

**Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Avon Tree Commission
Held in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Building
On Wednesday, August 12, 2026
At 7:30 p.m.**

The Chairman Mr. Varga, called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

PRESENT:

Commission Members: Mary Berges; Alex Boccabella; Mary Johnson; Collin O'Donnell (non-voting Student Member); Matt Smith; John Traxler; Liesa Wetzig; Chair, Richard Varga (non-voting Member).

Others in Attendance: Anne Kish, Assistant Clerk of Council

Absent - Olivia Pajak (non-voting Student Member); John Gasior, Law Director

ADDITIONS AND DELITIONS TO THE AGENDA

A motion was made by Ms. Berges and seconded by Ms. Johnson to add two items to the agenda: (1) Discussion of the Commission's Facebook page content, and (2) Discussion of the application process for appointing a replacement for the vacancy, and the vote was: Ms. Berges, "yes"; Mr. Boccabella, "yes"; Ms. Johnson, "yes"; Mr. Smith, "yes"; Mr. Traxler, "yes"; Ms. Wetzig, "yes".

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

A motion was made by Ms. Wetzig and seconded by Ms. Johnson to accept the agenda as amended, and the vote was: Ms. Johnson, "yes"; Mr. Smith, "yes"; Mr. Traxler, "yes"; Ms. Wetzig, "yes"; Ms. Berges, "yes"; Mr. Boccabella, "yes".

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

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE AVON TREE COMMISSION HELD
WEDNESDAY, JULY 8, 2026**

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, July 8, 2026, and to approve said minutes as published, and the vote was: Mr. Boccabella, "yes"; Ms. Johnson, "yes"; Mr. Smith, "yes"; Mr. Traxler, "yes"; Ms. Wetzig, "yes"; Ms. Berges, "yes".

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

UPDATE ON ARBOR DAY 2026

Mr. Varga

Mr. Varga reported that the event permit had been received and all rental cost information had been compiled, allowing the Commission to proceed with Arbor Day planning. Discussion turned to several logistical matters.

Regarding the scavenger hunt, planning is ongoing with prizes still to be determined, including consideration of an age-based category breakdown, to be finalized at the next meeting. Ms. Berges raised a concern that the event flyer advertises both tree planting and pruning demonstrations, but only planting appeared on the planning worksheet. Mr. Varga clarified that pruning materials are always available at the event and suggested a sign-up sheet be used to gauge interest, noting that proper pruning technique is rarely

understood by the general public or even many landscaping companies. He emphasized the importance of educating residents on why topping a tree is harmful to its health.

The Commission discussed temporary tattoos as an activity for attendees. With the previously assigned volunteer no longer available, it was suggested that two Leo Club members be recruited to manage that table. Regarding event signage, it was agreed that yard signs should be distributed approximately one month prior to the event. The Commission agreed to bring all signs to the September 9th meeting for distribution. Ms. Kish confirmed that 100 Arbor Day flyers had been printed and were available for members to take and distribute. Mr. Varga noted that the Commission's supplies and plaques have been relocated to the new City Hall.

UPDATE ON THE ISA CONFERENCE

Mr. Varga

Mr. Varga reported on his attendance at the ISA Conference in Detroit, Michigan. He purchased two children's books for potential use at Arbor Day, priced at \$13 and \$12 respectively, and noted that the vendor offers bulk discounts. He indicated that the Dr. Seuss-style book was the vendor's most popular title and recommended it over the other option, as it covers the physiological aspects of trees rather than simply telling a story. Members were encouraged to review both books before the next meeting to reach a consensus on which to order. The Commission also discussed re-ordering tree-planting pamphlets, which are available at \$12 per 100, pending an inventory of current stock.

Mr. Varga shared several highlights from the conference. He noted that arborists at the conference expressed reservations about crabapple trees due to disease susceptibility and the mess caused by falling berries. The most strongly recommended species for planting by conference arborists was the oak tree, citing its geographic diversity across nearly all U.S. states and the availability of numerous cultivars. Mr. Varga also reported on an Oregon State University research presentation demonstrating that 7-gallon container trees caught up in size to 20-gallon container trees within 3 to 4 years, leading researchers to advocate for planting smaller, less expensive trees as a cost-effective strategy for municipalities. He noted that loosening the root system at planting was found to have the greatest impact on growth rate, more so than soil amendments.

