathogen, and the fungi associated with the decline of Spartina grasses in salt marshes. Dr. Marra gives frequent public presentations on various topics, including those related to tree health, tree diseases, and urban forestry.

“I joined the West Haven Tree Commission in an effort to help manage and improve the city’s urban forest, volunteering my knowledge and expertise in trees and tree care for the benefit of West Haven’s trees and their appreciation by my fellow residents.”

**West Haven Tree Commission
City of West Haven
355 Main Street
West Haven, CT 06516**



John Haas, Chairman
Rosemary Beloin, Secretary

Michelle Matteo, M.S.
Robert Marra, Ph.D.
Councilwoman Gail Burns, City Council Liaison

December 10, 2015

Vincent N. Amendola, Jr.
Corporation Counsel
City Hall
355 Main Street, 3rd floor
West Haven, CT 06516

Dear Mr. Amendola,

The members of the West Haven Tree Commission are unanimous in their concern regarding a clear conflict-of-interest in the appointment of Mr. Eric Herrington, of Herrington & Sons Tree Specialists LLC, as Tree Warden for the City of West Haven, given that Herrington & Sons Tree Specialists LLC is the city's contracted tree service company.

As you know, a "conflict of interest" is a "situation in which a person has a duty to more than one person or organization, but cannot do justice to the actual or potentially adverse interests of both parties" (www.dictionary.law.com). This clearly applies to Mr. Herrington, who as Tree Warden is in a position to make decisions that impact the amount and nature of work performed by his family's company.

Conflicts of interest are not uncommon in all manner of situations, and can be addressed and managed, but they must first be recognized and acknowledged, and a strategy explicitly articulated that transparently propitiates their avoidance.

The Commissioners take no issue with Mr. Herrington's qualifications as a certified arborist or as a tree warden, nor should it be inferred here that we impugn his integrity or character. But we are also aware that this conflict of interest in Mr. Herrington's hiring has been aired publicly by citizens, and should therefore be addressed, deliberated, and resolved.

Respectfully,

John Haas, Chair
Rose Beloin
Michelle Matteo
Robert E. Marra

