

**Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Avon Tree Commission
Held in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Building
On Wednesday, June 11, 2025
At 7:30 p.m.**

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; John Traxler; Liesa Wetzig; Chair, Richard Varga (non-voting Member).

Others in Attendance: Barbara Brooks, Clerk of Council

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE AVON TREE COMMISSION HELD
WEDNESDAY, MAY 7, 2025**

A motion was made by Mr. Smith and seconded by Ms. Johnson to dispense with the reading of the minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Avon Tree Commission held Wednesday, May 7, 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.

DISCUSSION OF THE 2025 ARBOR DAY EVENT, SATURDAY, OCTOBER 4, 2025

Mr. Varga

Mr. Varga stated that we are going to basically follow last year’s Arbor Day celebration, and he has a spreadsheet that he is going to send out to everyone just as a reminder. We will have give-away items again and the nice thing is that we still have give-away items from our Tree City USA Awards dinner so that is going to work out really nice. We have to have somebody again to get involved with the advertising and we have to go over the sponsors. Mr. Varga said that he has a list of the sponsors from last year and he knows that some of them are going to be sponsoring again. We also have to think about the set-ups, the tents and tables, etc. We have our list from last year and we will probably just go with the same. Mr. Boccabella said, yes, there is no problem with keeping it all the same.

Mr. Smith said that he is still lobbying for a tent for the speakers and possibly the choir and band. Two years ago we lucked out; the choir performed and right when they got done, it started raining and rained the rest of the day. We have lucked out for three years and have gotten through everything. Last year we had the jazz band from the High School but if it had rained, they could not have played. So, Mr. Smith stated, he really would like another tent just in case because the rain will stop everything if we do not have a tent.

Mr. Varga agreed that another tent is a good idea and he asked Mr. Smith if he had talked with the High School yet about having the jazz band again this year. Mr. Smith responded that this year he is going to invite both the jazz band and the choir. Last year the choir did not come because the director was at a wedding but he said he would be there this year and the jazz band director said he would like to come back. Mr. Smith said he would like to bring them all back if possible and Mr. Varga thought that would be a great idea. Mr. Smith added that he will contact them in August by email and they then reply.

Mr. Varga noted that we have to start thinking about the scavenger hunt again and also the tree planting. He felt that last year the tree planting worked out to be extremely informative so he thought we can do that basically the same way.

Mr. Varga asked about the food for Arbor Day and Mr. Smith said that the Big Top Brew House (formerly ZZ's Big Top) is going to provide the food and the beer. Mr. Varga then asked about music and Mr. Smith responded that he will have Curt Vigg lined up. Mr. Varga asked about the petting zoo and Mr. Smith said that he has that lined up as well.

Ms. Wetzig stated that she and Mr. Traxler will do the scavenger hunt again.

Mr. Varga noted that, as he said, he will send out the checklist for everybody to review and next month we will then really start looking at this and figuring out how we are going to approach the sponsors and everything.

Ms. Johnson stated that she would like to add the following item to an agenda sometime: "Education on how to use the bike repair stand that the Lorain County Public Health Grant will be funding." This bike repair stand will be installed near the area where we are celebrating Arbor Day and as a part of the grant proposal, we included in there that we would provide education to the community on how to use the stand. So it rolls right in with Arbor Day and there would be a captive audience and would give people the chance to learn how to use the tools that are on that bike repair stand. Mr. Varga said, yes, he will put that on the agenda.

Mr. Varga asked if there were any other comments about Arbor Day, and Mr. Smith stated that we were discussing printing up generic yard signs for Arbor Day, just stating that Arbor Day is the first Saturday in October by Every Child's Playground and listing some of the activities that will take place, such as tree planting, live music, scavenger hunt, Story Book walk, etc. We would put those signs at all the parks in Avon and by the library and by the schools at least a month before Arbor Day to really advertise it and we can re-use those signs every year. Mr. Smith said he was sure we can get the City to get those signs.

Mr. Varga said, if he remembered, the beer is going to be supplied in a keg, and Mr. Smith confirmed that, yes, it would be, and he can handle that because we did that the first year. Ms. Johnson asked if we had a vendor for the yard signs or does anyone know where we would get the signs. Ms. Berges said that the City does use a printer in Elyria and they do yard signs. She added that this is a good time to remind everybody that we need a purchase order if we are going to purchase something, anything that is done through the City. We do not want to have anyone purchase something and then have to reimburse them. That does not go well with the auditors but yes, we can definitely do the yard signs for the City.