UPDATE ON THE TREE INVENTORY PROJECT

Mr. O'Donnell

Mr. O'Donnell reported that the inventory right now is focused on the area east of NagEL Road, beginning at the southernmost point below I-90. Approximately 650 trees have been catalogued to date. Mr. O'Donnell noted that Bradford Pear trees appear to account for over half of the trees recorded, which prompted discussion about the importance of species diversification. Mr. Varga drew a parallel to the Dutch Elm Disease crisis, which devastated city tree canopies across the U.S. because of over-reliance on a single species. He indicated that the two most prevalent species observed in Avon's inventory are pears and crabapples. Mr. Varga also presented Mr. O'Donnell with a book on tree inventories obtained at the ISA Conference.

DISCUSSION OF THE COMMISSION'S FACEBOOK PAGE CONTENT

Ms. Berges

Ms. Berges presented a proposed list of educational topics for the Commission's Facebook page, including mulching, watering, gator bags, deer guards, suckers, pruning, insects, native tree profiles, and the i-Tree platform, which provides a dollar-value analysis of individual tree benefits. Mr. Varga added that AI tools such as ChatGPT have proven useful for tree diagnostics. Mr. O'Donnell suggested adding content about invasive species. The Commission agreed to prioritize topics of planting, soils, and pruning before moving to more specialized subjects such as entomology or specific pest threats like Emerald Ash Borer. Mr. Varga

noted that the next step is to meet with Ms. Zalesky, the Mayor's Administrative Assistant, to set up the Commission's dedicated Facebook page.

DISCUSSION OF THE APPLICATION PROCESS FOR THE VACANCY

Ms. Berges

Ms. Berges discussed the application process to fill the vacancy. The application is posted on the Tree Commission page of the City website. The Commission agreed that completed applications should be returned to Clerk of Council, Ms. Brooks, to be compiled and distributed to members. A deadline of September 4th was set for applications, with the goal of having candidates attend the September 9th meeting. It was noted that following the Commission's selection, the appointment must go to the Mayor and Council for approval, with a target date of October 14th for final appointment.

REPORTS AND COMMENTS

Ms. Berges reported that the new City Hall will hold an open house on August 22nd from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM. The City will use the Commission's Arbor Day tote bags as giveaway containers and will distribute flyers containing Arbor Day event information to all attendees. The City has committed to replenishing the bags so that an adequate supply remains available for Arbor Day.

Mr. Boccabella had no comments.

Ms. Johnson reported that she has been working on updating the PowerPoint presentation that is currently posted on the Commission's web page.

Mr. O'Donnell reported that he visited Every Child's Playground while scouting locations for the scavenger hunt and observed a Tree of Heaven, an invasive species, in the nature walk area. He suggested that the Commission's Facebook page include educational content about invasive species in addition to native trees—a suggestion well received by the Commission. Mr. O'Donnell also reported on his efforts to distribute Arbor Day flyers, visiting the library, a local business, and the Post Office to request that flyers be displayed. A brief discussion ensued about whether the event's nonprofit status would satisfy the library's posting requirements, with the consensus being that as a City entity the Commission does not generate revenue and the matter was unlikely to be a concern. Mr. Varga added that he would coordinate with the City Water Department to have the Arbor Day date included on water bills, as was done in a prior year.

Ms. Pajak was absent.

Mr. Smith had no comments.

Mr. Traxler had no comments.

Ms. Wetzig had no comments.

Mr. Varga noted that he had received information from the Mayor's Administrative Assistant regarding an Illuminating Company program offering free small oak tree saplings. Given the difficulty of maintaining small transplants in public spaces, he suggested the SAVE Club at Avon High School might be an appropriate partner to grow and tend the trees on school grounds. He indicated that Mr. O'Donnell would look into this. The application deadline for the program is September 4th, with tree pickup on October 8th. Ms. Berges noted that the program requires the applicant to be a municipality, and the Commission agreed to coordinate through the Mayor's office to resolve any eligibility questions.

AUDIENCE:

There were no comments from the audience.

ADJOURN: 8:14 p.m.

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

The vote was 6 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, September 9, 2026, at 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Anne Kish, Assistant Clerk of Council

PASSED: _____

SIGNED BY: _____
Rick Varga, Chair

ATTEST:

Anne Kish, Assistant Clerk of Council