

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Avon Tree Commission
Held in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Building
On Wednesday, April 12, 2023
At 7:30 P.M.**

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

PRESENT:

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

CORRESPONDENCE

Ms. Berges stated that they received a note from Kate Webb, congratulating them on achieving the designation of Tree City USA.

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE AVON TREE COMMISSION HELD WEDNESDAY, MARCH 8, 2023

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, March 8, 2023, and to approve said minutes as published, and the vote was: Ms. Berges, “yes”; Mr. Boccabella, “yes”; Ms. Laurenzi, “yes”; Mr. Smith, “yes”; Mr. Traxler, “yes”; Ms. Wetzig, “yes”; Mr. Moore, “yes”.

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

UPDATE ON ATTENDING THE TREE ACADEMY – Ms. Berges

Ms. Berges stated that, based on Mr. Varga’s recommendation, she attended the freshman class of the Tree Academy in Fairview Park at the end of March. It was put on by the Ohio Dept. of Natural Resources, Division of Forestry, and the instructor was Stephanie Miller, who was here at one of our early meetings when she was filling in as the Urban Forester. There is a series of four classes in the Academy: freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior, and they are intended to be completed in one year. Each class is 10 hours in duration over two days. There will be another freshman class held in Euclid that Mr. Varga was able to get into and then the sophomore class is going to be sometime in June.

Ms. Berges said that there were 24 participants in her class; it was a full class with a diverse group of people. Matt Leiden, who is now our Regional Urban Forester, was there so it gave her a chance to meet him. In the first session of this freshman class, they had classes on ordinances, tree biology and its significance, introduction to urban forestry, marketing urban forestry, and scheduling.

Ms. Berges then gave some highlights of the classes: with tree ordinances, it was recommended that we leave out standards or specifications that could change and one example that they gave was the recommended tree list and the prohibited tree list because that could be changing and you do not want to have to go back to Council every time you need to change the list. What they said was that your ordinance can say that the City shall maintain a list of recommended trees or prohibited trees. Negligent failure was discussed: the City’s responsibility for looking for predictable failures. They gave an example of something that happened in Toledo. There were tree roots that were cut when they were installing a

sidewalk and that caused this huge tree to fall over and it killed a mother and her two children. The City was liable for that because they had inspectors who inspected the sidewalk and did not say anything about the tree and so they were found to be negligent. So maybe there are opportunities for our City Arborist to get involved in those kinds of situations. There was also the recommendation to not let residents plant trees in tree lawns because residents do not always know how to take care of trees or they may not plant the right tree or the developer may not plant the right tree in the right spot. So the Academy recommended that residents get permits from the City before planting or trimming tree lawn trees and the permits do not have to cost anything. There is a city in Ohio where the developer pays the City \$1,500 per tree that they want to plant and the City keeps that fund and then the City has the responsibility for planting the trees in the tree lawn and then maintaining them for a period of 10-15 years. Apparently the developers are happy because they do not have to mess with planting trees.

Ms. Berges said that they also emphasized tree diversity, very much in line with what Mr. Varga discussed at our last meeting and went into reasons for diversity which again we had discussed at our last meeting. In the scheduling part, they distributed the City of Waterville's Tree Commission's Strategic Plan which Mr. Varga had already distributed to us. And then for marketing and communication plans, it was advised to consider your audiences and to craft your messages to those specific audiences. It does not have to be the same message for everyone; you want to know what their values are, what they are looking for, what you want the outcomes to be and how you are going to measure those outcomes so you know whether or not you have achieved them.

Ms. Berges concluded, so that is a summary of an hour's worth of the Tree Commission Academy.

