

Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Avon Tree Commission
Held in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Building
On Wednesday, January 8, 2025

The Chairman Rick Varga, called the meeting to order at 7:30 P.M.

PRESENT:

Commission Members: Mary Berges; Alex Boccabella; Megan Englemann; Mary Johnson; Olivia Pajak (non-voting Student Member); Matt Smith; Liesa Wetzig; Chair Richard Varga (non-voting Member)

ABSENT: John Traxler

Others in Attendance: Rachel Markovitz, Assistant Clerk of Council

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE AVON TREE COMMISSION HELD WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2024

A motion was made by Mr. Smith and seconded by Ms. Wetzig to dispense with the reading of the minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Avon Tree Commission held Wednesday, December 11, 2024, and to approve said minutes as published, and the vote was: Ms. Berges, "yes"; Mr. Boccabella, "yes"; Ms. Englemann, "yes"; Ms. Johnson, "yes"; Mr. Smith, "yes"; Ms. Wetzig, "yes".

The vote was 6 for and 0 against and the Chair declared the motion passed.

MOMENT OF SILENCE

Mr. Varga

Mr. Varga asked to take a moment of silence for former 39th President Jimmy Carter.

MOTION TO RE-SCHEDULE THE TIME OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE TREE COMMISSION TO BE HELD ON WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2025, FROM 7:30 P.M. TO 2:30 P.M.

A motion was made by Mr. Smith and seconded by Ms. Berges to re-schedule the time of the Regular Meeting of the Tree Commission to be held on Wednesday, February 12, 2025, from 7:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m., and the vote was: Mr. Boccabella, "yes"; Ms. Englemann, "yes"; Ms. Johnson, "yes"; Mr. Smith, "yes"; Ms. Wetzig, "yes"; Ms. Berges, "yes".

The vote was 6 for and 0 against and the Chair declared the motion passed.

DISCUSSION OF HOSTING THE TREE CITY USA AWARDS EVENT IN MAY 2025

Mr. Varga

Ms. Wetzig stated they met with Tom's Country Place to get a quote on the menu items to try to figure out their budget. She noted Tom's Country Place offered a continental breakfast and two buffet entrees as well as the setup charge and room rental information which totals \$8, 813. She added that is a little higher than they had at Rocky River, but difference is \$1,000 for the room. Ms. Wetzig stated Tom's Country Place stated two entrees, but she felt that one entrée was good.

Mr. Boccabella clarified if the cost was based on 200 people and Ms. Wetzig confirmed it was. He noted that would come out to approximately \$44.07 per person which sounds reasonable for breakfast, lunch and room rental and setup.

Mr. Varga stated he thinks two entrée items are essential.

Mr. Smith agreed that one entrée would not be enough.

Ms. Berges inquired if they are going to cap the attendees to 200 people, and sought confirmation if that was what they are looking to do.

Ms. Wetzig stated they discussed 250 people.

Mr. Varga stated they noted 200 people but indicated they may have as many as 250 people and inquired what number Rocky River had at their event.

Ms. Wetzig stated Rocky River had 200 people at their event.

Mr. Varga stated he believes they could leave it at 200.

Mr. Boccabella stated he is assuming once they get their final RSVP's they would just advise Tom's Country Place how many are attending, whether it be 235 people or 192 people or whatever that final number may be.

Mr. Varga advised they would need the final number 10 days before the event.

Ms. Berges stated they are going to have their registration deadline before that.

Ms. Wetzig stated she knows Rocky River catered to 200 people. She added for their event they had talked about using the front hall at Tom's Country Place for the vendors and possibly the breakfast and beverage table. She noted the beverage table would have beverages such as coffee, juice, pop, and water. Ms. Wetzig brought the sponsor letter from Rocky River which included information that was requested. She noted the back has the sponsorships/signups and the levels were listed as platinum at \$1,000, gold at \$500, silver at \$250 and bronze is any donation amount and the vendors are \$250. She noted they could donate a gift bag of items and added a lot of the vendors would likely bring their own door prizes. The platinum level includes 4 tickets and a full-page in the program, the gold level includes 2 tickets and a half-page in the program, the silver level includes 2 tickets and a quarter page in the program, and the bronze level includes recognition in the program. Ms. Wetzig stated she did not see anything they would need to change regarding that aspect. She added they would need to start looking for sponsors right away.

