



City of Hartford Tree Advisory Commission
Minutes of Meeting- October 5, 2022

In attendance: Jack Hale (Chair), Charmaine Craig (Vice-Chair), Greg Secord (Commissioner), Chris Hayes (Commissioner), Owen Deutsch (Commissioner, Director of Planning designee), Heather Dionne (City Forester)

Guests: Patrick Doyle (Executive Director- KNOX), , Donna Swarr (Colt Park Foundation- Chair), Richard Cowles (CT Agricultural Experiment Station), Edith Pestana (Environmental Justice Program Administrator- DEEP), Barbara Robbins (KNOX), Josye Utick (City of Hartford Planning & Zoning Commission- Chair), Susan Masino (Trinity College- Professor of Applied Science/Old-Growth Forest Network- County Coordinator), Jessica Mercier (Department of Public Works- GIS Project Leader), Cecelia Drayton (City of Hartford Office of Sustainability- Director), Mayra Rodriguez Gonzalez (Educator, UConn Urban and Community Forestry), Ted Hinman (arborist- KNOX), Rodney Barco (Hartford Fire Department- Chief), Sara Lowenthal (City of Hartford Risk Manager)

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

Minutes- The minutes of the September 7, 2022 meeting were presented for comment and approved.

City Forester's Report- City Forester Heather Dionne reported that there were many dead trees in the City and removals to catch up on removal following her five-month absence. A new City tree trimmer recently started work and another new tree trimmer is scheduled to start work within the week, bringing the total number of City tree trimmers to four. Dionne stated that all the tree trimmers are knowledgeable and experienced, and are expected to complete more numerous and smoother tree trimming operations. Northern Tree & Landscaping Service started pruning to ensure visibility for the Hartford Police Department's cameras, and SavATree will take over the remainder of the safety pruning. Dionne mentioned that last year's pruning program allowed HPD to secure a conviction for homicide. Treatments of Ash trees were begun by SavATree, and planning locations at Old North Cemetery were reviewed with KNOX. The City's stump grinding contractor will grind stumps wherever possible; they recently performed work in Pope Park, and work in Goodwin Park and some residential stumps will be next. City Forester Dionne has been meeting with Metro Hartford Innovation Services staff and the City Risk Manager to discuss pruning and security issues around City pools. Dionne also toured Goodwin Park to identify dead and hazardous trees, and assigned them to a contractor. She is trying to obtain PPE and attire for the new tree trimmer hires, and reported favorably on the transportation of a Monkey Puzzle tree (*Araucaria araucans*) from the Elizabeth Park greenhouse to the Environmental Science Magnet School at Mary Hooker School. Dionne is actively observing trees that were planted last Fall and Spring, determining their survivability, and flagging dead trees with red tape.

Commissioner Secord commended the stump grinding work which had been performed in Colt Park. Donna Swarr of the Colt Park Foundation welcomed Dionne back to work, and mentioned that she would like to tour Colt Park with her because of the multitude of dead trees, and would like to set up a meeting to consider the replacement of pine trees. Chair Hale observed that the southwest corner of

Colt Park appears to have some dead spruces, and that that area of the park requires attention. The City Forester's Report and 311 metrics are posted to the meeting webpage, and Chair Hale remarked that he is pleased to again see a record of tree cases being reported and addressed.

Vice-Chair Craig expressed her appreciation for new plantings in Old North Cemetery and replacements for many dead trees, but that the magnitude of trees dying from drought is unfortunate. Craig feels that the City is behind in its plantings, and better watering plans for new trees are needed, as well as resident engagement for plantings to be successful. Craig welcomed City Forester Dionne's return to service, and celebrated the seamless relocation of the Monkey Puzzle tree to Mary Hooker School, the joy brought to the students, and the camaraderie of the group involved in its transport. Chair Hale also commended the challenging relocation of the tree and referenced its Hartford Courant article.

Update on Exotic Invasives- Richard Cowles of the Connecticut Agricultural Experiments Station (CAES) delivered a presentation on invasive pests threatening trees, specifically the emerald ash borer, spotted lanternfly, and beech leaf disease nematodes.

Cowles reported that the emerald ash borer is a threat to all North American ash trees, and that signs of infection include epicormic sprouts and "blonding" inflicted by woodpeckers. The treatment of only some of the ash trees in an area can be sufficient to kill the borers and prevent further infection. Cowles offered to let City staff borrow CAES injection equipment for training purposes.

The spotted lanternfly has been observed in Fairfield and New Haven County, and has distinctive red markings, indicating its toxicity (and the aversion of birds to preying on it). Its egg masses are inconspicuous and deposited on surfaces indiscriminately. Cowles discussed its lifecycle, and remarked that it will feed on over 70 different plant species but strongly prefers Tree of Heaven, and therefore recommended removing all such trees to curb the spread of spotted lanternflies. He also does not recommend sticky traps as a treatment, but circle traps instead.

Cowles explained that beech leaf disease reproduces in the dormant buds of beech trees, resulting in galls on leaves when the buds expand. The effect of this infection is defoliation of beech trees, which may result in their death in as little as three years. Cowles noted that infection requires a layer of water, and that propagation would not be possible in a period of intense drought. Cowles has conducted experiments on various potential chemical treatments, which have been found to be effective but require careful handling and are not always available to the general public.