DISCUSSION OF AMENDING THE TREE ORDINANCE NO. 90-21 – Mr. Varga

Mr. Varga stated that he and Mr. Moore were at the Avon Garden Club meeting and there was a lot of discussion from the members about the developers taking down trees and wooded areas, trying to protect trees, tree preservation and buffer zones, etc. So he and Mr. Moore felt it would be a good idea to have these issues included in our ordinance. Mr. Varga said that he went through ordinances from all the cities around us and pulled out certain ones that pertained to what we were talking about and he highlighted them for everybody to look at. He asked Clerk of Council Barb Brooks to email this information to everybody. Law Director John Gasior will have to look this over with us also to get the right verbiage down to amend the Ordinance. And so what he and Mr. Moore thought they would do is to send this out to everybody to look at and if anybody has any questions about what is highlighted, or would like to add or subtract something, that would be the time to look at that. Then he and Mr. Moore and anybody else who would like, can meet with Mr. Gasior and formulate an amendment. Then everybody could look at it again and then we would have to present it to Council.

Mr. Varga said that if you look at the original Ordinance No. 90-21, Section 1028.21 in Exhibit A, says "Master Tree Plan" and that is part of being a Tree City USA, so that is another thing that we have to start working on as a Tree Commission. Mr. Varga said that he has looked at tree plans throughout different cities and thinks that we will be able to do this without too much difficulty. But what he was thinking about doing also was having a meeting with Stephanie Miller and Matt Leiden, the new Urban Forester, and the Mayor. He said that Ms. Miller and Mr. Leiden will tell us more specifically what we need to be doing and focusing on as a Tree City USA because we need to maintain this designation. Ms. Berges went to the Tree Academy and that was part of maintaining it and part of it is to have a Master Tree Plan. As he said, he has looked at other cities so he has a good concept about doing that but Ms. Miller and Mr. Leiden can guide us on how to proceed in establishing that Plan and also explain what else we need to be

focusing on so everybody on the Tree Commission will have a better concept of what we really need to do to go forward as a Tree City USA.

Mr. Moore suggested having Ms. Miller and Mr. Leiden come to a meeting here. He said that if Mr. Varga could arrange that for the next meeting, that would be great.

Mr. Boccabella asked Mr. Varga for an example of a couple points that have to be addressed in the Master Tree Plan. Mr. Varga said one would be the tree canopy and there is a lot of software out there that he can use to tell us how much living canopy we have and how many impervious things are out there such as roads, rooftops, and buildings. So he can evaluate all that and come up with that percentage. The other thing they want to have is a detailed plan of what trees we have planted in the City. Basically it is an inventory of trees so that when developers do plant or we have to replace all the Bradford pears, we have a plan in place of what trees we are going to be planting where.

Mr. Moore stated that there is a lot of talk about the diversity and he understands the reason for diversity but in his opinion, he thinks we should be careful about boxing streets into having diversity. If a street wants to have the same trees, it should be their option to do so. He thinks that we are going to hit on having a lot of diversity in trees throughout the City as a whole opposed to on a street. For example, on his Kensington Street, he likes the look of the same trees so he is just tossing that out for discussion.

Ms. Berges said there may be ways to have that and still have diversity. It is possible that on your street you have the same trees down the street but maybe the next block over or across the street, there is a similar tree, not the exact same one but a similar one. Because when you look at where trees were completely wiped out by disease or they just were never the right trees for tree lawns and you start seeing them die away, that is not a good look either, so she thinks the idea is to understand that people like that look of the same trees but how do we still get the diversity that needs to be there as well.

Mr. Moore said that he thought that the trees that are dying on the tree lawns are Bradford pears and we are banning those, unless there are other trees on tree lawns that are dying and are not Bradford pears.

Ms. Wetzig said that she also thought what Ms. Berges was saying was that in the future maybe it will be a different tree that will be a problem.

Ms. Laurenzi noted that when you come down Wyndemere, there is one type of tree and then on Kensington there is another and on Waterford there are the pears, so there is diversity there; it can still be done by street.