Ms. Johnson asked if they would approach people in the booklet as she recalls there is already a list of sponsors that may be interested and Ms. Wetzig confirmed and stated they could refer to the sponsors on the list.

Ms. Berges asked if Ms. Wetzig knew how many were platinum sponsors?

Ms. Wetzig stated Rocky River had three platinum sponsors, two gold sponsors, three silver sponsors, and eleven vendors.

Mr. Boccabella asked if the vendors are essentially the same group of sponsors every year.

Mr. Varga advised that is correct for the most part. He added from going to other events vendors have been typically the same ones. He noted whether a conference at the Ohio State University or another location it is usually the same vendors of local nurseries, suppliers, etc. although there are always a couple variations.

Ms. Wetzig stated at Rocky River she was surprised some of them just had a table with no vendors.

Mr. Varga clarified that they would have a letter and Ms. Wetzig responded she has an example of a letter she could use as a template. She added then vendors could pick what sponsorship they want to sign up for. She added she will have to change out a lot of the information on the letter. She added looking at the program you can see that Acorn Farms is a platinum sponsor, Bartlett Tree Experts was a platinum sponsor, Cure Tree Service, and noted Ohio CAT as a sponsor.

Mr. Varga stated what they need to do is start approaching individuals/businesses as soon as possible so they can get setup.

Ms. Wetzig agreed and advised she will get the letter done. She did not know if anyone on the Commission had some time to make some calls.

Mr. Varga confirmed and noted that Ms. Englemann will be a part of that as well as Ms. Berges and Mr. Boccabella.

Ms. Englemann asked if calls are the most effective and suggested email or mailings. She inquired about a list of who she would contact. She referred to the Arbor Day celebration and noted they all had a list of possible vendors but was not sure if someone had already reached out or knew someone at a particular company. She suggested maybe their workgroup could split that up and they could be in charge of a handful of each to reduce putting too much on one person.

Mr. Boccabella stated he could contact some people and if there is a list available, he can assist with some calls.

Ms. Wetzig stated she will get that list out and inquired if the Commission Members have access to Google Docs for Google Sheets.

Mr. Varga noted the one company he would be talking to is Willoway Nurseries. He added he will also procure a speaker for the awards ceremony through Willoway Nurseries as well.

Ms. Wetzig asked if the speakers are paid.

Mr. Varga responded no and that is his problem at the moment as one of the individuals he wanted to speak at this event Joe Boggs, Entomologist at the Ohio State University, indicated that he does not want to come all the way from Cincinnati to this event in Northeast Ohio without being compensated. Mr. Varga commented that Jim Chatfield, Associate Professor and Extension Specialist- Department of Plant Pathology at the Ohio State University, is going to be a speaker and does not charge to be a speaker. He added Willoway Nurseries will be fine. Mr. Varga noted he has quite a few contacts through the Ohio State University that he plans to reach out to discuss speaking at this event. He added he is confident that he could find another speaker. Mr. Varga advised he may also try to reach out to another individual who works at Davey Tree Expert Company who has a Doctorate in Arboriculture.

Mr. Smith inquired if they are looking at having three speakers for this event.

Mr. Varga confirmed three speakers and believes that will be enough. He added that previously indicated he is trying to have them tie in together in topics. Mr. Varga advised Mr. Chatfield is a Plant Pathologist who will be speaking on the topic of tree diseases and viruses then he was hoping a speaker would speak about new hybrid species that could adapt to that particular area and would not contract any diseases/virus.

Ms. Wetzig asked what Mr. Varga would have Willoway Nurseries concentrate on.

Mr. Varga responded he would ask Willoway Nurseries to focus on tree species as they grow individual tree species that are more disease resistant for the area.

Ms. Wetzig stated the only other expense Rocky River had for this event were swag bags and they also gave away mugs. They also had giveaway tree seedlings by a drawing.

Mr. Varga stated he is unsure on the bags but possibly mugs.

Ms. Wetzig agreed if they could come up with a gift idea. She added what she thought was to have a bag that had the vendors items in it and a mug.

