

Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Avon Tree Commission
Held in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Building
On Wednesday, March 12, 2025

The Chairman Rick Varga, called the meeting to order at 7:39 P.M.

PRESENT:

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

Others in Attendance: Rachel Markovitz, Assistant Clerk of Council

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE AVON TREE COMMISSION HELD WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2025

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, February 12, 2025, 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"; Mr. Traxler, "yes"; Ms. Wetzig, "yes".

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

LORAIN COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH GRANT

Ms. Johnson

Mr. Varga advised that Ms. Johnson will be updating the Commission on the Lorain County Public Health Grant and noted she did a great job putting this grant together. He relayed a kudos as today they had a meeting with the Lorain County Health Department and the grant representative noted it was one of the best applications she has ever received. Mr. Varga added out of 30 applications there are only 7 grants awarded and they received one.

Ms. Johnson stated they were notified of securing the grant the first week of March and they were pleasantly surprised to learn that they were being funded. She advised that they applied for a grant in the amount \$8,243 which would go towards bike racks that will be installed at Heritage Square Gazebo, the Traxler Family Arboretum, and at Eagle Point Park. Ms. Johnson stated she will distribute images of the bike racks that they plan to purchase with this money. She also noted that they will also be purchasing a bike repair station that will be going in at the Avon Aquatic Center by the pool area. She noted the library has a bike rack and now they will have several spots in the City where people can park their bikes.

Ms. Johnson advised that a part of the grant was that the library will be doing a display of books and information on bike repair stations and promote the bike rack and bike repair station once installed. She stated they met with a School Board representative, and it was relayed that it appears as though the schools will also help to promote the bike racks and to remind people that they are available and to encourage people to use them in addition to utilizing the bike repair station.

Ms. Johnson stated Lorain County Public Health suggested as part of the grant that they do an education program on how to use that bike repair station. She noted the Commission felt they would integrate the

bike racks/bike repair station into their Arbor Day celebration as it may be an opportunity to draw more people to Arbor Day in addition to educating those present at Arbor Day. She noted Mr. Smith took her around the City and introduced her to many different people and they worked together to craft the ideas for the grant and locations.

Mr. Varga believes there was also some discussion on a possible ribbon cutting with press present to take photos for any features/articles. He added if the Commission wants to do something along those lines that would be something they would have to consider further. Ms. Johnson agreed and stated she would love if the Tree Commission could host something like that once they have the racks installed not only for the Lorain County Public Health's own publicity but also the Tree Commission's publicity as well.

Mr. Boccabella asked if there was a timeframe on when the installation and promotion of the bike racks/bike repair station may take place, for example a month, a couple months, etc., and inquired how long it may take.

Ms. Johnson stated the grant must be expended before the end of the year and Lorain County Public Health would be reimbursing the City as it is a reimbursement grant. She added the Commission would have to submit an invoice to Lorain County Public Health by November 30, 2025, and provide a timeline for the grant. She advised the timing is from about April through October to accommodate the purchase and installation as well as the promotion. Ms. Johnson advised they must spend the grant funds before the end of the year.

Mr. Varga stated they are aiming for everything to be completed prior to Arbor Day so they can highlight this achievement at the Arbor Day celebration.

Ms. Johnson advised that Duane Streater, Safety/Service Director, is the official contact person and he will be working on getting those items purchased and installed

DISCUSSION OF THE URBAN FORESTRY CONFERENCE AT TRI-C EAST ON APRIL 2, 2025

Mr. Smith

Mr. Smith distributed a handout that says 2025 North Coast Urban Forestry Conference at Tri-C East and noted the cost to attend this event is \$55 per person, which would be covered by the City. He advised that Rose Seighman, Administrative Assistant to the Mayor, needs to know which Commission Members are going to attend this event.

Mr. Smith added the cut-off date is next Thursday, March 20, 2025, and requested the Commission Members contact Ms. Seighman to let her know by next Thursday as she will be putting in one registration and purchase order for those attending.

Mr. Smith also noted that Mr. Varga and Ms. Berges will be presenters at this event. Mr. Varga stated they will be highlighting their Student Member through a PowerPoint presentation. He noted that he sent the PowerPoint presentation out to the Commission but if he missed anyone to let him know.

Mr. Smith stated that this would be the fourth year that he and Mr. Varga attended the Urban Forestry Conference. He noted that he thoroughly enjoyed going to each of these events previously and described it as a very informative event and he had a very fine experience overall.

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

Mr. Varga & Ms. Wetzig

Ms. Wetzig advised that it is too soon to finalize the menu selection and she was unsure if Ms. Englemann looked at the menu yet. She stated that Ashely Spooner at Tom's Country Place sent her a layout of the possible set up and Ms. Wetzig suggested they discuss the group addition first.

