



TREE COMMITTEE

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TOWN HALL

238 Danbury Road

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WILTON TREE COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2009

Minutes

Present: Jessica Kaplan, Chairman; Kate Throckmorton, Nick Lee, Marilyn Gould, Paula Byrdy, William Meehan, and Junius Brown

Also Present: Patricia Sesto, Director of Environmental Affairs; Paul Young, Tree Warden; and Lars Cherichetti, Deputy Tree Warden

I. Call to Order

Chairman Kaplan called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m. and welcomed new member, Marilyn Gould, who is representing the Planning and Zoning Commission.

II. Approval of October 2009 Meeting Minutes

Bill Meehan questioned the inclusion of a motion attributed to Nick Lee approving the Tree Ordinance "subject to revisions as discussed." He expressed concern that the ordinance should not have been approved in a form that still required substantive revisions. Discussion ensued regarding the appropriateness of such an action and its place in the minutes. Ms. Sesto clarified the purpose of minutes, stating that they are a reflection of what transpired at a meeting, regardless of whether what someone said was accurate or even regretful. Mr. Meehan again asserted that the inclusion of the motion could be misleading to those in the future who read the minutes.

Nick Lee made a MOTION to approve the minutes as drafted, Seconded by Paula Byrdy, and carried 5-0-2, with Marilyn Gould and Junius Brown abstaining.

III. Ongoing Business

A. Draft Tree Ordinance

Ms. Kaplan reintroduced the Tree Ordinance noting that, as of the last meeting, Ms. Sesto was going to contact Ridgefield's tree warden, John Pinchbeck, and forward a copy of the ordinance to Town Counsel. Ms. Sesto reported that John Pinchbeck was strongly in favor of including the section in their ordinance which authorized him to deal with trees on private land that represent a hazard to public land. He has never has to use the enforcement provisions of this section of the ordinance; rather, he works with the property owners to have hazards removed. At times, he has split the cost of the tree work with the private property owner. Nick Lee responded that Robert Ricard, Connecticut, Department of Environmental Protection, has strongly discouraged such a provision in local tree ordinances.

Ms. Sesto added that she has forwarded the ordinance to Town Counsel for review.

Marilyn Gould noted that as a new member she has not been able to properly review the ordinance and wanted time to do so. The timeline was reviewed vis a vis the committee's goal to apply for Tree City, USA designation. That application, including an adopted Tree Ordinance, is due by December 31, 2009. Consequently, after a brief discussion, it was concluded that there was not time to extend the review period if the committee was going to get this ordinance submitted to the Board of Selectmen for a December approval.

Junius Brown made a MOTION to delete in its entirety the section of the ordinance addressing hazardous trees on private land, Seconded by William Meehan, and carried 6-0-1, with Marilyn Gould abstaining.

Ms. Kaplan spoke to the overlapping language in the ordinance associated with the Tree Warden's duties. Discussion ensued and elements were clarified.

Mr. Meehan suggested the language in the item (a) of the Tree Warden's Duties, which states "care and control" should be broadened to say "care or control as set forth in C.G.S. section 23-59." Ms. Gould pointed out that the same change is then needed for (f). Mr. Meehan also suggested a change to the "Enforcement" section (a) to include "as provided in C.G.S. section 23-65 after "...fine, penalty, and/or damages."

William Meehan made a MOTION to Approve the Tree Ordinance as amended, Seconded by Junius Brown, and carried 6-0-1, with Marilyn Gould abstaining.

B. Tree Plan Implementation

Mr. Lee indicated that he has replaced the two dead oaks, one at the American Legion building and the other in the green space opposite the nursery school on Hubbard Road.

Ms. Sesto said she still has had no luck making contact with anyone associated with the AT&T building. This is where Frank Mabley would like his tree planted and he recently

emailed her to get an update. Since there has been no progress, Ms. Sesto offered to work with Mr. Mabley to pick another site.