Mr. Varga said, yes, but on Wyndemere, you have all these wonderful locust trees on the tree lawn which are way out of proportion; they are 60 ft. tall and we have had complaints about them lifting up the sidewalks. That is an example of a tree that is not good to plant in the tree lawns. And that is why we want to have a plan also so we know that a particular species will adapt to a particular environment and also not cause any structural damage. The other thing is we have to remember is that we are here as an educational group also; we are not here to dictate the planting of trees. We are just here to recommend. So if we start a tree plan, then we can show what trees we are thinking about and plot out where we would plant them and discuss it.

Ms. Laurenzi asked how we find out what we already have planted, what the diversity of trees is in Avon. Mr. Varga answered that he has to do an inventory. Ms. Laurenzi said that she guessed that if we get an idea of what our canopy is and what we want it to be, what types of trees that we have and the diversity we are looking for, we could have new neighborhoods going into the City and we could be recommending the trees for planting on the tree lawns.

Mr. Varga asked about the idea of the builder putting money into a fund for planting trees. The reason he is asking is because Willoway Nursery was very interested in planting trees in the City. The Mayor has told him that Tom Demaline, the owner of Willoway Nursery, has called him and wanted to move forward but there is a lot involved with that.

Ms. Laurenzi said that is a great idea that Willoway is willing to plant the trees. Mr. Varga said, yes, and if we are working with a local nursery, that is a win-win. A local nursery and local trees and Willoway said they would supply the gator bags for watering them. And this is exactly what the Tree Academy was saying was that the contractor should have somebody planting the trees, and who better to do that than an actual nursery. As a Tree Commission this is something we want to think about down the road. The developers could leave it up to us and we have a Master Tree Plan and then we just work with Willoway and it is a win-win for everybody..

Mr. Moore said, so what he would like to do with the amendments to the Ordinance No. 90-21 is, if anybody has anything they want to see in the Ordinance, we would take that to the Law Director to have him hammer out the language, then come back to the Tree Commission and vote on adding the amendments.

Ms. Berges said that she would just like some clarification. So unless you hear something else from this body, you would propose taking all the areas highlighted by Mr. Varga to Law Director John Gasior for review. Mr. Varga stated that the highlighted areas were basically considerations for wooded areas and then protection and management and the overall tree plan for the builder. And the other thing he put in there was a minimum tree standard which kind of helps to develop our canopy so we know how many trees we need to plant in certain areas to establish our canopy. Mr. Smith said that he agrees that everything that Mr. Varga highlighted should be in our tree ordinance. All that information is pertinent to what we are doing. Ms. Berges stated that she would say that some of it should be included and that is why we are going to have John Gasior look at it. It is probably going to be in the Planning Code and Mr. Varga said, yes, Planning Coordinator Pam Fechter has to be involved in this. He said so we will proceed; we will work with Mr. Gasior to make to make sure the verbiage is right and then we will put something together and then show everybody on the Tree Commission. If everybody agrees on it, then we can go to City Council. Mr. Varga said that a big concern at the Garden Club was all the trees that were being taken down by developers so that needs to be addressed in the Ordinance.

DISCUSSION OF THE 2023 ARBOR DAY CELEBRATION – Ms. Laurenzi

Ms. Laurenzi said that she just wanted to wrap up a few of the details on Arbor Day, and to finalize the agenda sheet and the donation sheet. She confirmed with everyone that the hours for Arbor Day would be 11:0 A.M. – 2:00 P.M. She said that she will put together a sheet and next month will have everybody sign up for what they wanted to do. So we will get some things like that started in May and then start working on some sponsors, donations, and things like that and what we want to do for flyers. And she know Mr. Varga wants to talk about the banner, which she thinks is a great idea.

