

DRAFT Minutes
Meeting of City Council LORAX Taskforce
Monday, May 23, 2016, 6:30 PM
City Council Chambers

Participants: Taskforce Chair: Councillor David Eppley. Members: Joanne Mizioch (Cemetery Commission), , Paul L'Heureux (SPS), Ron Malionek (DPS), Rick Rennard (Tree Warden/Arborist), Kirt Rieder (Planning Board), Flora Tonthat (NIAC), Barbara Warren (Salem Sound Coastwatch), Polly Wilbert (SSNA)

Observers: Roberta Clement, Michael Coleman, Bart Hoskins, Councillor Elaine Milo, and Co-Chairs SSNA Tree Committee: Sandi Power, Liz Vago,

Absent: Councillor Dibble (and Member, Park and Recreation)

Copies of Minutes: Mayor Driscoll, Dominick Pangallo, Salem City Clerk Cheryl LaPointe,

Next Taskforce Meeting: Tuesday, June 21, 2016, 6:30 PM, City Council Chambers

Taskforce Chair and Ward 4 City Councillor David Eppley opened the meeting by reading the Council order establishing the taskforce, outlining its proposed work and distributing copies of Dr. Seuss's The Lorax to taskforce members. Rick Rennard submitted a draft Shade Tree Ordinance that he had previously submitted to City Council but that was never adopted. Kirt Rieder asked that Mr. Rennard's draft ordinance be scanned and distributed to the taskforce members. Sandi Power inquired about the interface with Chapter 87, the Commonwealth tree laws. Chairman Eppley stated that the taskforce should discuss a shade tree ordinance.

Chairman Eppley shared information about possible study funding through the state's Mass in Motion program, the potential for a GIS-based tree inventory, and reported that Councillor Dibble has requested that citizen input be a component of the tree effort. He also noted that he was desirous of input from taskforce members Kirt Rieder as a landscape architect and Barbara Warren of Salem Sound Coastwatch as to the benefit of trees in flooding. Polly Wilbert distributed historical research about the city's record of tree work and expenditures from 1895-1980.

The taskforce was informed of examples of precedents that could be helpful: Somerville's master tree plan, Somerville's urban forest flyer, a draft urban plan for a comprehensive public tree inventory, and a tree inventory fact sheet. Kirt Rieder noted that the City of Cambridge has also developed a master tree plan. Rick submitted a copy of a GIS-based National Grid Tree Inventory from Sept. 2010, which covers part of Salem, and commented on the work intensiveness of tree inventory record keeping. Kirt mentioned the possibility of using a program like Leafsnap (a free visual identification tree app) as a citizen participation inventory identification aid. Chairman Eppley felt that a database like the city's present See Click Fix program would be optimal because it could interface well with citizen participation, including school children, scouts, and neighborhood groups. Liz Vago emphasized the important mission of teaching about the value of trees. Additional comments included that we need more trees, more help, a balance between planting native trees and other types. Kirt said that it would be important not to rule out adaptive trees (like some Japanese tree varieties) and that we should embrace successful trees, both native and adaptive, especially those that do well in the harsh urban environment. Rick referenced Michael Dirr as a resource (Note: Dirr's Tree and Shrub Finder, a \$14.99 app, his book, The Manual of Woody Landscape Plants, and website: dirrplants.com).

Bart suggested that, as the city worked up to a master plan, interim steps could be taken to remove barriers to residents' hiring a certified arborist and privately paying for work that could be quickly approved and accomplished. Rick expressed concern about the different levels of expertise among contractors and city liability since street trees are public property. He noted that Wakefield issues permits for work on city trees (show insurance, certified arborist, period of time) which gives approval for tree work. Chairman Eppley

suggested that we form a sub-committee to fast track citizen maintenance and planting of street trees and a program for donations for trees (donated tree of a type and size that the city would plant). Flora Tonthat suggested vetting some specific companies/contractors for an approved list. Chairman Eppley promoted creative thinking: what doesn't overwhelm DPS and allows the city to get up to speed on planting. He referred to the meeting of the City Council's Committee on Public Health, Safety, and the Environment where the city staff presentation showed that 220 trees had been cut down, chiefly due to safety/liability issues, and that only 88 had been replaced. He believes that there is a problem of prioritization and that it is important to get the number of trees planted above the number cut down.

Roberta Clement inquired about the trimming of trees under utility lines and who is responsible and noted that some of the work is not good. Rick said that it is National Grid and that he has sometimes had to stop their contractors from overly aggressive trimming, and that utility trimming work takes place about every four years. The utility contractors are supposed to call the Shade Tree Department to let the city know that they will be in Salem doing trimming work so that we can oversee the work. Ron noted that in the best of conditions they have an arborist who speaks English as part of the trimming crew. Liz Vago asked what is our recourse if National Grid damages a tree? Rick noted that sometimes it's a case of the city's having planted the wrong tree; there are right trees for locations under utility wires. Kirt asked about compensation for extreme injury by a contractor? Rick noted that it is hard to track, very hard to pursue. Last season, Rick noted that National Grid planted 30-40 trees. Chairman Eppley noted that an agreement with the utilities would be helpful and some formula for mature tree replacement.

