

**Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Avon Tree Commission
Held in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Building
On Wednesday, August 13, 2025
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; Matt Smith; John Traxler; Liesa Wetzig; Chair, Richard Varga (non-voting Member).

Others in Attendance: Barbara Brooks, Clerk of Council; Anne Kish, Assistant Clerk of Council

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

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE AVON TREE COMMISSION HELD
WEDNESDAY, JULY 9, 2025**

A motion was made by Ms. Wetzig 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 9, 2025, and to approve said minutes as published, 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.

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

Mr. Varga

The Chair, Mr. Varga led a detailed discussion about planning for the upcoming Arbor Day event scheduled for Saturday, October 4, 2025. The Commission reviewed specific responsibilities for the event, beginning with the opening ceremony which Mr. Varga agreed to lead.

Ms. Johnson volunteered to manage the Welcome table, which would include giveaway items and various pamphlets. The Commission discussed how items would be displayed, agreeing that rather than pre-assembling bags, they would lay items out on the table to allow visitors to take what they wanted. Ms. Brooks confirmed that some of these items are currently stored at City Hall.

The Commission reviewed the event flyer and discussed potential changes. It was decided to remove "airbrush" from the temporary tattoo description, as they would use simple decals as they did the previous year. Ms. Berges agreed to order the tattoo decals again, noting they had some leftover from last year featuring woodland animals and trees. Mr. Smith mentioned a preference for using tattoo decals over airbrush options, to avoid the complexity and mess associated with painting the kids. The Commission discussed how Leo members might help with applying tattoos, with Ms. Wetzig suggesting they involve them to assist with this activity to ensure it proceeds smoothly. Additionally, Mr. Varga mentioned that they were attempting to confirm Representative Gayle Manning's participation in the event. Although she previously expressed interest, her attendance was still subject to confirmation based on her schedule, and efforts were ongoing to secure her involvement.

For promotional materials, the Commission noted that Ms. Englemann had previously handled newspaper ads, school notifications, and social media announcements. Mr. Varga indicated he would contact Ms. Englemann to determine her availability.

Mr. Boccabella and Mr. Smith volunteered to arrange for yard signs. They discussed creating signs with clear, concise information about the event date and time. The conversation included ideas on effective

wording to ensure that passersby could quickly and easily understand the information. Mr. Smith proposed keeping the message brief to enable readability from a distance, suggesting the sign include just the key details, such as "Arbor Day, First Saturday in October, 11 to 2, Every Child's Playground." Ms. Berges suggested making 25 signs because 50 is a lot. These signs are intended to be placed strategically at various schools, parks, and other important locations throughout Avon, making sure not to place them in right-of-ways to comply with City Regulations. Ms. Berges, who had experience with past events, advised on the importance of the signs being easy to read at a glance, sharing her own challenges with reading dense signs while driving by. The Commission considered using Jet Signs, a local print shop, based on past successful collaborations, and discussed the possibility of reusing generic parts of previous banners to conserve resources. Mr. Boccabella assured the Commission that they would have these signs produced and placed in the coming weeks to maximize visibility leading up to the event.

The Commission reviewed sponsorships and donations for raffle prizes. Mr. Varga reported that several businesses had already committed, including, Bob-o-Link Golf Course, Heinen's, Rays Auto, Pickering Hill Farms, Site One, Taylor Rental, X Golf, and Big Top Brew House. They also discussed the participation of Lorain County Metro Parks, Lions Club, Avon Public Library, and other supporters. The Commission agreed to conduct the raffle at multiple times: before the entertainment began, and during the intermission around 1:00 PM. However, any contributors to the prizes should be confirmed before being listed on promotional materials, as there were instances in the past where commitments fell through. At the event, plastic signs at the raffle table would list all businesses and organizations that donated prizes, ensuring recognition even if some contributions were finalized after the printing of flyers.

Mr. Traxler confirmed he would handle the Scavenger Hunt, and the discussion ensued about the details related to prize procurement. Ms. Wetzig noted they needed to replenish prizes since many of the previous year's items, such as sidewalk chalk, lip balms, and bubbles, were well-received and added excitement to the hunt. To ensure a successful event, she proposed working with the City to secure purchase orders for these items. Various purchase options were discussed during the meeting. Ms. Berges provided guidance, suggesting that Amazon could be a potential source for the prizes, as the City has an Amazon account that could be utilized. Alternatively, if a local store offered these items, a Purchase Order could be specifically arranged for that store. Ms. Wetzig confirmed she would explore both options while also considering age-appropriate items, especially for the boys, as that had been challenging in the past. Ms. Johnson shared her experience from last year's hunt, affirming that participants seemed to appreciate the diversity of available prizes, which contributed to a successful event. By securing a variety of exciting and suitable prizes, the Avon Tree Commission aimed to make this year's Scavenger Hunt a highlight of the Arbor Day event.