Mr. Varga stated Mr. Leiden contacted him and advised that the East Central Ohio Awards Ceremony was canceled by the host city. He advised the East Central Ohio Awards Ceremony want to have their ceremony combined with the Northeast Ohio Tree City USA event at Tom's Country Place on May, 15, 2025. Mr. Varga advised they would have people from an additional 15-20 cities coming to the event. He stated the Tree Commission does not have to do anything as far as sending information out to sponsors/vendors, city officials, etc. Mr. Varga advised they would simply collect the money. Ms. Wetzig asked if it would be Mr. Leiden handling the additional arrangements or someone else and Mr. Varga responded yes, they would handle those tasks/arrangements.

Ms. Wetzig asked if Mr. Varga checked with Tom's Country Place about the additional number of guests and he responded yes and that there is plenty of room to host the additional party. He estimated there would be at least another 75 more people in attendance at the Tree City USA event.

Mr. Smith stated the day that he and Mr. Varga went to Tom's Country Place, Billy Hricovec showed them the room they were setting up for the "Night at the Races" event and it was setup for 400 people. He added so Tom's Country Place can accommodate these additional people.

A motion was made by Mr. Smith and seconded by Ms. Wetzig to Agree to East Central Ohio Awards Ceremony to Combine with the City of Avon at the Tree City USA event on May 15, 2025, and the vote was: Mr. Boccabella, "yes"; Ms. Englemann, "yes"; Ms. Johnson, "yes"; Mr. Smith, "yes"; Mr. Traxler, "yes"; Ms. Wetzig, "yes"; Ms. Berges, "yes".

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

Mr. Varga advised he is going to call Mr. Leiden tomorrow to notify him of their decision. He advised it was indicated to him that the additional party would handle everything for their side.

Ms. Berges asked with these extra 75 people, they had giveaways for this event such as bags, etc., are they also giving these giveaways to the other 75 people. She noted she would feel bad if they do not also receive them, but stated that is an extra cost. Ms. Wetzig stated she has the receipts for 325 giveaway bags and they ordered 300 bags and Ms. Berges agreed. Mr. Varga asked if they have enough giveaway bags and Ms. Wetzig responded they have 25 extra giveaway bags and Ms. Berges confirmed that to be correct. Ms. Berges stated then they just have to factor that in the additional people for the giveaways and whatever they end up ordering, but she just wanted to clarify that is the intent which is that everyone gets something. Ms. Wetzig agreed and noted Ms. Berges had mentioned the Avon Arbor Day flyer going in there as well.

Ms. Wetzig asked if they should send them a sponsor letter or will use the own. Mr. Varga stated the East Central Ohio group are going to use their own everything that they put together because Mr. Leiden has their sponsor letter and everything. Ms. Wetzig confirmed Mr. Leiden had to approve it. Mr. Varga confirmed he has it and he will acquire more details about that tomorrow. He added he does not want to get too far ahead of himself until everyone was aware of what was going on and it was agreed upon.

Mr. Varga added as Mr. Leiden has been through this event hosting process, he will hopefully be able to reach out to some potential sponsors. He noted they have another inquiry about the City of Independence which advised they are unable to make it, but wish to pick up their award.

Ms. Wetzig added Independence wanted to be present for the award ceremony portion only because they have another event going on that day.

Mr. Varga stated he is fine with them coming up to get their award as they won it. He noted if anyone else reaches out to pick up their award that day it would be okay with him.

Ms. Wetzig stated then the menu will probably get more finalized at April's meeting as well as the setup once they know how many people will be attending. She advised in regard to the banners, they currently have the two banners. She added Mr. Leiden indicated they were unable to purchase another one due to lack of funds. She inquired of the Commission if they want to purchase a Tree City USA banner although noted she did not recall seeing one when she was at Rocky River's Tree City USA event.

Mr. Varga advised they have their two flags that they can display, the Tree City USA flags and felt that was enough.

Ms. Wetzig agreed that they are good with the two flags.

Mr. Varga stated they will also have the tree ring on display and plan to have the PowerPoint displayed along with a second PowerPoint highlighting their Student Member, Olivia Pajak.

Ms. Wetzig confirmed they have the tree ring, the PowerPoint presentations, and banners, and inquired if there were any additional suggestions.

Mr. Boccabella stated they have the banner that lists City of Avon on it that they displayed at Arbor Day and Mr. Varga confirmed. Mr. Varga believes they have enough banners and what they would use for the Arbor Day celebration would work extremely well in his opinion.