Kirt inquired about the cost of a city tree. Rick stated that it is \$350-400/each with labor approximately 3X cost of tree, a little less if there are quantities of trees planted at the same time. Kirt raised the benefit of planting trees within the property line and not in the tree lawn. (Rick again noted liability issues.) Polly suggested that this should be a condition for subdivisions with the requirement flowing through from the developer to the eventual individual property owners, with a condition to maintain the tree. Bart supported this concept of a standard condition for trees in subdivisions, with the developer being responsible for the planting of trees. Chairman Eppley felt there should be a baseline number of trees to be planted under those circumstances.

Liz inquired whether we have a place to store trees on city property (a tree bank)? For some projects, it should be required that healthy existing trees should be removed, stored, and then replanted, if it would be successful. Chairman Eppley referred to Salem Common, where if a tree is cut down it should be replaced with a sufficiently large tree and not a sapling. Rick noted that Salem Common trees must be replaced with a 4-5 inch diameter trees. Ron Malioneck referred to a recent case where red maples adjacent to the North Street overpass were moved, which cost \$10,000. There was a similar earlier instance at Mary Jane Lee Park. It is expensive to move trees. Polly raised the importance of the exotic trees in Greenlawn, that they are part of Salem's historic fabric, and it could be expensive to replace them. Councillor Milo referred to the perpetual maintenance and trust funds that benefit Greenlawn and how they can be used. Ron noted that they are an interest-only source of funding. He noted that it is hard to replace exotics, hard to find exact matches for them.

Chairman Eppley pointed to the example of Mack Park and their fundraising for the police department's canine unit. He suggested that trees could be an opportunity for fundraising in the neighborhoods. Chairman Eppley asked about trees and the schools and tree education as part of the schools' curriculum. Paul L'Heureux reported that SHS has an active group, headed by Messrs. Marcoux and Buchanan. Chairman Eppley would like to see work with the elementary/middle school science teachers, annual class projects, with perhaps 6th graders raising money to plant trees. Kirt noted that the Witchcraft Heights school has a garden club project. Ron reported that the Bates School has a sugar mapling project with a planting and tree identification program three times a year. Paul suggested that involving the PTO could be valuable, especially at Bentley, where there are dead trees currently. Chairman Eppley inquired about the involvement of Essex Aggie. Ron suggested that there might be the opportunity for Aggie pruning field visits. Rick asked whether there was any connection

with Frederick Law Olmsted and Salem, because there are grants available if there were a record of interface with him or his firm.

Further discussion took place about removing barriers for citizen maintenance. Soliciting ideas from other cities/towns about tree maintenance and how it can be done better in Salem. Ron has information that he can bring in about tree work in other cities/towns. Rick suggested that a master list of what needs to be done (by priority) needs to be created and then contractors identified who can do it. Bart emphasized again that we need to enable property owners to get tree work done. Rick emphasized that the problem is the limit of manpower/biggest problem is implementation. Where do we get the money? Ron has significant staffing limitations. Sandi Power confirmed that we need money and asked who is paying attention to grants, like the Gateway City funds. Councillor Milo noted that the Gateway monies were for pilot programs. Liz cautioned that a master survey/plan should not be created to sit on the shelf. We need some interim activity so that we create some implementation and creative quick wins to create a groundswell. Chairman Eppley noted the value of photo opportunities to foster awareness.

Bart referenced the city's solar program as an example of the opportunity of the designation of a single contractor to do work at an agreed upon cost. Can this be a model for trees? Polly noted that 2026 will be our 400th anniversary. Could there be a 10-year program to plant trees to celebrate that occasion? Sandi suggested planting 2,026 trees by 2026 (or 2,026 plus 400 for 2,426 trees). Flora Tonthat recommended communicating neighborhood by neighborhood. Chairman Eppley supported making tree maintenance resident friendly and that Sandi's memorial tree program could be a helpful part of the solution. Bart asked if there could be a fixed price for planting/pruning or matching monies? Ron will bring price lists to the next meeting. Rick Rennard noted that it is less expensive to buy trees from a grower than from a nursery like Northeast, but Ron pointed out that the problem is storage for trees. Chairman Eppley suggested that we begin with a Northeast model. Ron presently has \$5,000 in his department's annual budget for purchasing trees (there are additional CDBG monies for low income areas) This year there were 88 trees planted (including CDBG and National Grid monies). Chairman Eppley noted that we need to plant 200 trees/year. Bart inquired about whether when a tree is taken down whether that precludes using that tree well again for a time. Ron noted that the stump contractor grinds 18-20 inches in depth below grade, which should make the well viable.

Rick noted that there is a willow tree that needs to be replaced in Pickman Park, which was originally planted in memory of Paul Perry, a helicopter pilot.

Because funding and is scarce and manpower is limited, Polly urged the taskforce to focus first on where there is an absence of trees and not on an inventory of where we have trees.

Sub-Committees and individual Efforts:

1. A memorial tree donation program subcommittee was formed with Sandi, Liz, and Polly.
2. Rick and Ron will serve as a technical subcommittee on planting and trimming issues.
3. Kirt offered to do research on tree master plans.
4. Roberta offered to create a list of potential donors.

Polly mentioned the potential availability of expertise through the Conway School, which did *pro bono* work on the Lead Mills Conservation Area design effort.

Liz Vago pointed out that Historic Salem could be encouraged to be an advocate for historic trees. Liz also spoke about the possibility of flood mitigation monies that might fund trees and she advocated for trees as habitat, including the value of tree berries for birds.

Adjourned: 8:40 PM

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