C. Benches

Paula Byrdy reviewed the directive the committee received from First Selectmen Brennan and the subsequent process that she and Mr. Lee undertook to develop a list of possible sites for benches. There are nine sites proposed for consideration, although it is expected that only 5-7 of the sites will actually receive a bench. According to Mr. Brennan, the funds to acquire the benches will be privately raised and this will not be the responsibility of this committee. Installation will be handled by the town.

IV. New Business

Threats to Local Trees – Emerald Ash Borer & Asian Longhorn Beetle

Ms. Kaplan introduced the guest speaker, Lars Cherichetti, deputy tree warden for Wilton and his topic of discussion. Mr. Cherichetti began by describing the reality of the impact caused by these two insects. In a recent trip through the Midwest, Mr. Cherichetti was able to see firsthand how the woodlands of northern Ohio have been substantially altered by the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB). Since woodlands in this area are dominated by ash, the loss of that tree species is devastating.

Mr. Cherichetti outlined the two elements of his presentation: introduction to the bugs, then planning for the problem. Photographs of the EAB and Asian Longhorn Beetle (ALB) were passed around and distinctions between these beetles and other native species were made. Mr. Cherichetti went on to describe the habits of each beetle.

ALB is a wood-eater, creating vertical channels in the interior portion of the tree. They emit sawdust as a byproduct and produce holes in the tree with a diameter the size of a pencil. ALB has a preference for maples, especially Norway maples, but will also feed on other hardwoods. The beetle stays in the same tree or neighboring tree from one generation to the next, which is helpful in containing the infestation.

EAB exists in the phloem of only ash trees. They do not emit any sawdust, so the only outward sign of the infestation is a “D” shaped exit hole. The EAB infestation starts at the top of the tree and works its way down. Consequently, by time the indicator exit holes are low enough to be observed, the damage is too far along.

Mr. Cherichetti stated that infestations have been identified in New York City, New Jersey, and Worcester, MA. It is thought that the ALB was introduced to the U.S. in Asian shipping material and pallets. Within the U.S. the primary means of spreading the beetle is through firewood transported out of an infected location. An area can be infected for many years before the trouble is known. Outside of Detroit, an infestation was thought to have been

developing for 15 years before it was identified. Oddly, the tree service professionals have not been the ones to discover the bugs; it has been primarily through homeowners.

Ms. Gould left the meeting at 10:10 a.m.

The treatment of an infested area calls for clearing the targeted tree species within ¼ mile of the host tree and then chemically treating trees from the ¼ mile mark out to ½ mile of the host tree. Adult beetles are on the move from May through October, making this the time infestations are normally caught.

Prevention has to include publicizing the risk of moving firewood. Wood should be purchased only from local sources. This is an unregulated activity and consequently difficult to control. The University of Vermont has information on their website uvm.edu/albeetle to further public education. The state of Connecticut already has draft regulations that outline a quarantine procedure should an infestation be identified.

Mr. Cherichetti encouraged the creation of a response plan for Wilton. This plan would address not only possible insect infestation, but also a response should our area suffer from a large storm which results in substantial tree damage. The plan should also include means to educate and calls for vigilance on the part of tree professionals first, then conservation minded residents, and lastly, the general public.

Ms. Kaplan called for volunteers to serve on a subcommittee to draw up an emergency response plan. Mr. Lee, Ms. Throckmorton, Ms. Kaplan, and Mr. Cherichetti volunteered.

Mr. Cherichetti was thanked for his excellent presentation.

V. Other Items

Ms. Kaplan suggested the next meeting, scheduled for December 9th, be cancelled. A MOTION was made by Ms. Byrdy to cancel the December 9, 2009 meeting, Seconded by Mr. Brown and carried 6-0-0.

The 2010 proposed schedule was introduced. Mr. Lee made a MOTION to approve the 2010 schedule as submitted, Seconded by Ms. Throckmorton, and carried 6-0-0.

Ms. Byrdy stated that she is now a member of Wilton's Energy Commission and that commission is planning a "Green Discovery Festival" for May 2, 2010. She is hopeful that the Tree Committee will be represented.

VI. Adjourn

At 10:33 a.m., Ms. Throckmorton made a MOTION to adjourn, Seconded by Mr. Lee, and carried 6-0-0.