Mr. Varga commented that they have their bags from Arbor Day.

Ms. Berges advised they would have to order more as they only have about 20-25 bags leftover. She added it would not be a big deal as they are already setup as a vendor.

Mr. Varga agreed and stated since they have that setup already that was agreed idea.

Mr. Smith added it is also good advertising for Arbor Day.

Ms. Wetzig suggested putting an Arbor Day Flyer in there as well.

Mr. Boccabella stated on Arbor Day they handed out a lot of City of Avon tumblers and inquired if any could be available to hand out at this event.

Mr. Varga stated he is unsure and Ms. Wetzig stated they only had some leftover and does not believe there is a big supply left. Mr. Varga indicated he would speak with Ms. Seighman to see if any are still available.

Ms. Wetzig stated Rocky River had miscellaneous supplies and they also had banners and flags which were \$1,000, but they are waiting to hear from Mr. Leiden to see if his organization would pay for a Tree City USA banner that could be moved to the host city annually.

Mr. Varga stated right now they have two Tree City USA flags that they could use in addition to Avon's Arbor Day banner so he believes that would be sufficient.

Ms. Wetzig stated they also have the City of Avon banner as well. She stated Rocky River only had the program which was \$500 and she asked if they are going through the City for that expense.

Mr. Varga stated what they have to do is come up with what they think the budget is going to be and if they think they are going to have to get some more money they have to let Mr. Presley know the amount that they might need then he will put a purchase order in for that particular amount. He added he will just say after they go through all their evaluations here and determine they can get this many sponsors

and vendors then how much are they going to charge for the event. He added last year was \$35 or \$40 and there are 200 people at \$40.

Mr. Boccabella stated that would for the most part cover the cost of Tom's Country Place.

Mr. Varga confirmed and added then you have the sponsors and vendors. He added he is unsure but if they put a purchase order in for certain dollar amount and do not use it, he does not think that is a problem. Ms. Wetzig agreed and stated the problem is if you do not ask for enough upfront.

Mr. Varga agreed and stated that is what they believe they can always do as right now they know that if they make it \$40 that will cover the costs of what they need just for the banquet room. Mr. Varga feels they should have enough money but they should still put a purchase order in for maybe \$2,000-\$3,000 just to make sure they have enough as he does not believe that would be an issue. He advised he believes Mr. Presley may be anticipating that amount from when they talked about the event.

Ms. Wetzig stated she believes Mr. Presley indicated \$5,000.

Mr. Varga responded they could do \$5,000.

Mr. Boccabella asked Ms. Wetzig from the information received from Rocky River, if food costs were factored. Does she have an approximate total of what everything else cost?

Ms. Wetzig responded they would not count the banners right? Mr. Varga responded no and Ms. Wetzig speculated Rocky River calculated 1,000 in seed giveaways and commented they must have had other trees they gave away or something. She believes it was approximately \$3,700.

Mr. Boccabella stated so about \$4,000 more dollars.

Mr. Boccabella stated the registration fee basically covers the lunch and room and everything so they would need approximately \$4,000 more in sponsors. Ms. Wetzig stated the platinum sponsors were \$1,000, so if they get 3 or 4 sponsors. Mr. Boccabella responded that is right where they would need to be and if they need money from the City and Mr. Varga added if they do not use it, they do not use it. Ms. Wetzig asked what was proposed. Mr. Varga responded \$3,000 but they could do \$5,000. Ms. Wetzig stated she also recalled \$5,000.

Ms. Wetzig stated they would need to propose possible costs to the City.

Mr. Varga indicated that he will talk to Mr. Presley about utilizing the full \$5,000 offered. He also indicated that he will discuss a purchase order with Ms. Seighman. Ms. Wetzig offered to do a mockup budget if needed.

Mr. Varga noted he can discuss it tentatively with Mr. Presley and see if he wants a more specific budget.

Ms. Wetzig stated in Rocky River there was 125 that paid, 11 vendors, 3 platinum sponsors, so about 18-20 extra people. She indicated a possibility of the vendors get their lunch included as a part of their fee. Ms. Wetzig added they will have the cost of guest speakers and asked besides Mayor Jensen and the Ohio State Representative Gayle Manning if there was anyone else they were considering inviting to the event.

