

Minutes of the Meeting of the Avon Tree Commission
Held in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Building
On Wednesday, December 11, 2024

The Chairman Rick Varga, called the meeting to order at 7:50 P.M.

PRESENT:

Commission Members: Mary Berges; Alex Boccabella; Ms. Englemann; Mary Johnson; Olivia Pajak, 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 SPECIAL MEETING OF THE AVON TREE COMMISSION HELD WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 29, 2024

A motion was made by Mr. Smith and seconded by Ms. Wetzig to dispense with the reading of the minutes of the Special Meeting of the Avon Tree Commission held Wednesday, October 29, 2024, and to approve said minutes as published, 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.

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE AVON TREE COMMISSION HELD WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 2024

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, November 13, 2024, and to approve said minutes as published, 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.

POWERPOINT PRESENTATION FOR VOICEOVER PROJECT

Mr. Varga

Mr. Varga stated that Mayor Jensen wanted the Commission to post the PowerPoint on the City's website. He added for the Avon Tree Commission PowerPoint, they went through the presentation of a previous meeting and he wanted to confirm that everyone was familiar with the PowerPoint presentation. Mr. Varga indicated that Mayor Jensen believes it is a great idea to have a voiceover for the PowerPoint and have it added to the website. Mr. Varga noted he and Ms. Berges discussed it and approached Aaron Jenkins, IT-City of Avon, to discuss the project. Mr. Varga noted that Mr. Gasior's son Johnny Gasior was doing voiceovers and it is something he has a passion for doing. Mr. Varga advised they contacted Johnny Gasior and he indicated that he would love to do the voiceover, so at this point they are looking for him to work on the voiceover project. He inquired if the Commission had any other recommendations or comments about this project. Mr. Varga stated he wished to keep it in-house and that is their intention with this project.

Mr. Boccabella asked if the voiceover would include talking over the screen. Mr. Varga confirmed that is what they are planning to do and not only what is on the screen, but to also work with Johnny Gasior on each subject in the PowerPoint presentation. Mr. Varga noted he just wanted to make sure before they begin that process that everyone on the Tree Commission understood the plan.

DISCUSSION OF AVON'S TREE CANOPY

Mr. Varga

Mr. Varga advised that part of this discussion includes the evaluation of the tree canopy which they would like to do as far as their Tree City USA designation is concerned. He stated that Bartlett Tree Company performed Bay Village's tree canopy analysis and noted the price was in the range of approximately \$20,000 to \$25,000. He stated that Bartlett Tree Company told him that they have a program called Arbor Net which details how you can go about evaluating your tree canopy. Mr. Varga indicated he spoke with Mr. Jenkins, on another occasion and Mr. Jenkins commented he would try to look into it further as it costs about \$200/year to have this program.

Mr. Varga advised that when in discussions with Mayor Jensen, that possibly Ms. Pajak, our student member, and some of the other students from the high school may want to get involved with this particular project to help evaluate the tree canopy. He added the thought was that there could be potential compensation for them to conduct the evaluation. Mr. Varga added presently that is where they are at in that process. Mr. Varga advised he plans to discuss this soon with Mr. Jenkins to review some options as well as with Ms. Pajak to see if there is anyone she would want to work with or if any other students may be interested in being a part of this project.

Mr. Varga commented he believes this would be a great way to get students involved. He added why have an outside company come in for \$25, 000 when they could probably do this in-house and then everyone can get involved.

Mr. Boccabella inquired if they are trying to determine if they have a healthy canopy or more focused on identifying certain types of trees.

Mr. Varga advised the main aspect is to identify the total canopy cover but most importantly all the species of trees that are in the tree lawns. He added they have copious amounts of Bradford Pears planted in the tree lawns that they are going to have to eventually remove. He noted they have to figure out how many they have. For example, if they have 4,000 Bradford Pears then they can figure out which ones they are going to have replace and with what trees. He added the City of Bay Village evaluated every single tree, where Bay Village can also zoom in and see what tree is on what tree lawn and variety/species it is and that is what the program can do.

Mr. Smith asked about trees that are on private property, if this methodology could just get a percentage of foliage and not identify all the trees?

