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MAYOR

CITY OF SALEM, MASSACHUSETTS  
**TREE COMMISSION**  
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DARLEEN MELIS, CHAIR  
KIRT RIEDER, VICE CHAIR  
ROBERT LEBLANC, TREE WARDEN

*Touch the Future - Plant a Tree*

**MINUTES OF THE SALEM TREE COMMISSION  
AUGUST 16, 2021**

A meeting of the Salem Tree Commission was held on August 16, 2021 at 6:00 p.m., via ZOOM, an online video conference call system. Present on call were:

Chair Darleen Melis, Vice Chair Kirt Rieder, Members: Joshua Arenstam; Naomi Cottrell, Curtis Dragon, Rachel McCarter, David Rowand and Susan Yochelson; Tree Warden Robert LeBlanc and Commission Clerk Joanne Roomey. Absent was Paul L'Heureux.

**1. Tree Warden's Report**

- The Salem Tree Department is now up to two-thirds staffing. The lead climber came back on Monday and the tree truck can now go out daily working on pruning. The third member will be out for a bit longer and when needed, another staff member from the Cemetery Department will take his place.
- The tree watering program by the city contractor has been ongoing throughout the summer and one of the cemetery staff is now on a regular route with the city 300-gallon tank, adding to the efforts to keep the newly planted trees watered.
- Mr. LeBlanc contracted with Cicoria Tree Co. in late June and early July to spend a couple of days at the Salem Common. Over fifty (50) trees were canopy cleaned of dead wood. More work still needs to be done on some of the exterior trees. There are also three (3) trees that will need to be removed, due to unbalanced structure, large cavities in the trunks and one Oak that failed to leaf out this spring. This will be coordinated within the next thirty (30) days depending on crew availability.
- There are twenty-five (25) stumps on a grinding list and this will also get done before fall planting begins. They all need to get a dig-safe number and be marked out.
- Four (4) tree pits will be completed with porous paving this week. All of these are from the Derby Street sidewalk project from this spring.
- Two (2) tree permits were issued over the past thirty (30) days. One for Northshore Community Development Coalition and the other for Turner Seafoods (see June 21, 2021 TC minutes). Payments were made into the Tree Replacement Fund: \$12,037.50 from the CDC and \$3,712.50 from Turners, totaling \$15,750.
- Five (5) trench permits have been issued for work near the dripline of a public tree, several more are in progress. The permitting process is done online and is sent to the Tree Warden for comments. The Engineering Department has been very helpful, as this process is still working out the bugs. Last year the Engineering Department received five hundred (500) requests for trench permits. Although the process is

documented well, the site visits still need to be performed and that still takes up a lot of time.

- Tree planting for the fall is in the planning process.

**2. Greening of the Gateway Cities – Barbara Warren, Salem Sound Coastwatch – community outreach**

Barbara Warren was on the call and spoke about the new grant she had applied for this year in May, but unfortunately, she has had no response from the state yet. SSC handed out GGC literature at the Wild Fish Open Water Swim Festival at Collins Cove Beach on August 7<sup>th</sup>. They also completed the postcard mailing to approximately 3,200 homes, which is generating many calls of interest.

Ms. Melis read the following statement from Dave Bresnahan: “Dave Bresnahan and Ana Nenshati (GGCP Forestry Assistant) have been busy responding to requests for free trees from homeowners. They have 150+ trees in the backlog sited so far and calls are coming in daily. They have also met with Salem Housing Authority management to plan to plant trees at four public Housing Complexes. Michael Griffin has transferred to a different role as a Regional Forester and will still assist as needed in Salem. The fall planting season is set to begin the first week of September.”

**3. The House of the Seven Gables, Kara McLaughlin – parking lot landscaping**

Kara McLaughlin, Executive Director of The House of The Seven Gables, was on the call and discussed plans to remove four (4) Protected Trees on the Hardy Street side of their parking lot and replace with site appropriate trees. Also on the call was Bruce Campbell, the landscaper for the property. He explained to the commission that the tree canopies are declining and it is much better to remove and replace them.