Mr. Varga advised for the most part, most cities have the Mayor or a Council Member attend but they have not extended past that yet.

Mr. Boccabella stated at the Rocky River event, he believes there was a table that had the Service Department.

Ms. Wetzig confirmed Rocky River did as they had the Service Department involved in cutting up the wood centerpieces and noted in the awards program.

Mr. Varga stated that is another thing to think about as the Streets Department trims the trees, but then the Parks Department plants the Memorial Trees and takes care of all the trees in the parks. He inquired who do you choose as you could easily include 20 people from the City without a problem. Mr. Varga advised what they could do is have a limit of Michelle Morahan, Service Department and Mark Rofe, Streets Department, and Susan Beres, Clerk at the Parks & Recreation Department and Clare Harasimchuk, Recreation Coordinator and keep it to those employees as they are key individuals who will see what is going on and be more involved. He added they are the ones that will be part of some of the key decisions as far as the Streets and Parks Department so he believes they should just limit it.

Ms. Berges commented they should be sure to include Mr. Streator, Public Service/Safety Director.

Mr. Varga confirmed and suggested if other City personnel should be included as they may also have interest such as Pam Fetcher, Planning Coordinator so they may want to consider that from a city planning perspective.

He added right now he believes the focus would be getting the invitations out, getting sponsors and vendors situated then they can figure out who to invite as far City officials. He noted it is a good discussion for sending invitations to possible individuals from certain departments versus whole departments.

Ms. Wetzig stated she will try to get this done by the end of the week.

Ms. Johnson asked Ms. Wetzig regarding the invitations that are going out to all of the potential attendees, is that was something that she has completed?

Ms. Wetzig stated Mr. Leiden is giving them a spreadsheet.

Ms. Johnson asked is there a target date to get those out.

Ms. Wetzig stated for the cities, they wanted to try to get that out as soon as they can.

Ms. Johnson stated the budget is open for the year.

Ms. Wetzig stated they are setting their budget for the year.

Mr. Boccabella asked if those invitations are mailed or emailed?

Ms. Wetzig believes Mr. Varga emailed it to Mr. Leiden but added she will have to look into it further as they have to get sent out.

Mr. Varga reminded the Commission that the next meeting time is going to be 2:30 p.m. and Mr. Leiden would be present. He added so they want to have a lot of this progressing forward so by the time they get to the next meeting as far as sending out invitations/reminders to the cities.

Ms. Wetzig stated according to this binder, Mr. Leiden has a timetable of sending out invitations in March, but they decided they wanted to move that up.

Mr. Varga stated that is correct.

Mr. Boccabella asked for clarification about the invitations, if they have to physically send them out now, or send an email blast to all the recipients.

Ms. Wetzig stated yes and she would have to talk to Mr. Leiden about that, but he indicated that he had the email list and they will make flyers too. She stated she would have to look through all of the information and the details.

Mr. Varga stated what they really need to attend to are the sponsors and vendors as they will need time to decide if they are attending. He believes the earlier they start this the better versus last minute. He added sometimes for example, Arbor Day, he goes around to various people/businesses, but some people/businesses preferred more time to think about it so moving forward its advantageous to start reaching out to potential sponsors. He added at the next meeting they can get everyone together to look at the options. Mr. Varga advised they will get the sponsor/vendor list together then they can review it and send it out. Mr. Varga inquired if splitting that up could be a possibility.

Ms. Wetzig stated for those who can use Google Docs they could use that application and print anything if needed. Ms. Wetzig added the major thing is getting the letters out.

UPDATE ON UTILIZING THE ARBORSCOPE APPLICATION FOR THE TREE CANOPY EVALUATION

Mr. Varga advised they found four application sources and Aaron Jenkins, City of Avon- IT, emailed those to him yesterday. Mr. Varga stated he looked them over and there is one on there called ArborPro which looks very nice and he will send that one to everyone so they can review it. Mr. Varga added once they decide on what program they are going to use, they would like Ms. Pajak and some of the high school students to get involved. He added they are going to do a demonstration at City Hall with Mr. Jenkins. He clarified they would order the demonstration once they decide which application they want to use then proceed forward with the tree canopy evaluation project.

