



City of Hartford Tree Advisory Commission
Minutes of Meeting- September 7, 2022

In attendance: Jack Hale (Chair), Charmaine Craig (Vice-Chair), Greg Secord (Commissioner)

Guests: Patrick Doyle (Executive Director- KNOX), Susan Masino (Trinity College- Professor of Applied Science/Old-Growth Forest Network- County Coordinator), Mary Pelletier (Park Watershed), Barbara Robbins (KNOX), Joan Maloof (Founder and Executive Director- Old-Growth Forest Network), Sarah Grico (Old-Growth Forest Network), Ted Hinman (arborist- KNOX), Susan Barney, Linda Tomasso (Researcher- Harvard University), Richard Cowles, Henry Hester (Vice-President- Friends of Keney Park), Barbara Robbins, Joyce Utick (Chair- Planning and Zoning Commission), Scott Alexander, Jeffrey Stewart (Friends of Keney Park), Jordan Friede (Director of Landscape Operations- KNOX), Heather Dionne (City Forester), Mark Nadeau (Licensed Arborist/concerned citizen), Amy Paterson (Executive Director- CT Land Conservation Council), Debby Reelitz (concerned citizen), Richard Cowles (CT Agricultural Experiments Station), Daniel Gutierrez (Research Assistant- Trinity College), Dave Galt (interested citizen), Joyce Chan (student-Trinity College), Katie (student), Susan Barney, Judy Dworin (Executive Director- Justice Dance Performance Project), Sarah Lowenthal (Risk Manager- PMA), Dana Olmsted

The meeting, held via Webex, was called to order at approximately 11:30 AM. Attendees made introductions.

Minutes- The minutes of the August 3, 2022 meeting were presented for comment and approved.

City Forester's Status- The return to service of City Forester Heather Dionne was welcomed by Chair Hale.

Tree Trimming Hiring Update- Chair Hale reported receiving notice that a new City tree trimmer had been hired. This will be the City's third tree trimmer, of the four positions included in the budget; Hale commented that not all positions had been filled because pay is not competitive with other municipalities, and is a challenge for hiring and retention.

Designation of portion of Keney Park as Old Growth Forest- Prof. Susan Masino announced that Trinity College will submit an application to host an arboretum. Masino delivered a presentation on old-growth forests and their psychological and ecological benefits. Masino stated that old-growth forests are not off-limits to the public, spoke of the work and volunteers involved in the Old-Growth Forest Network, and that there are currently four such forests in Connecticut, with the pending designation of an additional two. She continued that the Keney Park Ten Mile Woods is an exemplary older urban forest, proposed the inauguration of Urban Wilds Hartford, and dedication of a section of Keney Park to Frederick Law Olmsted, and spoke of the general benefits of old-growth forests for natural resources, mental and other health benefits, and organic interactions.

Chair Hale asked what was specifically meant when "protecting" forest was mentioned. Prof. Masino responded that her meaning of the term was that resource production was not a priority. Hale

emphasized the need for precise terminology because the City's park stewardship requires specific determinations of what activities are allowed to occur, and that language such as "allow to develop naturally" is not precise enough to provide direction.

Mark Nadeau and Mary Pelletier commented on the natural course of forest growth, and Joan Maloof offered clarification that the term "protection" meant forest that was protected from commercial logging, and that being part of the old-growth forest network also meant that removal of invasive species was the choice of landowners, and that the forest is open to the public. Commissioner Secord supported Chair Hale's question about what activities would be permitted in "protected" forest, and the need for ensuring safe and healthy forest access through some degree of management. Vice-Chair Craig commented that she liked the presentation given, but wasn't clear on what the parameters of "old-growth forest" were, and suggested expanding the language on inclusivity that was referenced in the presentation. Mark Nadeau suggested a definition of "safe" access, and discussed with Prof. Masino and City Forester Dionne what City tree management entails. Dionne welcomed the acknowledgement of the benefits of trees for people, and expressed her hope that the efforts discussed would help lead to resources needed for forest conservation. Henry Hester complimented the therapeutic value of the work that was presented on. Chair Hale mentioned to Hester that the Keney Park Sustainability Report was now accessible.

Prof. Masino stated in relation to the work presented on, a guided walk in 10-mile woods is scheduled for October 23rd. Mary Pelletier emphasized the importance of health in Olmsted's projects, and asked if riparian corridors are also being studied by the Tree Advisory Commission or KNOX.

Justice Dance Performance Project- Judy Dworin of the Justice Dance Performance Project discussed their dance performance, "In the Presence of Trees", which addresses the value of trees and forests and what they can teach people about mutual support and networking. She announced that the next performance will take place in Bloomfield at the Farmington River Park on October 16th at 3 PM, and that a related film will be shown at Hartford Public Library at a later date.

Urban Silviculture Research and Urban Forest Monitoring Project Update- Chair Hale remarked that the protocols of this research project were being reconsidered in response to suggestions to include control plots, and this would result in the installation of plots being delayed until next Spring instead of this Fall. Pelletier expressed disagreement with the plot locations being in intact portions of the Keney Park forest rather than less healthy locations. City Forester Dionne expressed that the concern in the portion of the park being studied is that natural regeneration would be insufficient without intervention, and that there was a relative lack of intervention from invasive species not being removed or browsing prevented.

Protecting Trees during Special Events- Chair Hale stated that this topic will be discussed at the next Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission meeting, and proposed that both commissions sponsor a joint meeting with event sponsors, park maintenance staff, and managers of special events to discuss the issue of vehicles driving in parks and under trees, and identify ways to improve protocols and regulations.

Other developments- Chair Hale referenced an oak tree that had all of its branches removed in Elizabeth Park, and stated that discussions had been started about the potential for turning such stumps into public art. Hale also raised the topic of urban orchards, stating that discussions will be held on how they can be effectively maintained on City sites, and that he will be meeting with the Portland Fruit Trees Project for information-gathering.

Program Update- Brainard Airport Tree Removal- Chair Hale reported that tree removal was proceeding for 30 acres in the airport flight path, consisting of topping and removals using heavy equipment. He related that he had spoken with Molly Guyer at the CT Airport Authority about the tree removal, and that the work is planned to occur this winter. The CT Airport's Authority's assumption is that most of affected trees will regrow, but Hale expressed that this was doubtful, and that he had invited the Airport Authority to speak at the next Tree Advisory Commission meeting.

Chair Hale welcomed the participation of the meeting's guests, and of those from outside the City of Hartford. Hale adjourned the meeting at approximately 1 PM.

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