Ms. Johnson provided updates on two demonstrations. For the rain barrel demonstration, she reached out to David Smith from Chagrin Valley Engineering who was expected to confirm his availability within the next week. This demonstration aims to showcase the value and functioning of rain barrels as a sustainable water management solution. It holds potential educational significance for the Community by highlighting how rain barrels can be used to conserve water and manage stormwater runoff. Mr. Traxler discussed the saplings plan, indicating that while they will not distribute individual saplings this year, they plan to provide a demonstration of planting a large tree on the day of the event. Additionally, attendees will have the opportunity to sign up to receive a sapling, with a subsequent demonstration at a later date to ensure proper planting and care techniques are followed, similar to the previous year. It was noted that they would have a limit of 30 trees and there would be only one given to each family that signed up to avoid families getting multiple trees. It was also stipulated that everyone that signs up must be a resident of Avon.

Regarding the bike repair stand, Ms. Johnson explained that the equipment has been ordered and received; however, the installation location has been revised. Initially planned for placement between Every Child's Playground and the pool, it will now be installed near the gazebo on Stoney Ridge Road/ State Route 611. This new spot is more centrally located and visible, offering easier access for cyclists and the Community. Due to this relocation, the Bike Repair Demonstration is anticipated to occur separately from the Arbor Day event. While the demonstration could not align with Arbor Day, Ms. Johnson proposed developing informational materials about the bike stands to be distributed at the event's Welcome table to inform

visitors of its features and location. These efforts aim to raise awareness and engagement regarding the bike repair facilities and encourage community cycling.

Food arrangements were confirmed with Big Top Brewhouse. For beverages, Mr. Smith reported that he was working with Lorain Brewing Company to secure beer donations, noting that they would need approximately three cases. He explained the previous method of acquiring beer, highlighting the fact that Railroad Brewing Company, which had provided beer cans in the past, no longer existed. Avon Brewing Company has now morphed into Lorain Brewing Company at the shipyards, and at present, they only offer beer in traditional 15 and a half gallon kegs. Mr. Smith emphasized that dealing with kegs is more cumbersome, so they were hoping to receive beer in cans.

Mr. Smith mentioned that he had been in contact with Ken Weaver, one of the owners of Lorain Brewing Company, who indicated they would donate beer closer to the event. However, if that is not possible, Mr. Smith expressed willingness to purchase the necessary beer if needed. He explained that in previous years, a legal exchange occurred where the Lions Club would issue a check for the beer cost, ensuring compliance with the Lions Club liquor license stipulations.

The Commission discussed the logistics of beer sales, including the need for permits and staffing. Ms. Johnson pointed out that her husband, the Lions Club president, could help by coordinating Lion members to serve beer, thus ensuring compliance with the legal requirements. It was noted that the fee for the permit, \$40, would typically be reimbursed from the event's proceeds.

Ms. Wetzig suggested that the event's layout could be adjusted to keep water and beverages in close proximity to the food serving area, making it easier for attendees to access refreshments. Mr. Varga acknowledged the practicality of this suggestion, noting that the placement of refreshments could impact attendees' overall experience positively. He expressed willingness to incorporate signage that clearly indicated where free water and cider would be available for ease of navigation and improved awareness among guests. Mr. Smith also offered that if Lorain Brewing Company could not provide beer donations as planned, they could pursue alternative avenues to ensure beer availability for the event.

Mr. Varga mentioned that he had taken the necessary steps to acquire permits for the event, ensuring all activities, including the distribution of refreshments, complied with City Regulations. This also let all the Department Heads as well as the Police and Fire Departments know that the space will be used that day.

Ms. Berges suggested having a program for the children called "Who Lives in a Tree" which is designed for preschool to second-grade children. This interactive and educational experience aims to engage young participants with hands-on activities, exploring the concept of trees as vital habitats for various species. The program includes natural artifacts, music, and games, offering a fun and informative session that could enrich the Arbor Day event's educational dimension. The Commission expressed interest in coordinating this program in conjunction with the day's activities, recognizing its value in fostering environmental awareness and appreciation among the community's youngest members.

DISCUSSION OF A SHADE TREE PLAN

Ms. Berges

Ms. Berges presented a Shade Tree Plan for City parks and sports fields that she and Mr. Varga had developed after visiting all locations. The Plan identified 38 trees needed across various parks, with specific attention to areas lacking shade:

- **Schwartz Road Park:** 6 trees are urgently needed near the bleachers and playground areas to provide shade for spectators and visitors. Currently, these areas are exposed to full sun without any form of cover or respite from the heat, creating discomfort for those who come to watch their children play soccer and baseball. There is also a need for additional trees near the playground to improve the environment for children and their guardians.