Mr. Smith asked Mr. Varga if Recreation Coordinator Clare Harasimchuck is aware that we are having Arbor Day on Saturday, October 7th? Mr. Varga said, yes, he had talked to her and clarified that. She just indicated that we had to fill out some permit and he has not received that yet. He believed it had something to do with selling beer. Mr. Smith said that he did not recall filling out any form last year but he will talk with Ms. Harasimchuck. Mr. Varga stated that the date for Arbor Day has been set and Council approved it so it is all good to go. And he thinks that 11:30 A.M. is a good start time because if we have a food truck there then people hang around for lunch and they might stay a little bit longer and get more involved.

Mr. Smith stated that his friend, Curt Vigg, did the Neil Young tribute last year and he said he would love to come back and play this year. He did not even accept money to play last year; he just wanted to do it. If the Tree Commission would like, he will book him again because he is somebody you have to book months ahead because he has a band and is playing every weekend. So the Commission can think about it and let him know at the next meeting if they want him to get him back. Ms. Laurenzi said she thought it is a good idea to have Mr. Vigg return and they can vote on it next month.

MEMBER COMMENTS

Ms. Berges said that in regard to the banner, she had asked Clerk of Council Barb Brooks to email pictures of a proposed banner and she knows that Mr. Varga was working on something too. She realized that the pictures she sent were pretty rough; they did not have the full verbiage that should be on the banner but her thought was to send something out and have them think about what they want the banner to look like. What we want it to say, etc. She asked if anyone had any thoughts about what was sent out? Both Mr. Smith and Ms. Laurenzi said that they liked the second picture: the green tree with roots that looks like a circle. Ms. Laurenzi said that maybe they could do a combination with the banner Mr. Varga brought. She said she likes the Avon eagle on the banner and we definitely need to put "Tree City USA" on it. Mr. Moore suggested putting discussion of the banner on the agenda of their next meeting and they could come with renditions that they like or an idea.

Ms. Berges noted that Linda Heiden had sent them a letter and some articles and she just wanted to let the Commission know that Ms. Heiden has continued her interest in articles about trees and continues to pass them along to her. So once we have the email for the Tree Commission set up then Ms. Berges can give Ms. Heiden that email and then everybody can get those articles from her. There have been a lot of articles in the newspaper recently about tree canopies and the fact that the more trees you have does have an impact on violence. Ms. Berges said she just wanted to acknowledge the fact that Ms. Heiden is very interested.

Mr. Smith said that they mentioned the beer permit and he was thinking that the money made at the beer tent was donated to the Leo Club (the youth group of the Lions Club). He asked Mr. Boccabella, who was a long-time member of the Lions Club, what some of the groups or organizations were that the Lions Club donates to. Mr. Boccabella stated that the Lions Club is a service organization so they will have fund raisers and then that money goes to two \$2,000 scholarships at Avon High School every year and then some of the other donations went to organizations at Christmastime and at Thanksgiving, and to individuals in need, more to individuals in need than to organizations. Mr. Smith said that he would like to stick with the Lions Club for the beer tent because they are adept at dealing with the State beer requirements. Doug Wetzig of the Lions Club did a great job with the application last year. Mr. Smith said that he knows that the Lions Club donates a lot of money to people in need and he would like to keep the Lions Club in charge of the beer tent and let them donate the money that is made as they please. Ms.

Wetzig stated that the Leo Club really helped with the scavenger hunt as well as other activities. Mr. Smith said that it would be great to have them involved every year because it gets young people out volunteering to do something, which is great. So he said again that he would like to stick with the Lions Club because they get the job done and they do it well.

Ms. Wetzig asked Mr. Varga if he had gotten the video out yet and Mr. Varga said, yes, it was up and running and he believed it could be seen on You Tube and was supposed to be on the City website.

ADJOURN

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: Mr. Boccabella, "yes"; Ms. Laurenzi, "yes"; Mr. Smith, "yes"; Mr. Traxler, "yes"; Ms. Wetzig, "yes"; Ms. Berges, "yes"; Mr. Moore, "yes".

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

Transcribed by Gail Hayden, Assistant Clerk of Council