



Town of Woodbury

Shade Tree & Sidewalk Committee

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SHADE TREE & SIDEWALK COMMITTEE JOINT MEETING WITH THE CONSERVATION COMMISSION SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, January 3, 2023

5:30 p.m., – Shove Building, 281 Main Street South

MEMBERS PRESENT:

A. Hickey (Chair)	D. Taylor
K. Doyle	L. Peters
T. Zissu	J. Sherman
C. Clark (Pomperaug Garden Club)	T. Clark
A. Persico (arrived 6:30 p.m.)	B. Hickey

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Hickey called the meeting to order at 5:32 p.m. Chairman Hickey noted that Bud Neal of Neal Tree Service was supposed to attend, but was unable. The Committee works closely with Mr. Neal.

2. TOWN PLANTING POLICY

1. The purpose of this joint meeting was to come up with some main goals for Town policy regarding trees, native plants and invasive plants. K. Doyle would like to see any policies implemented to be simple and workable for municipalities. The Public Works Department would like to have a GIS layer for plantings. While this is a lot of work initially requiring a larger investment, it would make maintenance of plantings easier in the long run. The Shade Tree & Sidewalk Committee (STSC) is looking to towns such as Fairfield, Ridgefield and Greenberg, NY for established policies. These towns have larger resources and enforcement capabilities. The STSC is hoping for policies to be more than just advisory.
2. Discussion continued that the initiative should be directed at the Town's properties or Town right of way first. This can then be used as an example to help educate the public as to why the Town is using good planting practices and why they as homeowners should want to also. However, there are always issues regarding the town's right of way on personal property which could make things very hard to enforce. K. Doyle stated that while they would like to have regulations put into place, they will need to first get the Selectmen to agree to any policy. She also felt that the policy should apply to the river banks.

3. Chairman Hickey stated that Mr. Neal would really like to work towards diversity of trees and plants in town. D. Taylor stated that the Planning Commission would need to be on board with any policy also to dictate practices on new applications. He noted that the Conservation Commission has already submitted a draft request to the Zoning Commission for regulations requiring native plants on Town properties and new developments. He shared the letter with the members. T. Zissu would like to see better communication between all of the Land Use commissions in order to be in agreement regarding any regulations or policies put into place.
4. Chairman Hickey noted that there is confusion about messaging of ecological concerns and practical concerns with tree and plant placement. Rich Lamothe, Public Works Director, has noted to A. Hickey that this can be a safety problem at times which has presented conflicts with residents at times. Lee Warner, Tree Warden, is very limited in what he can accomplish with his time. Chairman Hickey would like the Tree Warden's role expanded. B. Hickey recommended that when the Town's certified arborist is set to retire, that the position be filled with another certified arborist.
5. B. Hickey noted that other towns have gone through the standard of tagging trees in order to maintain them. R. Lamothe would like to be able to do this practice, but it requires someone to monitor and maintain. T. Zissu will look into GIS software that he thought was accessible online for this purpose. Chairman Hickey noted that the town of Newtown has a provision in place to protect public or historic trees with regards to cutting, pruning, roots etc. She would like a similar policy in place for Woodbury. T. Clark stated that the average homeowner wouldn't know any of this. There was discussion about posting information on the Town's Facebook page. Maybe local vendors and nurseries could also help educate customers as they come in. Unfortunately, the commissions do not have capabilities for enforcement, but the Public Works Department and Inland Wetland Agency do. The current objective would be to change the behavior of the Town and how they manage resources as an example that would trickle down.
6. Discussion continued on getting the Park & Recreation Department on board with better land use practices since they maintain the properties. This led to the conversation regarding pesticides. The Garden Club has encountered difficulties with this and would need to have the public put pressure on the department and the landscape crews that are used. The town farm leases also are a concern since they use pesticides. K. Doyle suggested speaking with the Inland Wetlands attorney, Janet Brooks. D. Taylor fears the scope is too large right now and would take a lot to get everyone on the same page. Chairman Hickey suggested starting with just the Town properties, public spaces and riverbanks.
7. D. Taylor explained that the goal of what was submitted to the Zoning Commission is to regulate trees, shrubs and plants to be native. Annual plants are not included. The draft does not address diversity or safety concerns. State law has been enacted so that nurseries cannot sell invasive plants. B. Hickey suggested removing what invasive plants are on town property which would be a good example. This led to discussion about the Japanese knotweed around town and how to deal with it. Removing the knotweed from the Minortown property would be another good example for the public. It would be helpful to develop a reporting system so that when an area is identified it could be dealt with systematically.
8. All the departments, commissions and groups involved should have a consensus as to where to direct people to go for a list of native plants. The Conservation Commission likes to use the

UConn website and the Audubon Society website. These links should be readily accessible. Consensus is that it is best to take one project at a time while educating the public. Discussion ensued as to what is the best method to proceed with these objectives; whether Town policy, regulations or ordinance. The Shade Tree Committee will offer a letter of support to the Zoning Commission regarding the proposed regulations.

3. ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Hickey adjourned the meeting at 6:55 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Robyn Wright

Robyn Wright
Clerk

Copies of documents and meeting audio are available at the Land Use Office

RECEIVED & FILED
IN WOODBURY CT
This 9th day of Jan 2023
at 2:45 o'clock P.M.
Maria M. Mancini
Town Clerk