Mr. Varga confirmed and added that his main concern is just the total canopy so they can evaluate through the years such as if they lost 6% canopy through development, and the developers would have to do something to replenish the canopy. The other reason is that the tree lawn trees are the most important. He added that is what Bay Village has done because tree lawn trees are the city's responsibility in Bay Village. He stated the property owners would need to have to have some type of vision as to what they will plant when they have to remove some of the Bradford Pears or other trees that are too large for the tree lawn such as in Woodmere Estates there are Locust trees that are on the tree lawns that are huge and taking up the sidewalk causing problems and need to be removed and replaced. He added that is why

documenting the tree canopy trees are essential. It is so that people have an idea of what is there and what trees they need to replace which is the idea behind this plan resulting in keeping their tree canopy established and to put the proper trees back in the tree lawns.

Mr. Smith asked what they would purchase from Bartlett Tree Company, a computer program?

Mr. Varga advised they are not purchasing anything from Bartlett Tree Company, they made him aware of the program that they use for their tree evaluations. Mr. Smith confirmed they would just get it online and Mr. Varga agreed and noted it is around \$40/month or \$200/year, in that range.

Mr. Smith noted that may be something they could review further at their next meeting and Mr. Varga agreed.

Mr. Varga stated hopefully by the meeting in January they will have more information on that so in the meantime it would be beneficial for the Commission to start thinking about utilizing such a program.

Ms. Berges advised if anyone wishes to look at the program, it is called ArborScope, and you could navigate to the City of Bay Village's website and view it there and it would give them an idea of the information that Bay Village had captured.

Ms. Pajak inquired regarding the identification of the trees, would that be only for residential areas?

Mr. Varga confirmed it would mostly be for residential tree lawn trees, and he would consider that to be the main focus and the most essential. He added in relation to that, it would give an overview of the tree canopy in the City. He commented that the tree lawn trees is what they would be the most concerned with as far as replacing certain trees and this would give an idea of what there is and what they need to replace. Mr. Varga added that right now they are completely lost with having no tree inventory.

DISCUSSION OF HOSTING THE TREE CITY USA AWARDS EVENT

Mr. Varga

Mr. Varga stated regarding hosting the Tree City USA Awards event in May 2025, Urban Forester Matt Leiden is going to be at City Hall on Monday, December 16, 2024. He indicated that due to Sunshine Laws, they have to be careful how many members meet outside of a meeting.

Ms. Englemann, Ms. Wetzig, and Ms. Jonson indicated they would like to attend.

Ms. Berges suggested a Special Meeting of the Tree Commission be scheduled so that it is open to everyone and then they have minutes for those who are unable to participate.

There was some general discussion of if they would proceed with possibly having a Special Meeting with Mr. Leiden and who may be available to attend that meeting.

Ms. Wetzig stated they are ahead of schedule, so they are doing well in that aspect. The next step is to meet with Mr. Leiden and come up with how they are going to get these payments in, and she has information from Rocky River and a binder to refer to, which is helpful.

Mr. Varga stated they will also invite Steve Presley, Finance Director; Beth Raicevich, Assistant Finance Director; Rose Seighman, Mayor's Administrative Assistant. In addition, Ms. Markovitz suggested they include John Gasior, Law Director; and Clare Harasimchuk, Recreation Coordinator. Mr. Varga stated he wants to get everyone involved.

Ms. Wetzig added so there is information between everyone, with the process starting as well as questions getting answered. She added her biggest thing is that the City said they could use their program to sign people up and handle payments. Ms. Wetzig added that is why the Finance Department should be there.

Mr. Varga advised the Tree City USA event will be the biggest event coming up for the Tree Commission and is why he wants to be proactive to keep everything moving and does not want to wait until the last minute. He added they are going to also have to look into how to get sponsors and knows of a few.

Ms. Wetzig added sponsors, vendors and what their budget is from the City are her main questions that need answered.

Mr. Varga stated if they proceed and decide in making this Special Meeting of the Tree Commission, they will have to provide 24-hour notice which would be by this Friday, December 13, 2024. Mr. Varga asked the Commission who would be able to attend if a Special Meeting is called.

There was a general consensus that the majority of the Tree Commission Members would be able to attend a Special Meeting.

Mr. Smith inquired as to the date and time of the potential Special Meeting.

Mr. Varga advised the Special Meeting would be for Monday, December 16, 2024, at 1:00 p.m. and it can be held in the Council Chambers. He added it would be beneficial for as many to attend since it is one of their biggest events and everyone should know what is going on as far as many different cities that are planning to attend.

Ms. Englemann agreed as she believes it would make sense for as many people to attend as possible and Ms. Wetzig agreed.

