

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Avon Tree Commission  
Held in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Building  
On Wednesday, February 9, 2022  
At 7:30 P.M.**

The Chairman, Ward 3 Councilman Anthony Moore, called the meeting to order.

PRESENT:

Commission Members: Mary Berges; Shannon Laurenzi; John Schwartz; Matt Smith; John Traxler; Anthony Moore, Chairman; Certified Arborist Richard Varga (Non-Voting Member)

Law Director – John Gasior; Clerk of Council - Barbara Brooks

ABSENT:

Commission Member: Greg Mateyka

CORRESPONDENCE

The Clerk said that she had no correspondence.

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE AVON TREE COMMISSION HELD WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 12, 2022

A motion was made by Mr. Smith and seconded by Mr. Traxler to dispense with the reading of the minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Avon Tree Commission held Wednesday, January 12, 2022, and to approve said minutes as published, and the vote was: Ms. Berges, “yes”; Ms. Laurenzi, “yes”; Mr. Schwartz, “yes”; Mr. Smith, “yes”; Mr. Traxler, “yes”; Mr. Moore, “yes”.

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

DISCUSSION OF ARBOR DAY ACTIVITIES

Ms. Berges asked if there was a budget yet for the Arbor Day activities or if we need to find out if we get a budget and what the amount would be. Mr. Moore said that he did not know if there was a budget. Mr. Varga said that he had talked to Recreation Coordinator Clare Harasimchuk and she said that the Aquatic Center is available for Arbor Day if everybody agrees on that location and also, she was thinking that 12:00 Noon would be an optimum time, especially that time of year in November since it is cool in the morning and gets warmer in the afternoon. Also, there is a marathon going on that morning but it is over with by 11:00 A.M. There is no other activity in the City of Avon that day. We set it up tentatively and he said he would run it by everybody on the Tree Commission and we could vote on it.

Mr. Moore asked Mr. Gasior if this needed to be put on the agenda in order to vote on it or could they just make a motion to vote. Mr. Gasior felt that someone could make a motion to place Arbor Day activities at the Aquatic Center on November 5<sup>th</sup> at 12:00 Noon, a second was needed and then they can act on that tonight.

Ms. Berges asked Mr. Varga, during activities at the Aquatic Center, if they would also be looking at the wooded area where the History Walk is located? Mr. Varga said, yes, that was one of the ideas because there is identification of trees back through there and we thought that it would be appropriate to start there. And Ms. Harasimchuk also indicated that she has a lot of suggestions of where they want to plant

trees in that area. She said that a playground area is being built back there this summer. She said that it should be completed by September and that is why she thought November would be no problem to have Arbor Day there. Mr. Varga stated that in conjunction with that playground area, she was thinking about shade trees there. So as a Commission, we can work on that as far as getting somebody to donate trees and we will look into that aspect as we go along. But first things first, he just wanted to make sure that everybody was agreeable to having Arbor Day at the Aquatic Center and that the time was good.

A motion was made by Mr. Schwartz and seconded by Ms. Berges for the Arbor Day celebration to be held on Saturday, November 5, 2022, at 12:00 Noon at the Aquatic Center. The vote was: Ms. Laurenzi, "yes"; Mr. Schwartz, "yes"; Mr. Smith, "yes"; Mr. Traxler, "yes"; Ms. Berges, "yes"; Mr. Moore, "yes".

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

Ms. Berges stated that nobody had talked about the schools getting involved and she thought we should also see about the library being involved because in the past, they have been great about participating in other City activities and they might be able to organize something as part of that day.

#### DISCUSSION OF ADDING AN AVON TREE COMMISSION PAGE TO THE CITY WEBSITE – Ms. Berges

Ms. Berges noted that Ms. Brooks had displayed the City's web page on the overhead screens and she explained how to get from the home page to the page for the Avon Tree Commission. Ms. Berges said, and that is where we can put all kinds of information: what our mission is, how we came to be, etc. And then we can link it to the Arbor Day celebration, the Arbor Day Foundation, frequently asked questions about trees, a listing of the trees that we encourage people to plant vs the trees that we do not want planted in Avon, pruning tips, a page for the Arborist to address certain topics, etc. We would give the information to the Mayor's Administrative Assistant and she would put it on the web page. So we just have to decide what we want on that page.

Mr. Varga stated that he has been at the Ohio Tree Conference the last two days. Tomorrow is the last day and in the morning he will be having a meeting with the Urban Forestries Committee to talk about Tree City USA. In conjunction with that, he has all this information that is put out by the Ohio Tree Conference that we can put on the website such as tree selection, new tree planning, the benefit of trees, etc.

Ms. Berges suggested that for next month's meeting, everyone could think about what they would like to see on the web page and she will come up with some questions and things as well and then we can agree on what we want out there first, second, and third so that we can get things moving.