Ms. Wetzig asked the Commission about the table centerpieces and inquired if any Members has any ideas or needs any help in that area.

Ms. Englemann advised she is still working out a couple different ideas for the centerpieces, but she is going to get in touch with Ms. Wetzig to discuss it further. She also noted she wished to obtain a table count.

Ms. Wetzig stated they do not have a table count yet. She added she did not know if anyone had any vendors who were willing to sponsor potted plants for the centerpieces. She also noted that the stage setup will be at a later time. She asked Mr. Varga if he was able to talk to the Avon Garden Club regarding possible volunteers. Mr. Varga confirmed they have two Garden Club volunteers for the registration table and noted the volunteers will be Cynthia Murnyack-Czarnecki and Nancy Haas.

Mr. Smith stated with regard to stage setup he spoke with Aaron Jenkins, IT - City of Avon, and Bill Hricovec, Owner, Tom's Country Place, who will meet with him and Mr. Traxler the afternoon prior to set up the screens and noted Mr. Jenkins will help to set up a laptop. Mr. Smith added when he and Mr. Varga were at Tom's Country Place last week they were discussing that with Mr. Hricovec because they are having so many people attend that they would definitely need two projection screens, which is something that Tom's Country Place confirmed they can provide.

Mr. Smith stated Mr. Jenkins and Mr. Hricovec can help to set up a laptop that has the capability to setup up two different projection units. He added Mr. Hricovec stated he could use a splitter to help with the hook up for the projection screens. Mr. Smith advised that he spoke with Ms. Seighman today and she is going to relay that to Mr. Jenkins who will be back in the office tomorrow. He also requested of Ms. Seighman if she could ask Mr. Jenkins about the morning of their program, if Mr. Jenkins could possibly be present in case there are any glitches, for example the first speaker puts in their flash drive and it does not

work. Mr. Smith stated he felt that they needed an IT expert there and noted Ms. Seighman indicated she would ask Mr. Jenkins about his availability, but he will try to talk to him as well.

Ms. Wetzig inquired if their speakers will need to do anything in particular in regards to set up.

Mr. Varga stated he talked to the speakers and they all have PowerPoint presentations and they would have to ensure they are equipped for them to plug in their laptop to access their PowerPoint presentation. Mr. Smith noted they would likely be utilizing the City's laptop and Mr. Varga stated whether they bring their laptop or they have one available, they would have to discuss that further with Mr. Jenkins.

Mr. Smith stated they would want to test everything out ahead of the event and Ms. Wetzig agreed and noted they could set up at Tom's Country Place the evening prior as it does not have an event the night before. She added Tom's Country Place indicated that they will notify them if they get an event for the day before the Tree City USA event as that could change when they could set-up.

Ms. Wetzig stated she sees raffles and door prizes next on the list of discussion but instead would like to discuss sponsors and vendors.

There was some general discussion regarding some potential and committed sponsors/vendors including sponsorship levels as well as updates for which Commission members contacted various businesses and the results of any contact.

Ms. Wetzig asked with respect to giveaways if anyone on the Commission looked at the www.4imprint.com website.

Mr. Boccabella stated he went on the [www.4imprint](http://www.4imprint.com) website and there are lots of options available but believes they need to dial in a price point. He added the website gives a range anywhere from .50 to \$47 each. He looked at some items like pens, for example, which range from .50 to \$1.00, stainless steel travel mugs \$4, mousepads \$2.50, and can koozies \$1.00 to \$1.50. He added they could spend quite a bit of time looking through everything, but unless they know what number they want to spend it does not make sense. Mr. Boccabella asked the Commission if they have a hard number yet on what they want to spend.

Ms. Berges stated they have an estimated number of \$6.00 per person total which includes the giveaway bag. Mr. Boccabella noted the giveaway bag cost about \$2.85 and Ms. Berges confirmed and advised that is an estimate because they do not know the sponsorship levels yet and registrations. She thinks once they have a better idea of how many people will be attending they could increase that number, but the \$6.00 per person is more of a conservative estimate. Mr. Boccabella stated in reviewing the items on the website, the majority of them appear to be that if you order you would receive the item in five days. He added it did not appear to be extended lead time as long as they had some sort of logo, or whatever they decide to imprint onto the item ready to go, that would probably be the bottleneck if anything. Mr. Boccabella advised it appears that the company would turn it around quickly once you get them the information.

Mr. Varga stated at the April meeting they will go through potential website orders in more detail.

Ms. Wetzig inquired if the Commission had any more comments or ideas. She added she preferred the mousepad and pens ideas over the mug option.

Ms. Johnson suggested post-it notes that they could print something on, but she does not know the cost of that.