Ms. Wetzig stated she can add speakers to the program that she is working on.

Mr. Varga advised the only one he is sure about is Jim Chatfield from Ohio State University and the speaker from Willoway Nurseries but has not received any other responses yet. He added he is awaiting a response from Joe Boggs, Entomologist at the Ohio State University.

Ms. Wetzig stated the speakers usually have a theme or topic that they speak about during the ceremony so the Commission may want to think about what they might want to use as their theme.

Mr. Varga stated he is going to have a theme regarding resilient tree species for example, presently there is a virus on Beech trees, and he was going to have Mr. Chatfield talk about this virus and its effect on trees. Then Willoway Nurseries will fill in as far as the trees they are trying to grow that are more resilient to that disease. Mr. Varga noted that Mr. Boggs, the Entomologist, could further expand upon that disease as far as the insects transmitting it. Mr. Varga advised he wants the ideas to pertain to something that is current, new and cutting edge versus a topic like Oak Wilt which has been around quite a long time.

MEMBER COMMENTS

Ms. Berges wished everyone Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays.

Ms. Johnson stated she just wanted to make the Commission aware that “thank you” letters for participation in the Arbor Day event went out to all their vendors, sponsors, and anyone else who participated received a formal letter from the Tree Commission. She added they applied for the Growth Awards through Tree City USA and ultimately only needed 10 points but since this is her first time going

through the process and she is unsure exactly how. She wanted to apply for more than they needed so they applied for 40 points. She noted the application was submitted on November 25, 2024, and is pending regional review. She also wished everyone a Merry Christmas.

Mr. Smith stated that Curt Vigg who performed the Neil Young Tribute at Arbor Day reached out and stated he was very appreciative of the thank you letter that he received from the Commission.

Mr. Traxler wished everyone a Merry Christmas.

Mr. Varga stated that he handed out a sheet regarding the Traxler Arboretum that included some notes of his visit to the property with a Landscape Architect. He noted Mayor Jensen suggested a landscape architect to look over the Traxler property. Mr. Varga advised that initially this landscape architect suggested to start noting ideas of what they would like to see at the Arboretum. Mr. Varga stated he wrote down a few notes, but wanted the Commission members to think about what they may want to see at the Arboretum. He noted he read a wonderful book given to him by Ms. Berges about Arboretums and tree collectors. He added there are Arboretums in many places and many of them specify things like Magnolias, another from Provence, France was Oak trees, which included 492 different species of Oak, historical trees, and musical trees. Mr. Varga added there was also an individual collecting trees for example an Elvis Presley tree, Frank Sinatra tree.

Ms. Englemann asked if they think they could get a Moon tree in Avon and Mr. Varga believes that could be possible.

Mr. Varga cited an example from Boise, Idaho, where a collector wished to plant palm trees, but that region is not viable for palm trees. He added that same collector found out about different hybrids that he was growing that became adaptable to his climate. He added it would need to be protected in the winter months. Mr. Varga stated he just wanted to highlight that there are many different avenues that they could go, and they want to start getting some specific ideas for the Traxler Arboretum. Mr. Varga suggested a Girl Scout Memorial Garden. He noted the first phase is to try to get ideas on what they want to do such as a rain or water garden, Avon historical trees or if the high school wishes to do something as far as a community garden. Ms. Wetzig suggested an outdoor classroom and Mr. Varga agreed saying that would be an idea for the botany/biology class. Mr. Varga added they need to put together a list.

Mr. Varga advised he received the Tree Academy list for next year which includes all the dates and he will send it out to everyone.

Ms. Wetzig inquired if there are four classes and Mr. Varga advised there are six classes to be held in Sandusky, Geneva, and Kent. Ms. Wetzig asked how many classes are for freshman? Ms. Berges advised two days for freshman and two days for sophomore class, and you get an associate degree certificate for those four days of classes. Ms. Englemann advised she submitted her application for Geneva in January but inquired if they are guaranteed a spot once they send in their application and noted a possibility of being shut out of a class. Mr. Varga indicated it was possible to get shut out of a class. Mr. Varga added the City would cover the cost of the class. She added the application was in the email and she had followed the link.

AUDIENCE COMMENTS

There were no audience comments.

ADJOURN: 8:22 p.m.

A motion was made by Mr. Smith and seconded by Ms. Johnson 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"; Ms. Englemann, "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,
January 8, 2025, at 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Rachel Markovitz, Assistant Clerk of Council