

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Avon Tree Commission
Held in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Building
On Wednesday, December 13, 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; Certified Arborist, Richard Varga (Non-Voting Member), Anthony Moore

ABSENT:

Liesa Wetzig

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

A motion was made by Mr. Smith and seconded by Ms. Berges to dispense with the reading of the minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Avon Tree Commission held Wednesday, November 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”; Mr. Moore, “yes”.

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

DISCUSSION OF THE 2024 ARBOR DAY CELEBRATION (Saturday, October 5, 2024) – Ms. Laurenzi

Ms. Laurenzi said that she did not really have anything for discussion; she just wanted to make sure that we get our sign from Brian Fischer. Mr. Moore said that he will follow up with Mr. Fischer on that. Mr. Moore then asked if they still wanted to reach out to the same food vendor in 2024 or if they wanted to be thinking about somebody else locally. Ms. Berges stated that they had Swenson’s food truck at the Halloween event by the Aquatic Center. It was an actual food truck and would take up less room in our area so if that is what we would prefer then we might consider them. Mr. Smith added that the Swenson’s food truck was parked over on the asphalt section right next to the playground so they were not in the way.

Mr. Moore asked if we had found out about the pony rides as he never heard back from that woman. Ms. Laurenzi said, yes, we are booked with the petting zoo. Ms. Berges noted that they had the petting zoo there at the Christmas Tree Lighting and that was a big hit with the kids. It was interactive where the kids could actually brush the animals so she thought it would be nice to have that as part of our Arbor Day Celebration. Ms. Laurenzi said, as far as riding the ponies, we can decide that depending on the weather. As long as it is not too muddy, she is planning on it.

Ms. Berges said she thought that Mr. Varga mentioned last month that since Shur Tech is not doing the Duck Tape Festival and the parade, that we might look at some of their vendors. Also, she thought that we might reach out to Shur Tech and see if they want to participate in our Arbor Day by having some kind of an activity because they have done that before where they had a tent and had their Duck Tape and the kids would do crafts. So maybe on a smaller scale they would be interested in participating with us and having it tree-related. Mr. Moore said that he knew somebody who worked at Shur Tech and he could ask him.

Mr. Smith stated that, at the Halloween event, all the vendors had their tents set up along the Story Book Trail which he thought was excellent because it drew people all along the Trail there and spread everything out and there were a lot of vendors. He thought that was a good idea because then we have more space in our tent for the Avon Garden Club and the MetroParks. The vendors brought their own tents and that worked really well. It was pouring down rain and they still were selling items.

UPDATE ON THE TREE CITY USA APPLICATION – Mr. Varga

Mr. Varga stated that the application is in and the other thing they have been working on is the Urban Site inventory which he handed out to everybody. What they did was they inventoried the area in the French Creek District and as they can see the inventory is three pages long. He and Ms. Berges spent all day doing this inventory. Part of this was to devise a future tree plan for the City of Avon and what tree selections would be appropriate. He said that they worked with the Urban Forester and came up with a complete tree plan for future reference. They are trying to develop something for down the road because at some point everybody is going to be replacing trees, such as all the Bradford pears, and we have to have some type of plan in place so when that comes around we are prepared to make suggestions for the appropriate tree. So this is our start, and this also was part of their homework for the Tree Academy so it was a two-fold purpose. Mr. Varga added that they are going back to the Tree Academy again which is tentatively set for January 10th and 11th in Fairview Park.

Mr. Smith stated that he saw on Rt. 83 as you are coming north from Mills Road, our Tree City USA sign is up there and it looks really good. He said that he believed that Mr. Moore had said that the other sign will be on Detroit Road as you are coming in from Westlake, heading west. Mr. Moore said, yes, the two signs are up. As you come down Detroit Road from Westlake right after the City of Avon sign, the Tree City USA sign is right there by the golf course. And the other one is on Rt.83 right at the round-a-bout coming into Avon. Mr. Moore asked Mr. Varga if they can look at getting another sign for another entrance to the City and Mr. Varga answered that he is working at getting more signs, at least one more for Detroit Road coming in from the west.

UPDATE ON THE INFLATION REDUCTION ACT GRANT APPLICATION – Mr. Varga

Mr. Varga stated that he and Mr. Smith and Ms. Berges have been working on this and Law Director John Gasior wrote a Resolution today. He asked what the process was now with that Resolution and Ms. Berges advised that it will first be on the Council Work Session agenda on Monday, December 18th, and then be voted on at the Regular Meeting, which will also take place on the 18th, and once the Resolution passes, it is done. Mr. Varga said that, in conjunction with the application, they have been procuring letters of support from different groups such as the Senior Center, the Board of Education, the School Board, the Garden Club, etc. Service Director Duane Streater also has to write a letter indicating how we are going to procure the funds and how they are going to be allocated through the Parks Dept. Mr. Smith reminded that we also need a letter from the Tree Commission, signed by all of the members. Mr. Varga said, yes, since it is actually the Tree Commission that is working on the grant.