- **Little League Field:** Similar to Schwartz Road Park, the bleacher areas are in need of 6 additional shade trees. The current setup does not offer any protection from direct sunlight, making it unpleasant for audience members during practices and games.
- **Soccer Fields and Playgrounds Behind New City Hall:** The fields and playgrounds lack any form of shade, resulting in harsh conditions for both players and spectators. Planting 8 trees here would significantly enhance the usability and comfort of these recreational spaces, particularly during peak sun exposure.
- **Northgate Park:** The playground area at Northgate Park is notably devoid of trees, which are essential to provide shade and improve the play experience for children. Introducing 3 trees would also enhance the aesthetic appeal of the park.
- **Eagle Point Park:** The playground at Eagle Point Park requires the addition of 5 trees not only for aesthetic purposes but also to safeguard children and their families from prolonged sun exposure. This will help create a more inviting environment for recreation.
- **Veterans Memorial Park:** 5 trees are recommended along the walking trail and within the Dog Park. The walking trail currently offers no shade, leaving walkers exposed to direct sunlight during their strolls. Similarly, the Dog Park lacks shade, which can make it uncomfortable for pet owners and their pets during warmer days.
- **Aquatic Center:** 5 shade trees are needed near the picnic tables and the bench by the playground. The current setup has these amenities entirely exposed to sunlight, reducing their appeal and usage during sunny days. Adding trees here would greatly enhance the comfort and overall experience for visitors using these facilities.

Ms. Berges explained that Phase 1 of the plan would involve planting 21 trees this fall using 3-inch caliper trees from Willoway Nursery.

- **Schwartz Road Park:** 6 trees
- **Little League Field:** 6 trees
- **Soccer Fields and Playgrounds Behind New City Hall:** 3 trees
- **Northgate Park:** 3 trees
- **Eagle Point Park:** 1 tree (by playground)
- **Veterans Memorial Park:** 2 trees (dog park and walking path)

She reported that City Council had already appropriated \$15,000 for this purpose. Mr. Varga added that the Parks Department would handle watering and maintenance of the trees.

A motion was made by Mr. Smith and seconded by Ms. Wetzig to recommend a Shade Tree Plan to City Council 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 THE TRAXLER ARBORETUM ADVISORY GROUP

Mr. Varga

Mr. Varga introduced Paul Burik, 37245 Carleen Avenue, a retired architect and Avon resident who had agreed to assist with the Traxler Arboretum design. Mr. Burik introduced himself, noting his 40-year residency in Avon, previous service on the Planning Commission, and role in co-founding the French Creek District.

Mr. Burik expressed enthusiasm about the project and offered to help with the early design stages, creating drawings that could be used for promotional purposes. He shared his vision for the Arboretum, suggesting they take advantage of the property's steep slope to create unique experiences allowing visitors to view trees from different elevations, potentially including a rooftop garden, terrace, or tower that would enable people to see into the tree crowns. He emphasized that most parks only allow experiencing nature at eye level, whereas this design could provide a more three-dimensional experience.

The Commission members expressed excitement about Mr. Burik's ideas, and it was agreed that he, Mr. Varga, and Mr. Traxler would walk the property together to identify opportunities based on the site's unique topography. Mr. Burik requested that Ms. Berges serve as his primary contact for the project.

REPORTS AND COMMENTS

Ms. Berges announced that the student application for the Tree Commission was now available on the City website with an October 1st deadline.

Mr. Boccabella had no comments.

Ms. Engelmann was absent.

Ms. Johnson expressed excitement about the Shade Tree Plan and thanked Ms. Berges for pursuing it through Council.

Ms. Pajak was absent.

Mr. Smith reported that he and Ms. Pajak had met with the principal at Avon High School, Christina Buller, to discuss Ms. Pajak's ideas for making Avon High a designated Tree Campus. They explained to Ms. Buller about the significance of Avon being a Tree City USA and expressed the benefits of having the school be part of the Arbor Day Foundation's program. The principal was highly supportive of the initiative. Ms. Pajak would be pursuing this project through the SAVE (Students of Avon for the Environment) club at the high school, which would help engage students in environmental activities. Mr. Smith noted the importance of collaboration and active participation from the student body to successfully implement the tree campus designation.

Mr. Traxler had no comments.

Ms. Wetzig thanked Mr. Burik for attending and expressed excitement about the Commission's progress.

Mr. Varga mentioned that Willoway Nurseries was having a sale on September 13th from 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM and asked for volunteers to staff a Tree Commission table where they could also promote the Arbor Day event. Mr. Smith and Ms. Wetzig volunteered to help.

AUDIENCE:

There were no comments from the audience.

ADJOURN: 8:26 p.m.

A motion was made by Ms. Johnson and seconded by Mr. Smith to adjourn the Regular Meeting of the Avon Tree Commission, 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.

The Chairman announced that the next meeting of the Avon Tree Commission is
Wednesday, September 10, 2025, 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