Mr. Moore said that he is still encouraging the pictures of those trees as we discussed with Mr. Traxler. Mr. Traxler said that obviously would make sense and we kind of have a list of trees that we might start with; we could make a chart to discuss what we want to accomplish with that. He said that he thought the information is pretty simple; the hard part is getting the pictures. He thought that discussion might be difficult to do at a regular meeting but maybe two or three of them could sit down and do that sometime. He asked Mr. Gasior how they would deal with that and Mr. Gasior said that to do that, they could not have a quorum. So with 7 voting members, a quorum would be 4 so they would have to stay below 4. Mr. Traxler asked if they would announce what they were doing and Mr. Gasior said that they could make a public announcement that they are going to meet in a small group and Ms. Brooks would have to post that. Mr. Traxler asked where that meeting would be and Mr. Gasior said they could meet here at City Hall; they would want to meet in a public place if they are going to give the public notice.

Mr. Moore stated that they might set up three or four separate meetings if that is what they want to do. Mr. Gasior said they might do a meeting here at City Hall and just see what kind of public attendance they get and then after a couple of meetings here, maybe they could just go to the Community Center or the Senior Center. But figure out initially what kind of response they are going to get from the public to show up at a meeting.

Mr. Gasior asked for clarification that the public announcement of a meeting must be 24 hours in advance of the meeting and Ms. Brooks confirmed that there must be a minimum of 24-hour notice. Mr. Gasior said, so you just put together a brief agenda of what you are going to talk about and you can have everybody show up; you are not really restricted. But you are restricted if you are not going to have a public announcement. Ms. Brooks added that a third requirement for a meeting would be minutes of the meeting.

Mr. Moore thought that they could have just a couple small group meetings and then bring items back to the Commission to discuss. Mr. Varga suggested having a meeting first to go over that tree list and Mr. Varga said to let him know.

#### DISCUSSION OF PRUNING TREES, TREE RECOMMENDATIONS AND IDENTIFYING TREES THAT NEED TO BE REMOVED – Mr. Traxler

Mr. Traxler stated that what we find with trees is that oftentimes you will see large branches that have cracks where dead branches need to be removed or branches that have weak unions, and also branches that have damaged a trunk of a tree. Also you will see unsound architecture of trees where instead of having one straight leader, you have two leaders and that makes for a weak tree and those need to be pruned out. Also you have severe root injury due to damage to the root system which causes the tree to be weakened. And oftentimes you see trees that are improperly pruned which will damage the tree.

Mr. Varga stated that he has all the handouts showing how to prune properly. Mr. Traxler asked if there were certain trees that respond better if they are trimmed going into winter? Mr. Varga said that right now the main concern is oak wilt and the consensus is to trim oak trees when they are dormant so basically from November to February is when you really want to trim oak trees because of the disease transmitting. Sometimes you have to prune trees regardless but usually we tell people that if you do nothing else, you do the "3 d's": you always trim dead, diseased, or damaged branches. And taking down dead trees and pruning out becomes involved because of the wildlife issues. So in supporting the wildlife, the bats, the birds, the owls, the nesting birds, etc., you have to be judicious. Any dead trees that can incur injury have to be taken down regardless. The other thing is that it is always better to prune trees when they are younger as opposed to when they get older. When they mature there may be co-dependent trunks so it is a lot easier to prune them when they are younger. Mr. Traxler added that it would be nice if the City could do more of that with their own trees; it is a major setback for the tree to prune them when they are older and they are not very well formed.

Mr. Varga stated that he was trying to work now with the Streets Supt. and was taking a couple employees in the Streets Dept. out to show them how to prune trees, and we want to give residents the information that can guide them to prune their own trees in the right of ways.

Mr. Moore asked if our Street Dept. is going to set a plan for pruning because having a plan was a way to get grants as Urban Forester Stephanie Miller had indicated. He said that he knows we have a certain amount of money that we could spend on that pruning that will help us in qualifying for Tree City USA. Mr. Varga stated that he has started a plan. There is a breakfast meeting tomorrow at the Ohio Tree Conference with the Urban Forestry people and hopefully Ms. Miller is going to be there and he will talk

to her. But he indicated to the urban foresters at the Ohio Tree Conference that in our area we have a lot of mature trees and a lot that are dead. So the first phase of our plan would be removing dead trees as well as trimming the small trees in areas of right of ways. Then it would be planting trees and how to maintain newly planted trees. He said that he would be going over everything with them again tomorrow morning.

Mr. Smith stated that at Veterans Park, by the hiking trail in the big woods area, there are some trees that need to be taken down because they are dead. So that is another place to look. Mr. Varga said, yes, and he usually talks to the Mayor and the Streets Supt. about how we are going to progress in a particular area. Mr. Moore added that residents on Holly Lane where the woods back up to the pool have told him that there are some trees that are in bad shape over there and they asked if we could make a note of that area as well. Mr. Varga stated that he was called out there two years ago and there are trees that are in dire straits and need to be attended to. The problem with assessing trees is that trees are just like humans; they can fail at any time. But then you can have a tree that looks terrible and it is still there 20 years later and you wonder how that can happen. Trees are living things and most trees are very resilient but you cannot take that chance of their failure and the consequence of that failure.