Ms. Melis explained that she had had discussions with Ms. McLaughlin and as a result, had some suggestions for revisions to a new application. Ms. Melis proposed that in consideration of the consistent investment that the museum has made in its trees over the last several years and the severe financial restraints imposed by the Covid pandemic, that the conditions on the Protected Tree Removal Permit be modified to extend the replacement plan from eighteen (18) months to five (5) years in order to accommodate the museum’s fundraising schedule.

She also suggested that the additional replacement inches be used up by planting successor trees throughout the museum campus. Members encouraged that the planned future replacement of the parking lot plum trees utilize taller trees that will increase shade on the pavement.

Ms. Cottrell agreed with Mr. Campbell that the trees would not reverse their decline despite continued pruning. A discussion followed about determining the value of such trees. Mr. LeBlanc explained that under the circumstances, the value of these trees might be calculated based on the ratio of live crown length to total tree height. The Salem Code of Ordinances, Chapter 43-39 authorizes the Tree Warden to promulgate reasonable rules and regulations to implement administration of this ordinance such as using the Live Crown Ratio and other measures. Ms. Melis agreed with such an adjustment but cautioned that if accommodations are extended to declining trees, on the other end of the continuum, healthy

Protected Trees of exceptional girth might merit additional cost per caliper inch to account for their extraordinary contribution to the neighborhood.

Mr. LeBlanc will work with The House of the Seven Gables to make sure they are within the guidelines and will keep the commission informed.

4. **SIFI NETWORKS SALEM FIBERCITY Optic Installation Project**

Ms. Melis read a statement from Deb Duhamel: “Construction has not started. Engineering has not yet issued a street opening permit for the pilot work. The pilot work is on Jackson Street. SiFi and Bob walked the pilot. SiFi submitted a permit application to Bob for the tree(s) impacted. Bob has provided SiFi with a permit for the pilot work with conditions. Engineering is hoping to be able to issue a street opening permit for the pilot work by early next week. Construction would be at least 30 days after the date of issuance of that permit. Might make more sense to have an update once we have a mobilization date.”

5. **Mission Statement – Susan Yochelson and Rachel McCarter**

Ms. Yochelson and Ms. McCarter drafted a Mission Statement for the Tree Commission webpage. The commission edited and reviewed it and will vote on it at the next meeting.

6. **Century Tree – Loring Avenue (vote to designate as CT & order this tag + Albion St. tag)**

Mr. LeBlanc said he was not happy with the tree at 12 Loring Avenue. The tree at 22 Albion Street is good and should receive a Century Tree Tag.

Mr. Arenstam made a motion to go ahead and designate the Albion Street planting as a Century Tree and place the order for a tag. Seconded by Mr. Rieder. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion carried unanimously.

7. **Approve Tree Commission Minutes of June 21, 2021**

Mr. Arenstam made a motion to approve the Tree Commission Minutes of June 21, 2021. Seconded by Ms. Yochelson. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion carried unanimously.

8. **New Business**

Mr. Rieder stated that the Planning Board approved a development at the former HMA site at 4 Franklin Street. The applicant, CAS SALEM LLC, as part of its Site Specific Conditions will pay for planting up to eight (8) deciduous shade trees either on the slope of the North Street bridge embankment or on their property. Mr. LeBlanc will determine the caliper size and species. See online Planning Board Decision: [https://www.salem.com/sites/g/files/vyhlf3756/f/uploads/pb\\_4\\_franklin\\_street\\_-\\_decision\\_-\\_2021.08.05.pdf](https://www.salem.com/sites/g/files/vyhlf3756/f/uploads/pb_4_franklin_street_-_decision_-_2021.08.05.pdf)

9. **Next Meeting Dates: Monday, September 20, 2021 at 6:00 p.m. and Monday, October 18, 2021 at 6:00 p.m. via Zoom**

10. **Adjournment**

Mr. Rieder made a motion to adjourn. Seconded by Mr. Arenstam. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion carried unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joanne M. Roomey  
Commission Clerk

**Know your rights under the Open Meeting Law M.G.L. c. 30A §18-25 and  
City Ordinance Sections 2-2028 through 2-2033**