

**City of Hartford Tree Advisory Commission**  
**Minutes of Meeting – February 2, 2022**



In attendance: Jack Hale (Chair), Charmaine Craig (Vice-Chair), Chris Hayes (Commissioner), Heather Dionne (City Forester, Commissioner), Greg Secord (Commissioner),

Guests: Adam Murphy (Assistant Director - City of Hartford Sustainability Initiative), Chris Donnelly, James Del Visco (Attorney - City of Hartford Corporation Counsel), Mark Dowd (Superintendent of Parks - City of Hartford Department of Public Works), Tyler Napper (Executive Assistant - City of Hartford Planning Division), Chris Goodwin (Horticulturalist - KNOX), Patrick Doyle (Executive Director – KNOX), Ted Hinman (Instructor – A.I. Prince Technical High School), Susan Massino (Instructor – Trinity College), and Danica Doroski (Urban Forestry Coordinator - State of Connecticut: DEP), Cindy Greenblat (Committee Member – Hartford Brainard Noise Advisory Committee)

The meeting, held via Zoom, was called to order at 11:30 a.m.

Minutes – The minutes for the December 1, 2021 and December 16, 2021 meetings were presented. The minutes were adopted as presented.

City Forester’s Report – Heather Dionne presented her written report. She made several additions:

- The DPW Forestry Crew is responding to 311 cases. There is only 1 open 311 case.
- The forestry crew finished the removal of hazardous materials in Keney Park and plan on starting the removal of hazardous materials on Hubbard Road in Goodwin Park.
- Attended the Policy & Resilient Forest for CT Future working group meeting and shared their results for a report.
- Meeting with Tree Warden & Eversource – Productive meeting: Eversource is maintaining a positive relationship with the Tree Warden.
- Urban Forest Council – Making headway for the grant program.
- Met with Mary Hayes from Two Design for reviewing trees; the review is for planting and hazard mitigation related to the revamping of Forester Park.

Susan Massino from Trinity College shared her concerns about protecting Hartford’s old growth forest areas along Park River and would like to give a presentation in the next meeting; Susan invited attendees to discuss the matter via the Old Growth Forest Network. Susan also provided an update regarding Trinity College becoming an arboretum.

City Forester, Heather Dionne added to her report that her team finished their tree maintenance work on Torwood Street. The team spent \$28,000 for the overall maintenance, cleaned the crowns of 25 Pin Oak Trees, and removed 2 hazardous trees.

2022 Budget Recommendations – The commissioners critiqued the drafted budget letter. Chair Hale intends on revising the drafted budget letter. Vice Chair Craig suggested changing the language of the letter. Commissioner Dionne expressed her concerns regarding the dollar amount for the capital improvement funding was less than last year’s dollar amount and shared her concerns with Frank who is responsible for creating the budget. Vice Chair Craig noted that Councilwoman Rossetti will be requesting \$200,000 for neighborhood plantings on private properties for this budget year and Councilwoman Rossetti is open to speak about the funding with the commissioners and the public. Commissioner Secord concurred with Vice Chair Craig’s suggestions. Commissioner Hayes recommended that the first section of the letter should replace current statement with the statement “*funding should be held at its current levels.*” Chris Donnelly wants to identify who is responsible for funding and payments related to city owned trees and if the tree program is pursuing other funding sources. Patrick Doyle suggested to take an informational tone with the budget letter and noted the rising cost of tree maintenance in general. Chair Hale noted that the fifth item regarding additional equipment, the commission is still waiting for actual numbers; the log truck number is not dependable. Chair Hale will revise the budget letter and have the commissioners review it before sending the letter to the City in the next couple of days. Commissioner Dionne stated she will get the quote on the grapple truck.

P&Z Commission Response to Recommended Changes to Zoning Regulations – Chair Hale noted that he needs confirmation from the commission for the changes in zoning regulations, preferably before the upcoming Planning & Zoning Commission meeting on February 8, 2022. Chair Hale also noted that if the regulations have broader applicability then the commission may need to adjust the items.

The Commission discussed the following items:

**1.3.3.B(6) Site Plan Review & 1.3.3.B(7) – Site plan:**

Chair Hale suggested changing the term ‘critical root zone’ to ‘tree protection zone’; and define it as the area within the drip line of the tree or a circle centered on the center of the tree trunk with a radius of 18 times the diameter of the tree trunk at 4 and half feet above ground level which ever is larger, further it extends the tree protection zone to a depth of 3 and a half feet and, further the City Forester can grant exceptions or changes to that requirement; the protections offered are outlined in the ANSI 300 practices.

The commission made no changes to Chair Hale’s recommendation.

Chair Hale noted that the Planning & Zoning Commission may provide the following suggestion: “*when a landscape plan is prepared must also include the crown spread of any tree at maturity.*”

**NEW SECTION to 6.1.1. – Intent – Section 6.1.1.F. - To meet the citywide tree canopy goal of 35% by 2070:**

Chair Hale suggested to add that the current canopy is at 25%.

The commission made no changes to Chair Hale’s recommendation.