#### UPDATE ON TREE CITY USA STATUS – Mr. Varga

Mr. Varga said, as he indicated, he has been talking to urban foresters and telling them our plan and again tomorrow morning at the Ohio Tree Conference, he will be having a breakfast meeting with them. So they will discuss the plan again in more detail but initially what he has been talking to them about is making sure that we cover every single item on the application for Tree City USA. And it will be a lot easier when they finally get us our urban forester so he can communicate with that individual directly. The applications for the urban forester ended yesterday and so they are hoping that they will have our urban forester in place by April 1<sup>st</sup>.

#### UPDATE FROM THE GRANT WRITING SEMINAR – Mr. Varga

Mr. Varga asked Mr. Smith to talk about this a bit. Mr. Smith stated that he and Mr. Varga were part of a Zoom meeting that was for Cuyahoga County. There is a Cuyahoga County Urban Tree Canopy grant and they do this every year and one of the things that they emphasize is when you are writing these grants you really need an arborist and we are fortunate that we have Mr. Varga available to do that. The woman who was running the meeting was from the Holden Arboretum and she was basically saying that there are monies available every year and it is worth applying for those. Mr. Smith said he was looking around on the internet for Lorain County and he could not find an Urban Canopy Program for Lorain County but he did find that one that he was looking at, with the State, was that if Avon applied for a grant it would have to be a matching funds grant – a 50/50 idea. So there are things out there but he could not find one specifically for Lorain County.

Mr. Varga noted that Mr. Schwartz had mentioned briefly that he was aware of some grants that he wanted to point out. Mr. Schwartz said, yes, there are opportunities that come up. He received grants through the Western Reserve Land Conservancy which were more geared for water quality but the great thing is that trees do wonders for stormwater pollutants. So there are smaller grants out there; he was not sure about large grants but opportunities do come up. It is really just being abreast because when they advertise they have a short turn-around. We should also note that Ms. Miller mentioned grants through the Ohio Division of Forestry. He thought that we are going to need to know our budget as most grants require some sort of a match unless they are a \$2,500 grant or something like that, which is still great as you can do a lot with \$2,500. Mr. Smith said he thought that with the grant he was reading about, the smallest amount you could apply for was \$2,000 and the maximum was a \$25,000 matching grant and

this was one through the State Forestry Program. Mr. Schwartz agreed that there are a lot of opportunities for grants; it is having the time to apply. And as Ms. Miller mentioned, if we have projects to identify, we can search for those monies and we can look at other Tree Cities and what grants they were awarded and then try to piggyback on that and apply for those grants ourselves. But in applying for grants, we need to know what we are trying to accomplish. Mr. Smith added that, in looking at the application forms for some of these grants, they are specific about what your project is, a timetable, how you are going to accomplish it, etc.

Mr. Varga stated that he printed out the applications for these grants and he can send those to everybody to show the application process. Mr. Moore asked if the grants can be used not only for planting trees but for pruning and removal? Mr. Varga said he was not really sure but he would ask that question tomorrow morning. Mr. Varga said that there is an app called "i Tree" and it tells the canopy of a city. So we will be able to identify the tree canopy of Avon so that we can maintain that canopy. And that is what we really want to do. We are not stopping people from building or stopping progress in the City. We just want to make sure that we try to keep the canopy to somewhat of the baseline of where it is now. So we would say to a developer coming in that we would like them to plant a few more trees or do something to try and save a couple of trees if possible. That is the whole idea.

#### MEMBER COMMENTS

Ms. Berges and Ms. Laurenzi had no comments; Mr. Mateyka was absent; Mr. Schwartz, Mr. Smith, and Mr. Traxler had no comments.

Mr. Moore stated that, in regard to a budget, he was pretty sure that the Finance Director does have a budget for the Tree Commission but he would double check on that. And he would also ask how that is to be used or how it is allocated. Mr. Gasior thought the amount was \$50,000. Ms. Brooks stated that you have to spend \$2.00 per capita so they budgeted \$50,000. Mr. Moore added, that was a requirement for Tree City USA.

Mr. Varga said that he thought that the budget was pretty much set. He then asked Mr. Moore if he had talked to the Mayor about the newsletter that was going out and Mr. Moore said he had not. Mr. Varga said he asked because the Mayor indicated to him that he wanted an article about the Tree Commission in the next newsletter and said that Paula Pitasky, Editor of the newsletter, would be in touch with him or with Mr. Moore about that. But the Mayor wanted the article to be in the newsletter which Mr. Varga thought was going to come out in April.

#### ADJOURN 8:15 p.m.

A motion was made by Mr. Smith and seconded by Mr. Moore to adjourn the meeting of the Avon Tree Commission and the vote was: Mr. Schwartz, "yes"; Mr. Smith, "yes"; Mr. Traxler, "yes"; Ms. Berges, "yes"; Ms. Laurenzi, "yes"; Mr. Moore, "yes".

The vote was 6 for and 0 against and the Chairman declared the motion passed and the meeting adjourned.

Transcribed by Gail Hayden, Assistant Clerk of Council