

**Minutes of the Organizational Meeting of the Avon Tree Commission
Held in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Building
On Wednesday, January 10, 2024**

Susan Pintz, Planning Commission/Zoning Board of Appeals Secretary, called the meeting to order at 7:30 P.M.

PRESENT:

Commission Members: Mary Berges; Alex Boccabella; Megan Engelmann; Shannon Laurenzi; Matt Smith; John Traxler; Liesa Wetzig; Certified Arborist, Richard Varga (Non-Voting Member)

Others in Attendance: Law Director John Gasior; Susan Pintz

APPOINTMENT OF A CHAIR FOR THE AVON TREE COMMISSION

Mr. Smith nominated Richard Varga for Chair of the Avon Tree Commission.

Since there were no other nominations, Ms. Pintz declared that Richard Varga is the elected Chair of the Avon Tree Commission.

APPOINTMENT OF A CHAIR PRO TEM FOR THE AVON TREE COMMISSION

Mr. Smith nominated Shannon Laurenzi for Chair Pro Tem of the Avon Tree Commission.

Since there were no other nominations, Ms. Pintz declared that Shannon Laurenzi is the elected Chair Pro Tem of the Avon Tree Commission.

Mr. Varga then proceeded to Chair the rest of the meeting.

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE AVON TREE COMMISSION HELD WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2023

A motion was made by Mr. Smith and seconded by Ms. Berges to dispense with the reading of the minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Avon Tree Commission held Wednesday, December 13, 2023, and to approve said minutes as published, and the vote was: Ms. Berges, "yes"; Mr. Boccabella, "yes"; Ms. Engelmann, "yes"; Ms. Laurenzi, "yes"; Mr. Smith, "yes"; Mr. Traxler, "yes"; Ms. Wetzig, "yes". (Ms. Wetzig noted, though, that her first name was misspelled in the minutes although it was correct on the agenda. It should be Liesa Wetzig, not Leisa Wetzig.)

The vote was 7 for and 0 against and the Chair declared the motion passed.

MEMBER COMMENTS

Ms. Berges stated that she did not think that she would be there and was very happy to still be part of the Tree Commission; this is wonderful. She then said that today she and Mr. Varga had the opportunity to start their junior year at the Tree Academy and would like to highlight the things that they went over: tree establishment, the proper site, preparation and planting - downtown and commercial planting. They

talked about the different types of planting. There are tree pits where you just have a big pit and stick the tree in the ground and put dirt around it, then using pots, raised beds and planters and two fairly new methods. One is called structural soil where they take crushed stone, clay loam, and hydrogel and use that as the base and it holds up underneath the sidewalk. The other new type is soil cells which is a modular pre-engineered cell system made out of plastic and it supports the sidewalk and what they do is they fill the cell squares with proper tree rooting soils. So those are the two new applications. They also discussed contract planting so when you contract out what you need to consider in your bids, your specifications, etc. and they are going to find out more about that tomorrow. Then a lot of time was spent on young tree care and maintenance. When we first formed as a Tree Commission, Stephanie Miller, the Urban Forester, came out and talked to us and she said people think the most important thing is to plant trees, but maintaining those trees is actually more important. You want that tree to survive and thrive. So at the Academy, they spent quite a bit of time talking about watering, mulching, and pruning at the different years in the life of the tree. Ms. Berges said that she learned a lot; she said she was going to go home and take the mulch away from the tree lawn tree that they planted a couple of months ago because it is right up against the trunk. There was a lot of information that they are going to be able to share with residents, so it was a very productive day today.

Mr. Boccabella welcomed Ms. Engelmann to the Tree Commission and said that they look forward to working with her. He also welcomed Ms. Berges back.

Ms. Engelmann stated that February 22nd is World Thinking Day for Girl Scouts and she happens to be a local Girl Scout Troop Leader. The theme for World Thinking Day this year is thinking about the environment, learning about compost, soil health, planting trees, thinking about the tree canopy in your community, etc. And as you know, the whole concept of Girl Scouts is about how you can get involved with your community. So before she even spoke with somebody about becoming a member of the Tree Commission, they talked about inviting our Avon Girl Scout Service unit to the next meeting of the Tree Commission, which is on February 14th. She is happy to put something together or invited others to work on it with her if anybody is open to that. It does not have to be anything big; she is hoping just to tell them about the Tree Commission. It would be a great way to introduce the Commission to our younger population and hopefully they will want to get involved with Arbor Day, or Save Our Soil Day, etc. These are events that a lot of kids, teachers, or even parents do not know that we have yet because they are so new. So she was hoping that we could plan something for the Girl Scouts to come to the next meeting on February 14th.