Ms. Pajak inquired if that will be coming up soon or further out like springtime.

Mr. Varga indicated it would not be soon because most of these applications have licensing agreements that last about a year after purchase. He added they had to review the different licensing agreements to decide on the best option. Mr. Varga stated the nice thing about ArborPro if you look at it you can see more detailed color and can highlight certain areas and have it in color. For example, all the Bradford Pear trees are going to be a purple hue. He suggested looking through the application as time permits and make note of the demonstration. Mr. Varga added this will give a good idea of how it can be utilized then they can reach out to setup a time for a demonstration.

Mr. Boccabella asked if they are looking for the company to provide the software and the Commission is going to do the legwork.

Mr. Varga stated they want Ms. Pajak and some fellow students to do all of the research. He added that is their intent and is what Mayor Jensen indicated as he wished to have the students involved and they would compensate them for doing that work. He commented Bay Village hired a tree company and they charged approximately \$25,000 to do that work as he referenced in the last meeting. Mr. Varga stated they are trying to get the students involved and purchase the program. He added from what he can see, he is pretty sure that they would be more than able to do something like this and have fun doing this project at the same time.

Mr. Smith inquired if the tree canopy evaluation project is also something the students could do during the summertime as well, similar to a summer job.

Mr. Varga stated yes and noted this is not a highly time sensitive/immediate project.

Ms. Pajak stated she would just need some information and descriptions of what the other students would be doing so she has better information to pass along or send out to see if other students are interested.

Mr. Varga responded that he will send her the application for her review. He added the main goal is to see what the tree canopy is and that is not going to be that difficult but to identify the trees, mostly in the tree lawns as they will probably have to replace a lot of them going forward. He added she will see how the application will say what tree species a given tree is and replace it with another tree such as Hearts of Gold Redbud. He added the application would then indicate the Hearts of Gold Redbud is going to be 20 feet tall and 20 feet wide in the description. Mr. Varga noted the application also gives you an idea of the environment such as where that tree is located, and the proper trees that could go into that environment and then you could plant it right into the tree lawn; then if there is a circumstance where someone calls the City and inquires what tree should they plant in their tree lawn, this way they will have the whole program set up so when they call and they can easily pull it up and advise what tree could be perfect for them. He added that is their intent because as he indicated the big thing they are going to have in the City is the tree lawn trees as that is one of their biggest issues coming up.

DISCUSSION OF A NEW GRANT

Ms. Johnson knows that they applied for this same grant last year and she does not think they were awarded it. She inquired who put the grant application together.

Mr. Varga advised Ms. Berges and Mr. Smith.

Ms. Johnson stated it is not reflected at all on how the grant was written. She conducted some research and there is \$50,000 to be awarded and over 22 applications and the organizations are asking for over \$180,000 so Lorain County has to decide on the programs and divide that money so it appears to be a fairly competitive grant. She indicated Mr. Smith had some suggestions if they received the grant.

Mr. Smith confirmed and stated the Cahoon House, the Traxler Family Arboretum, and Heritage Square (where the gazebo is located) would be areas of consideration. He added there are no bike racks there and those are all perfect destinations for people to ride a bike, park, lock it up and walk around the City.

Ms. Johnson stated she is sure the City has a vendor for those as some are located by the pool and in the parks that they could possibly get the cost for installing bike racks.

Mr. Smith advised that he and Mr. Varga spoke with Ms. Seighman yesterday and she was going to discuss this further with Ms. Harasimchuk and try to have Ms. Harasimchuk get in touch with Ms. Johnson.

Ms. Johnson offered saying she could contact her as well. She added the other thought she had was the potential for a bike repair station. She added maybe a bike repair station could be installed at one of those areas mentioned.

Mr. Smith felt that would probably be a good thing.

Ms. Johnson stated they are not inexpensive as it would require parts to be bolted down to the ground and all kinds of different tools at the station to repair the bike if someone is having a problem riding it or

just need to quickly fix something. Ms. Johnson added she thought if they are encouraging people to ride bikes then a bike repair station would be a nice addition and she would be open to suggesting a location so they could describe this endeavor in the grant.