Chair Hale inquired if the treatments discussed for beech leaf disease would be appropriate for Keney Park. Cowles responded that the treatments would be more suitable for ornamental trees than in a forest context, and that there are few instances of chemical control practices in forests which are useful until biological controls can be established. Chair Hale asked if mature beech trees should receive chemical injections to preserve their health in the short term. Cowles replied that the only effective injection is currently experimental and not otherwise registered for use, so the beeches are likely on their own for now, but wider registration of the treatment may occur soon.

Commissioner Hayes inquired if there are any situations where chemical treatments for the spotted lanternfly would be useful. Cowles responded affirmatively, and that such treatments could be used by

arborists. Tree of Heaven trees could also be pollarded and converted to “trap” trees, but chemical treatment of Tree of Heaven trees would be harmful to pollinators. Planning Commission Chair Utick expressed concern for the removal of trees, and suggested applying treatments only to the point that natural predators can remove the remainder of invasive pests. Trinity College Prof. Masino observed that young Tree of Heaven trees were growing in Zion Hill Cemetery and wrecking gravestones, and encouraged prioritizing their removal. She remarked that ash trees that have survived infestation by the emerald ash borer can retain some of their crown, and asked if surviving ash trees were being researched, which Cowles confirmed. Vice-Chair Craig received clarification from Cowles on the definition and origination of invasive species.

Wildfire Plan- Chief Rodney Barco of the Hartford Fire Department, City Risk Manager Sara Lowenthal and City Forester Heather Dionne presented maps and discussed fires that occurred in Keney Park between 2020 and 2021 near the Ridgefield and Windsor entrances and Ebony Horsewomen location. City Forester Dionne reported on her discussions with Lowenthal and Chief Barco on a strategy for HFD to be adequately prepared for future forest fires. Chief Barco remarked on the difficulty getting firefighting apparatuses to forest fires and the need for a relay pump and additional resources. City Forester Dionne discussed using HPD drones to monitor homeless encampments that present a fire risk, and using City tree trimmers to assist fire fighters by cutting burned or burning branches. Dionne stated that a utility vehicle (UTV) had been funded which is better able to reach forest fire locations, and that two more UTVs will be deployed to the north and south ends of Hartford for use in other City parks. Dionne and Lowenthal discussed the forest fire risk presented by trees that have undergone drought and have shallow roots, and the risk from having fire hydrants present only along the perimeter of Keney Park, and only one road that can support fire trucks. In addition to the procurement of the UTVs and associated equipment, forestry hose will be obtained which is less susceptible to burning. Dionne and Lowenthal also suggested construction of a new fire road in Keney Park between the Ebony Horsewomen location and Ridgefield entrance, in proximity to a dry, grassy field. Lowenthal stated that some coordination had already occurred with DPW on the potential road construction, and that the environmental impact had been reviewed, but that permission from Ebony Horsewomen would be needed, as well as a fire truck turnaround point. Chief Barco agreed that fire trucks were not designed to travel off-road, and that a new fire road would be helpful. He stated that the UTVs were also a step in right direction, but more equipment might be needed for more severe fires, and that it was important that park maintenance be upheld. Dionne further stated that training with DEEP would be conducted on forest fire response, and that the City would participate in a fire hose exchange program.

Chair Hale asked if any other items were requested for addressing forest fires. Chief Barco responded that a brush truck would also be desirable. Chair Hale asked which fire department would respond to a fire in Batterson Park, the western part of which presents a high fire risk due to understory growth and inaccessibility. Chief Barco and Dionne replied that most likely Farmington and New Britain would be the jurisdictions responsible. Hale remarked that a passable entrance in Batterson Park would also be beneficial for firefighting. Vice-Chair Craig remarked that a response to a fire in Batterson Park would need to be collaborative, and that a cottage fire in the park had previously been extinguished by the Farmington Fire Department. Planning Commissioner Utick asked how many fires typically occur in City parks, what the difference in capabilities is between a UTV and fire truck, and what impact a fire road would have on Keney Park. She remarked that the road in Colt Park is mostly illegally used by motorized vehicles. Chief Barco responded that on average 7-10 fires occur per year in City parks, that fire trucks

are not well-suited for off-road travel, and that he was not sure about the impact of a fire road to Keney Park but that only one turnaround point would be required. Prof. Massino remarked as follow-up to her presentation at the last Tree Advisory Commission meeting that she wanted to dispel the myth that an unmanaged forest is entirely ignored, and stated that mature forests are less susceptible to burning than small forests due to components of the landscape that retain water, such as logs. Swarr asked Chief Barco who to report illegal grilling equipment in City parks to, and stated that she was concerned about structures, people, and trees in Colt Park being burned from grills located in forested areas. Barco replied that he would have a fire marshal notify her who to contact. Utick asked for further clarification on the different capabilities of a UTV versus fire truck, and remarked that it would be a shame to pave a road for infrequent fire occurrence. Chief Barco responded that UTVs are unable to carry as much equipment or water as fire trucks, and that his goal is to get more of those resources closer to fire locations.

Chair Hale stated that remaining items on the agenda could take a while to discuss and that the meeting was close to the time of its intended adjournment, and so he would write-up the remaining items and distribute to the attendees and/or revisit those items at the next meeting of the Tree Advisory Commission on November 2. Chair Hale adjourned the meeting at approximately 1 PM.