Mr. Varga said that having the Girl Scouts come to a meeting sounds fabulous but he and Ms. Berges will both be absent on February 14th, so if we could do something in March, that would be great. Ms. Engelmann said, yes, they could probably postpone it and do it in March. It would just be talking on to their World Thinking Day celebration. The girls are going to be doing multiple things throughout the month; some troops are planning craft days and they should be doing some outside learning. Actually doing it in March might give them some extra time to come up with a plan. So that sounds good.

Mr. Smith stated that for the tree ring display that they are working on, Mr. Varga has a couple samples from the black locust tree that we got up by the City pool and some of the stains are getting rings to show up. Then Mr. Varga is going to go cut more pieces, so we are working on that. Also, we have the Cutler Sign Co. that said they can help us do this.

Mr. Smith said that he wanted to mention that last Arbor Day with everything going on, he never walked over and did the Story Book Walk. It had a tree-themed story so about a month ago, he was at the Library

and asked about that book. They showed it to him and even though it was for little kids, he sat and read it, and it was great.

Ms. Wetzig welcomed Ms. Engelmann and also said to Ms. Berges that she was glad she was there.

Mr. Varga also welcomed Ms. Engelmann and said that it was great to have her.

Mr. Varga then said that he put together some highlights from the Tree Academy today. They want us to look at tree ordinances and think about things such as Arbor Day, a Tree Commission newsletter, tree grants, and doing workshops every once in awhile, so just things that they threw out there today so he wrote them down. Also, Jennifer Fenderbosch, a Councilwoman in Avon Lake, was at the Tree Academy and she wants to form some type of partnership with us as far as planting trees. For instance, if we have a nursery that would come in and plant trees for the City, she wants to go in with us and use the same contractor so we get a better price. He is not sure where that is going to go but it is something we are at least going to look into. Also, an interesting thing they showed today was a little magnet that you put on your refrigerator that could say "Tree Commission of Avon" with a little note. Ms. Berges said she took a picture of it; it was a planting guide and then it said it was from the City of Findlay Tree Commission and so we thought that would be fun to give away at Arbor Day. Ms. Berges said that she could call the Findlay Tree Commission and get some information about it.

Mr. Varga asked Ms. Laurenzi about the tree banner and she said, yes, she needs to find out. She said that Brian Fischer was supposed to print that for us and she would follow up on it.

Mr. Smith asked if Rocky River was going to host the Tree City USA awards this year and Mr. Varga said, yes. Mr. Smith then asked if Mr. Varga knew somebody at Rocky River City Hall so we could go and sit in on their plans for this. Mr. Varga said there were two gentlemen at the Tree Academy from Rocky River and he will talk to them tomorrow. Mr. Smith stated if Mr. Varga and Ms. Berges could make that connection, that would be invaluable if we went to some of their meetings to see what they are doing so we can get prepared for when we host the awards.

Ms. Berges said that she did talk to one of the arborists at the Tree Academy and he said that he was not involved yet but he thought the Rocky River Service Director was handling a lot of it so we can maybe get his contact information. And just a reminder for everyone that May 16th is the date this year for the Tree City USA awards. We will be getting more information but just so you put in on your calendars. And we are hosting the awards in 2026; Strongsville is 2025.

Ms. Berges noted that since Tony Moore was there in the audience, she just wanted to thank him for being the Council rep to the Tree Commission and also the Chairman. Everyone joined in in thanking Mr. Moore.

Tony Moore, 563 Kensington Dr., Avon, stated, yes, there were a lot of changes with Council and who the rep to the Tree Commission would be so Ms. Berges is here. He said that he just wanted to thank everyone. When he first started this, everyone agreed to serve without getting paid and that was amazing and he knows we have somebody on the Commission now that is not getting paid so it is amazing to see the willingness of our residents to be part of something bigger. It was really exciting to see our City do something so fast with the Commission. And it is amazing to see the Tree City USA sign coming down Detroit or around the oval so he just wanted to thank everyone. He will be around – and good luck. Again, everyone thanked Mr. Moore for all that he did with the Tree Commission.

Mr. Varga talked about the awards that they give at the Tree City USA Seminar. We were too late this last year to apply. It was just too much work too quick as you have to document meeting all the requirements of an award but this year he would like to spend more time on that so that we get awards. Michelle Morahan in the Streets Department does a lot of work compiling all the data as far as the Tree Commission is concerned for Tree City USA. She does a great job on that; she is always communicating with the Parks Department and Recreation Coordinator Clare Harasimchuk. Mr. Varga added that he will email the information about the awards to everybody so they can have an idea of what we can receive as awards.

ADJOURN

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

The vote was 7 for and 0 against and Ms. Pintz declared the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted by Gail Hayden, Assistant Clerk of Council