Ms. Englemann stated that Medina had a cool bike washing station and suggested it might be interesting to have that located by the pool.

Ms. Johnson said she never heard of that and noted this grant is similar to what has been done in the past, to build healthier communities through environment changes like areas they live and play to encourage healthier communities. She believes with the bike racks that would encourage people to ride their bikes more, hike trails more and do more of those type of activities. Ms. Johnson added she will review last year's grant as it had the same purpose. She stated another question she had for the Commission whether the City as ever received one of these grants.

Ms. Berges confirmed that the City has received this grant previously because they deduct five points if you have been a past recipient.

Ms. Johnson noted she saw that and it seems that they give priority to any community who has not yet received this grant.

Mr. Smith stated the gazebo where they have all of those summer concerts would be a perfect destination to ride a bike and park there. He added they have the Cahoon House down the street as well as the Traxler Family Arboretum. Mr. Smith suggested that at the arboretum they could place bike racks opposite of Centennial Avenue., in the City owned parking lot and the other parking lot across from the Early Learning Center. He stated in talking with Ms. Seighman yesterday, the City bought that property and the house where they want to make an access road to the high school coming out to Kinzel Road and that would be a perfect area to put a bike rack.

Mr. Smith clarified he was talking about the parking lot two houses across from the Early Learning Center on the west side. He added there is already a walkway located there.

Ms. Wetzig asked if that was north of the parking lot and Mr. Smith clarified it is south of the parking lot.

Mr. Smith stated something to consider in talking with Ms. Seighman yesterday regarding these bike racks, he would assume that concrete pads would have to be poured in order to bolt these things down. Mr. Smith stated that Ms. Seighman indicated that if they got a certain amount of money from the grant then there could be a conversation with Mayor Jensen about the City covering the concrete pads and have the Streets Department install it to match what is already there.

Ms. Johnson stated because they would have to put together a budget and Mr. Smith agreed.

Ms. Berges stated that they cannot use labor costs so those costs would be absorbed by the City and Mr. Smith agreed.

Mr. Smith stated that Ms. Seighman believes that Mayor Jensen would support something like this.

Ms. Johnson asked if anyone recalls if the budget for last year's grant was for the pathway. Did the budget reflect all of the other costs like we have this much in labor costs but paid for by the City, or did they just show that it was zero?

Ms. Berges stated she would have to review the previous grant application.

Ms. Johnson stated she thinks \$10,000 is the most you can ask for, but they certainly do not have to ask for \$10,000 they could ask for \$7,132 if that is what it comes out to.

MEMBER COMMENTS

Ms. Wetzig stated she wanted to make sure everyone is okay with the prices and inquired if they want to do \$35 or \$40 for registration for Tree City USA event. Mr. Varga stated his thought is \$40 citing inflation as a factor as everything has been going up. Ms. Wetzig agreed and said it is only \$5 more.

Mr. Varga stated he wanted to let everyone know that they are working on the PowerPoint presentation and they have Johnny Gasior doing the voiceover and he has already wrote a script for it and they are going over that now. He added they are going to meet with him and once all of it is put together with the voiceover and the PowerPoint they are hopeful to show everyone. Mr. Varga added he just wanted to let everyone know and they are getting close to finishing that project and believes it will be very cool.

Ms. Wetzig asked how long is the PowerPoint Presentation?

Mr. Varga estimated about 8-10 minutes.

Ms. Wetzig asked if they will be playing it on the TV in the entrance of the Tree City USA awards event.

Mr. Varga confirmed that it would be and noted the tree ring will be on display at the event as well.

AUDIENCE COMMENTS

There were no audience comments.

ADJOURN: 8:22 p.m.

A motion was made by Mr. Smith and seconded by Ms. Wetzig to adjourn the Regular Meeting of the Avon Tree Commission, and the vote was: Ms. Englemann, "yes"; Ms. Johnson, "yes". Mr. Smith, "yes"; Wetzig, "yes", Ms. Berges, "yes"; Mr. Boccabella, "yes".

The vote was 6 for and 0 against and the Chair declared the motion passed.

The Chairman announced that the next meeting of the Avon Tree Commission is Wednesday,
February 12, 2025, at 2:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Rachel Markovitz, Assistant Clerk of Council