DISCUSSION OF RECOMMENDING ESTABLISHING A TRAXLER ARBORETUM COMMITTEE

Mr. Varga

Mr. Varga asked Ms. Berges to talk about this item and Ms. Berges said that over the last few months there have been a lot of questions asked about what is going on with the Traxler property. And in talking with the Mayor, it was decided that we should have a separate committee, a Traxler Arboretum Development Committee, comprised of various individuals to talk about the Traxler property and look at developing a plan for the property: what we want in there, how do we want it to look, are we going to have a Visitors Center, who is going to staff it, etc. There are just a lot of pieces to this project; it is very large and we just need to get moving on it. So the idea is to have the committee. We will take minutes of the meetings and we will announce the meetings because they will be public meetings but the idea is not to have set days and times for meetings but keep it flexible as needed because there is just a lot of work to be done. So that is the general idea.

Mr. Varga stated that we want to get a great group of people involved in this committee, so we will ask members of the Avon Garden Club, the French Creek Foundation, the Senior Center, students at the High School, etc. if they have interest in becoming part of this. We need a great group of people involved because

there is quite a bit to be developing this into a good, functional arboretum. We have already started some of it; we have a checklist and we also have a mission statement set up for the arboretum. But there has been no organizational incentive to try to move this forward. This all started because Willoway called the Parks Department and said they had several native fruit trees that they would like to donate to the arboretum. That was fine but we really had no plan of where to plant the trees, how we were going to get water to them, or how we were going to take care of them. That is when we said, we really have to start thinking about the arboretum. And this way, when we develop a plan and we have a mission statement, we can go to different people like the owners of Crushers Stadium, who are really involved in horticulture, and ask for their opinions about our ideas.

DISCUSSION OF RECOMMENDING ADDING ANOTHER STUDENT MEMBER TO THE TREE COMMISSION

Mr. Varga

Mr. Smith stated that Olivia Pajak is now officially a high school senior and what he and Ms. Berges, and Mr. Varga have talked about is that we want to have a junior following her so every year when the senior graduates, there is someone who has been on the Commission, too, and has been mentored by the senior.

Mr. Smith said that Ms. Berges gave him information about the Tree Campus program and he has made copies for everyone. The Arbor Day Foundation granted Avon the status of a Tree City USA. Well, the Arbor Day Foundation also grants the status of Tree Campus to schools. He knows that we want to work with the youth in Avon in the schools to get them involved with the trees and this would be a great way to do it. Olivia has been designated as doing this project and he will be her mentor working on this. Mr. Smith said that he wants both of them to meet with the principal of Avon High School and talk with her about this and then go from there with the staff at Avon High and work on this. This will be somewhat in the summer and then picking up when school is starting. Council will have to approve an Ordinance to add another student but that should not be a problem. So we will always have two students and we are going to work on this Tree Campus designation for Avon High School. Basically, to get designated, you have lessons, indoors and outdoors, dealing with trees and we want to utilize the Traxler Family Arboretum because it is right there by the High School.

A motion was made by Mr. Smith and seconded by Ms. Berges to recommend to City Council the addition of another student member to the Tree Commission, 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.

REPORTS AND COMMENTS

Ms. Berges noted that the Tree City USA Awards event was very well done. There was lots of positive feedback at City Hall from the Mayor and from our Council person, Dennis McBride, who was at the event. She said that all she heard that Thursday afternoon from people who did not attend was that they were told by other people about how great the event was. So, well done, everyone!

Mr. Smith said that he just wanted to thank everyone who helped with the Tree City USA Awards event. It was just awesome.

Mr. Traxler stated that this is the first year with a student and Olivia has done everything that we have asked her to do, but he thought that we need to define the responsibilities of the new student. He said that he was excited with all that we can do with the arboretum as far as education about the maintenance of trees, identification, and learning.

Ms. Wetzig said that she wanted to thank everybody for their work for the Tree City USA awards. She stated that Ms. Berges has the budget on that if a report is requested. We had a good showing, and lots of drawings, and some people donated to the City the trees that they won. We ended up with seven trees which are now planted. Ms. Wetzig said that Mr. Smith has some good ideas for a numbering system for drawings and it would come in handy for anything that we do. She thought that everything went well and we had very good comments. Ms. Wetzig said, also, that she likes the fact that we are moving along with the Traxler Arboretum and loves the idea of keeping a high school student coming and rotating.

Mr. Varga stated he has gotten calls from several cities and everybody has just raved about the great job we did for the Tree City USA Awards event. Also, Urban Forester Matt Leiden wants to meet with us to go over the final assessment of the Tree City USA Awards and he will let Mr. Varga know when he sets a date for that. Mr. Varga thought that everything went extremely well at the Awards event and we had nothing but positive comments from everybody.

AUDIENCE:

There were no audience comments.

ADJOURN: 7:57 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”; 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, July 9, 2025, at 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Gail Hayden, Interim Assistant Clerk of Council

PASSED: _____

SIGNED BY: _____
Rick Varga, Chair

ATTEST:

Barbara Brooks, Clerk of Council