Mr. Smith noted that Ms. Berges had said that tonight we need to put a motion forward and vote on this, that the Tree Commission is officially seeking out this grant. We need to make it official as to what we are doing. Ms. Berges added, yes, as the Tree Commission we need to formalize it. We talked about it last month and agreed that we should seek the grant; now we should have a motion on the record and vote on it and she asked if there was any more discussion before we do the motion. Ms. Berges added that we should say what the focus of our grant application is. Mr. Varga stated that the focus of the grant

is for monies for the Traxler Arboretum; that is what we are focusing the grant on because part of the grant is specifically for saving green space. He said that there is a little bit of verbiage that it is hard to distinguish because the grant is for “disadvantaged communities”. What is a disadvantaged community? Right away everybody says it is economic but that is not true; it is also in conjunction with water, clean water, fresh water, water distribution and it is green space. So part of the goal is to reduce stormwater runoff, infiltration, and overland flow which we all know we have had issues with all those, but also it is for forestry benefits and saving the canopy of Avon so we are not going to become a disadvantaged community.

Mr. Varga continued by saying, but also we are looking at a \$50,000 grant and to help us get that grant, we have to include surrounding communities, villages, and townships. That enhances our chances to get the grant because since the grant is an Urban Forestry grant, which is Statewide, they like to see that we are going to service other communities. So we are going to make the Traxler Arboretum a focal point for education and to show people how we are preserving the tree canopy in Avon. We are very fortunate to have this opportunity because we have trees that are already mature enough to show that we have a canopy that we are trying to save. And as we said, we are getting letters of support from various City groups and we are hoping it is going to be beneficial for the whole community and the surrounding communities as well.

Mr. Boccabella asked if we know how many \$50,000 grants are awarded every year and Mr. Varga said the grants go all the way from \$50,000 to \$800,000 every year and they have different ones. The one that we are applying for is for the State of Ohio but there are also federal grants and grants for just the County. So this is great because if we can start and see what we can do with this, then we have a good format for the future.

Ms. Laurenzi stated that it says on the website that there are \$4.6 billion dollars available. Mr. Varga said, yes, so there is a lot of money and that is why he wanted to start looking for any opportunities we possibly can for monies because we have a great opportunity here and everybody we talked to was very excited about it so he thinks it is really going to be great for the future of Avon.

MOTION TO PURSUE THE INFLATION REDUCTION ACT GRANT APPLICATION

A motion was made by Mr. Smith and seconded by Ms. Berges for the Avon Tree Commission as a body to pursue the Inflation Reduction Act Grant application. The vote was: Mr. Boccabella, “yes”; Ms. Laurenzi, “yes”; Mr. Smith, “yes”; Mr. Traxler, “yes”; Ms. Berges, “yes”; Mr. Moore, “yes”.

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

MEMBER COMMENTS

Ms. Berges said that she had good news and bad news. The good new is that she is going to be on Council next year. The bad news is that she will not be on the Tree Commission so this is her last meeting. She said she wanted to thank Mayor Jensen for initially appointing her to the Tree Commission. When she started she knew that she liked trees, and she planted trees, but that was kind of the limit of her knowledge so she has to say over the past two-plus years she has learned a lot about trees, both through the Commission and the Division of Forestry, and the support that we have had from our Urban Foresters. Right now the Commission is in its infancy stage compared to some other cities that have been doing this for decades but we have already accomplished quite a bit through everyone’s commitment and hard work. And what is exciting to her is how much we can do in terms of education and implementation of

best practices. She will miss being on the Tree Commission and said that they all have been wonderful colleagues and she has learned a lot from each one of them and thanked them for the opportunity. Ms. Berges then wished everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy New year.

Mr. Boccabella thanked Ms. Berges for her contributions.

Mr. Smith said to Ms. Berges that, once again, he truly appreciates all of her efforts. And he did have another comment regarding the tree ring artwork display that the Commission has spoken about. He found a sign company in N. Ridgeville, the Bob Cutler Sign Co., which he believes has been there since 1936. It is currently owned and run by a gentleman named Scott Hixson; Mr. Smith met with him and explained to him what we wanted and he said he can do it. Mr. Varga is working on getting the cross sections of the tree cut so we can move forward on this.

Ms. Laurenzi thanked Ms. Berges very much for all her time and said that she will be missed by us as the Tree Commission. She hoped that Ms. Berges will stay involved and keep helping the Tree Commission although she knows that Ms. Berges will be busy with City Council. They will miss her.

Mr. Traxler said that he would like to really thank Ms. Berges for all she has done on the Tree Commission and he has enjoyed knowing and working with her. He said that his other comment is to advise that he will not be here in January for our next meeting and he wanted to put that on the record.

Mr. Varga said to Ms. Berges that she has been a great support for him and obviously he hopes that she can be with them and help them a little bit more if she can at her convenience. Hopefully, they can keep working together, at least through this grant process. Since we started it, this has become quite involved and they have been to meetings here and there and everywhere. So it has been quite an adventure and hopefully it will come to something. He added that if anybody has any input or any comments about the grant, to please email him or if they want to get involved in any way he is open for suggestions. He can send all the information about the grant to anyone who would like to see it so please contact him.

Mr. Moore said to Ms. Berges that he just wanted to thank her for all the work she has done and she will be missed. When he started this, everyone was a volunteer in an unpaid position. He agreed with Ms. Berges that there has been so much done in such a short time and again, he thanked her for all her work and help, and time spent with the Commission. Hopefully, they will see her out there here and there. He was sure that she will still stay involved somehow. Mr. Moore wished everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year and said to have a safe holiday.

ADJOURN

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

The vote was 6 for and 0 against and the Chairman declared the motion passed and the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted by Gail Hayden, Assistant Clerk of Council