Ms. Wetzig stated for the post-it notes they could have something tree-shaped on them. She added she believes they are ahead of schedule according to the binder. She noted the binder indicates that by this

time they should have the invitations and agenda completed which they do. She stated Mr. Leiden sent letters to the aspiring tree cities and the invitations were emailed to Mr. Leiden. She advised next month they have to mail confirmation letters to the vendors stating they are looking forward to them coming, and other pertinent information the vendors need.

Mr. Varga stated after talking with Mr. Hricovec at Tom's Country Place he feels pretty comfortable with where they are in the process.

Ms. Wetzig stated she has had vendors ask how much room is available to accommodate certain types of tables such as 6-foot table, etc. Mr. Traxler stated it is a large room and he believes that last year's event was the size of Council Chambers. Mr. Varga added there is plenty of space at Tom's Country Place. Ms. Wetzig noted if they needed more room for vendors they could have the registration in the foyer if needed.

Mr. Varga stated he was thinking about the meeting on May 14, 2025, but stated he believes most of the Tree Commission members will be at Tom's Country Place helping to set up. He wanted to inquire if for that meeting, they should have the Regular meeting on the 14th or move it to another day/time. Mr. Boccabella suggested the meeting could be rescheduled for the week prior on the May 7th. Ms. Wetzig stated they have to get the final count to Tom's Country Place as the deadline is May 6, 2025. Mr. Boccabella stated they can also look into other days/time besides May 7th.

Ms. Wetzig asked if there are any other meetings on the evening of May 7th scheduled in Council Chambers, and Ms. Berges responded yes and advised the Board of Zoning and Appeals meeting is that evening at 7:00 p.m. Ms. Berges noted if they look at the Agenda for Board of Zoning and Appeals it could potentially be done by 7:30 p.m. Ms. Berges advised she believes they would need a motion on the April meeting agenda to change the date of their meeting. Mr. Boccabella also suggested a possibility of the meeting being held on Tuesday, May 6th at 7:00 p.m. or Thursday, May 8th and noted it does not have to be at 7:30 p.m., or on a Wednesday necessarily. Ms. Markovitz offered to look into some options for rescheduling the Tree Commission meeting.

Ms. Wetzig asked for any updates regarding their vocal/musical feature. Mr. Smith advised he spoke with the Avon High School jazz band director Eric Moellman, and he did not say yes or no as it is a difficult time of the year in regards to concerts. Mr. Smith stated Mr. Moellman indicated that he would get back to him. Ms. Wetzig stated she does not know if Ms. Pajak could ask about scheduling a few people such as a trio of jazz instruments or choir group for an hour from about 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m.

Ms. Johnson requested they talk a little more on the door prizes and giveaways, and asked how it would work. Ms. Wetzig stated they have two door prizes, one is three potted pots and the other is a gift card. She noted that Willoway Nurseries indicated they are going to bring some trees as they will have a vendor area. She added the giveaway bag is something they need to discuss further. Ms. Wetzig stated she wanted to try to finalize what the vendors are bringing donation wise, and their names for the name tags.

Mr. Varga asked if they have tickets for the raffle. Ms. Wetzig stated she has tickets leftover from last year, but they also made raffle tickets where they can add information. Mr. Varga noted that would be fine. Ms. Berges stated that Barbara Brooks, Clerk of Council, has them stored in the basement at City Hall with some other Tree Commission items.

MEMBER COMMENTS

Mr. Boccabella stated at Mr. Varga's request he completed the online announcement for the Arbor Day Foundation for the website announcing all the Arbor Day celebrations. He noted it was a lot of information including basic points of dates, event locations, estimated number of attendees, the number of trees

planted as well as an event description which is on the national website. Mr. Boccabella stated on the description it states, "Held annually on the first Saturday in October, the City of Avon and the Tree Commission host its Arbor Day celebration. Last year's events included performances by the Avon High School Band, speech from the Mayor, a petting zoo, live music and food and drinks. In addition, we had an educational scavenger hunt, tree planting demonstrations, as well as several organizations offering valuable information related to tree planting and care. This year's event will offer much of the same and more." Mr. Boccabella noted this was a summary that he put together.

Ms. Wetzig wished to thank everyone for their help and relayed a good job to Ms. Johnson. She added she appreciates everyone's help with planning this event.

Mr. Varga stated he wished to again thank Ms. Johnson with the grant achievement.

AUDIENCE COMMENTS

There were no audience comments.

ADJOURN: 3:25 p.m.

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

The vote was 7 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,
April 9, 2025, at 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Rachel Markovitz, Assistant Clerk of Council