**6.2.3.G. – Establishment – All installed plant material shall be fully maintained until established, including watering, fertilization, and replacement as necessary.**

**Expand to read – All installed plant material shall be fully maintained until established, including watering, fertilizing, and replacement as necessary. Establishment is defined as survival in healthy and undamaged condition for a minimum of three years.**

**Maintenance and Replacement – The landowner, or successors in interest, or agent, if any, shall be jointly and severally responsible for the following:**

- 1. Regular maintenance of all landscaping in good condition and in a way that presents a healthy, neat, and orderly appearance.**
- 2. All landscaping shall be maintained free from disease, pests, weeds and litter. This maintenance shall include weeding, watering, fertilizing, pruning, mowing, edging, mulching or other maintenance, as needed and in accordance with acceptable horticultural practices;**
- 3. The regular maintenance, repair, or replacement, where necessary, of any landscaping required by this Chapter; and**
- 4. Continuous maintenance of the site.:**

Chair Hale noted Planning & Zoning Staff recommendation.

Chair Hale suggested replacing the term ‘weeds’ to ‘invasive vegetation’ and replacing the phrase ‘acceptable horticultural practices’ to ‘acceptable best practices’ in subsection 2 of 6.2.3.G.

Commissioner Hayes stated the nuance of using the term ‘weeds’ and how the state of Connecticut has a list of invasive species.

Commissioner Secord suggested using both terms: ‘weeds’ and ‘invasive vegetation’

Chair Hale will suggest using both terms to the Planning & Zoning Staff and welcomed the commissioners to join the upcoming meeting with the Planning & Zoning Commissioners and Staff.

**6.4.3 – Tree Spacing – Trees shall be planted no closer than 25, 15, and 5 feet apart for large, medium, and small trees, respectively...**

**Trees shall be planted no closer than 40, 30, and 20 feet apart for large, medium, and small trees, respectively...:**

Chair Hale suggested changing the phrase from ‘planted no closer than 25, 15, and 5 feet apart’ to ‘planted no closer than 35, 25, and 15 feet apart’ and the word ‘shall’ will be replaced with ‘should’.

The commission made no changes to Chair Hale’s recommendation.

**6.5.1.B. – Landscape Maintenance, Replacing Unhealthy Landscaping – ... This includes all plant material that shows dead branches over a minimum of 25 percent of the normal branching pattern.**

**Modify – ... This includes all plant material that shows dead branches over more than 25% of the normal branch pattern.:**

Chair Hale noted his concern for the Planning & Zoning Staff modification. Chair Hale stated that zoning regulations applied to more than a project that requires a permit especially, if it applies to existing landscaping.

The commission made no changes to Chair Hale’s recommendation.

**6.6.2.A. – Tree Protection During Development Activity – During development, all precautions shall be undertaken to prevent construction damage to existing trees, in accordance with ANSI guidelines.**

**Should read - During development, all precautions shall be undertaken to prevent construction damage to existing trees, in accordance with guidelines in ANSI 300 Part 5.:**

Chair Hale suggested that the text is not specific and the inclusion of the reference to the ‘ANSI 300’ provides the public with the specifications that the Tree Care Association adheres to.

The commission made no changes to Chair Hale’s recommendation.

Chair Hale noted that the general recommendation for the tree planting zoning regulations shall include the following requirement: Tree plans must be referred to the City Forester before it goes to the Planning & Zoning Commission.

Commissioner Secord expressed interest in joining the upcoming meeting with the Planning & Zoning Commissioners and Staff.

North Branch Park River Channel Clearing – Chair Hale stated that there will be a discussion soon about the old growth forest on the east side of the river that is south of Albany Avenue. Danica Doroski from CT Department of Energy Protection expressed interest in supporting the efforts for the clearing the North Branch Park River channel. The City Forester is setting up a meeting with the City’s Director of Capital Projects and Operations to discuss with Mary.

At 12:44pm, the meeting recording ended due to technical difficulties (internet connectivity related issues) and Commissioner Hayes left the meeting.

The meeting recording resumed around the time of 12:55pm.

Planned Riverfront tree removal by Eversource – No updates

Brainard Airport Tree Removal – Chair Hale read the license agreement from the City of Hartford. Chair Hale noted that there is public concern regarding the closing of the airport. James Del Visco shared with the commission that there are no license agreement updates.

2021 Tree Planting Update – The Executive Director of KNOX: Patrick Doyle, provided a tree planting update and reminded the attendees to read an upcoming handout:

- 672 trees were planted for the year of 2021
  - 405 trees were planted with direct support from the Department of Public Works
  - 123 trees were planted with various contractors.
  - 144 trees were planted with donors
- Planted 75% of trees in priority 1 and priority 2 neighborhoods.

Patrick Doyle expressed the following challenges KNOX is facing related to the maintenance of trees in the city.

- Data for Tree Keeper tool is inaccurate
- Discovering needs of tree stump removals
- Tree planting with short timeframe resulted in limited number of Staff assistance
- KNOX needs more community outreach efforts
- Identifying areas to not plant near underground utility
- Cost rising for tree maintenance materials due to inflation

Danica Doroski left the meeting at 12:58pm

Commissioner Secord made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Hayes second the motion. The commission voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 1:05pm.