

City of Hartford Tree Advisory Commission
Minutes of Special Meeting-December 16, 2021



In attendance: Jack Hale (chair), Chris Hayes (Commissioner), Greg Secord (Commissioner), Heather Dionne (City Forester, Commissioner)
Guests: Donna Swarr, Mary Rickel Pelletier, Patrick Doyle, Grace Yi

The meeting, held via Zoom, was called to order at about 10:15 a.m. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss recommendations for the FY 2022-23 City of Hartford Forestry budget. The following elements were approved unanimously:

- Current administrative support is adequate so there is no need for additional support.
- Under no circumstances should funding for tree planting, maintenance, staffing, or other expenses be reduced.
- Compensation for forestry crew members (tree trimmers) should be increased to be competitive with compensation at other municipalities and private companies. No formal analysis was available, but it was believed that base pay should be in the range of \$65,000 to \$85,000 per year. Current base pay for Tree Trimmer I is \$41,652 and for Tree Trimmer II is \$44,681. Greg Secord and Heather Dionne will further investigate the current market.
- In keeping with recommendations in the Hartford Tree Canopy Action Plan and based on the amount of work needing to be done, the number of members in the forestry crew should double to six.
- Also in keeping with the Hartford Tree Canopy Action Plan, funding for tree planting should be increased so that 1500 trees can be planted each year. At \$750 per tree, that amounts to \$1,125,000. As was done during the current fiscal year, some funding should come from the general fund rather than from the Neighborhood Environmental Improvements and Citywide Tree Planting line of the CIP budget so that planting can start at the beginning of the fiscal year. Some funding should specifically be allocated for planting on private property.
- The most recent tree canopy assessment was conducted by the University of Vermont using data and satellite images from 2010. In order to get a clear sense of the condition of our forest and the rates of canopy loss and gain by neighborhood and land use type, a new comparative assessment should be conducted that would include equity assessment, ecosystem service analysis, and refined planting priority. The cost will be about \$22,000.
- The Hartford Tree Canopy Action Plan recommends hiring a tree planting coordinator. This position should be created and filled as soon as possible, but the commission recommends a broader role, probably under the title of Community Forestry Outreach Coordinator. This position would engage in planting related outreach and education,

coordination of tree planting functions among various entities, and maintenance of the TreeKeeper GIS-based record keeping system.

- In order to properly support the forestry function and ensure the safety and effectiveness of the crew, DPW should invest in a grapple saw and a larger log truck. Heather Dionne will price them out.
- The Northeast Urban Silviculture Project will require some expenditures during the fiscal year, primarily for fencing research plots and purchasing tools for planting saplings. Likely costs are to be determined.

The meeting was adjourned at about 11:15 a.m.

Jack Hale

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