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KIRT RIEDER, VICE CHAIR

ROBERT LEBLANC, TREE WARDEN

Touch the Future - Plant a Tree

**MINUTES OF THE SALEM TREE
COMMISSION DECEMBER 20, 2021**

A meeting of the Salem Tree Commission was held on December 20, 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, Paul L'Heureux, Rachel McCarter and David Rowand; Tree Warden Robert LeBlanc and Commission Clerk Joanne Roomey. Absent were Curtis Dragon and Susan Yochelson.

1. Tree Warden's Report

- The Salem Tree Department has temporarily been hit with the COVID-19 exposure and right now two of the three staff members are out until they complete the quarantine protocols. Mr. LeBlanc expects work to get back under way as of the new year and has scheduled the workload by priority for then. Some of the Cemetery staff are still out doing some of the urgent branch pick-ups, as needed and the larger work will be subcontracted.
- Over 200 tree watering bags were picked up around the city at the most recent planting sites. Some of the watering bags can be re-used, others are badly soiled, mostly by dogs. Replacement bags will be purchased over the winter and the lists will be revised to get this very important part of tree care back out for late spring/summer. The tree watering program was an essential part of the establishment of all the new trees, and Mr. LeBlanc anticipates good results for the spring growth and re-leaf.
- Over the course of 2021, there were over 20 trench permits issued through the Engineering and the Planning Departments online application process. Presently, there is a moratorium on the cutting of roads for underground work, so this activity will drop till early spring. This online process has brought to the forefront the requirements on contractors. Several have reached out to the Tree Warden directly to get input and to inquire about specifications for the protection of trees. There have been a couple of incidents where the contractors have needed to be pushed to get the permit requirements met, but for the most part it has been successful.
- On November 22, 2021, a 37' 4,500-pound spruce tree was transported from a private residence as a donation to Lappin Park, where the tree was decorated and is on display for the holiday season. The Salem tree crew did an excellent job moving such a large specimen and preparing it for the site.

- During the month of January, the tree crew will be tasked with collecting and chipping all the curbside Christmas trees left out from the holidays. Once this process has been completed, the expectations will be to focus on catching up with the See Click Fix pruning requests and some winter additional pruning of trees as needed.
- As reported in the news release this week, a 50' silver maple was taken down on Federal Street last week. This tree was being monitored for its health over the past couple of years and the tree decay in the main trunk continued to expand 20' up its unusual, twisted trunk. A level II Risk Assessment was performed by the Tree Warden and a tomogram, using sonic tomography, was also performed by a local landscape company to verify the extent of the decay within the main trunk. Any mitigation measures required to reduce the risk of personal and property injury were too extensive to retain the tree's canopy in a safe structural balance. The tree also had a utility pole guy wire attached to the main trunk that probably added to the internal decay.
- The Tree City USA application for re-certification is nearly complete, Mr. LeBlanc is just getting the final financial report from the Finance Director. Salem should easily meet all the requirements as established by the National Arbor Day Foundation. Mr. LeBlanc will have the application signed by the mayor and submit it electronically.

2. **Greening of the Gateway Cities – Barbara Warren**

DCR has planted 403 trees in Salem toward their goal of 2,400. This despite the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic, and a labor crew shortage. Of the 403 trees, 358 were planted on private property. Twenty-two were planted in partnership with Salem Housing Authority - 20 at Rainbow Terrace and two at Bertram Terrace. The watering and maintenance of the HA trees will be the responsibility of HA facilities management with watering assistance from enthusiastic tenants.

Twenty-three public street trees were planted through the program. The majority of street trees planted were at the request of abutting homeowners, who have signed an agreement to water those trees for two whole growing seasons.

DCR has a backlog of 52 trees in Salem for the spring 2022 planting season. The majority of these are on private property with an additional 12 street trees requested by residents. A more even distribution of tree plantings was seen later in the year with most eligible neighborhoods participating in the program with one exception. Residents and landlords in the Point neighborhood have not been as responsive to postcard mailers and canvassing (door-knocking) efforts.

The program has agreed to plant between 5-10 park trees at Gonyea Park pending approval from the Salem Parks and Recreation Commission. DCR will be recruiting long-term seasonal and short-term seasonal staff as we approach the spring 2022 planting season.

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

Mr. LeBlanc spoke with the Assistant City Engineer, Deb Duhamel last week and she has informed him that the project on Jackson Street, which was Pilot #1 was completed. This was the installation of fiber optic lines on the remaining side of the street from Broad Street down to Jefferson Ave. This project is on hold for the remainder of the winter season. The project engineers will be back to discuss the plans for 2022.

4. MassWorks - Road and sidewalk projects, North Salem walk to MBTA and The Point Street upgrades – Dave Knowlton

Mr. Knowlton spoke about two points regarding upgrades to streets and sidewalks:

- 1) **North Salem:** pedestrian and bike route to the commuter rail, downtown
- 2) **The Point:** Peabody, Ward, Harbor, Leavitt and Congress Streets
 - ADA improvements for crosswalks, sidewalks and streets
 - Plant street trees
 - Improve lighting

He estimates that the plans will be developed within the next two months and construction will start in late spring or early summer. Mr. Knowlton will follow the Tree Manual Guidelines and will keep Mr. LeBlanc informed about the progress. Mr. LeBlanc will discuss with Jay Carroll the roadway projects and will give the commission an overview of their discussion.

5. Greenlawn Cemetery – Summary of Master Plan – Bob LeBlanc

- The City Council met in November of 2019 and wanted to know how many available spots were still at Greenlawn Cemetery for future burials.
- A Cemetery Master Plan RFP was put together and was advertised in the spring of 2020.
- Martha Lyon and her team were the lowest and most responsive bidders, based on M.G.L. Chapter 30B Procurement Law.
- Ms. Lyon held several public forums with residents of Ward 6, neighborhood groups, Friends of Greenlawn, and a joint session with the Historical and Conservation Commissions and city staff. The forums identified community perceptions of present cemetery uses and future considerations for the master plan.
- Ms. Lyon identified five locations around the historic Greenlawn Cemetery that could accommodate a “combination of columbarium walls (niches for cremation urns), in-ground cremation burials, in-ground full casket burials and scattering gardens.”
- A tree inventory of these five areas was conducted to survey 300 trees for tree health, size, and condition.
- Tree maintenance recommendations were presented for these areas in order to address the needs of the over 25-30% of trees that were in poor health.
- A drone image was taken of the entire cemetery and the trees were plotted with a GPS location.

- The master plan is nearing completion.
- The tree maintenance section of the plan will be beneficial to the overall appearance and health of these arboretum trees.

https://www.salem.com/sites/g/files/vyhlif3756/f/uploads/greenlawn_cemetery_progress_meeting-presentation-10-20-2021-cemetery_commission.pdf

6. **Tree Preservation Incentive Proposal – David Rowand**

Following up on Liz Vago’s October suggestion, Mr. Rowand reported on his research as to whether any Massachusetts municipalities offered property tax discounts to promote private tree maintenance. He contacted the Multi-Town Gas Leaks Initiative, one of the many member organizations within the Gas Leaks Allies. The response from the Wellesley member indicated that as far as they were concerned, there were no such refunds. “Incentives” had been informally discussed but not acted upon. They also mentioned Mr. Rowand’s question would be brought up at the next MTGLI meeting in January 2022.

Mr. Rowand believes that there are no incentives in the state and that the tree commission should ascertain whether there are any legal avenues to pursue the concept in Salem.

7. **DCR Challenge Grant Report – Main Points**

- The intent of the survey was to increase the urban canopy in identified heat island locations and areas of environmental justice.
- It was based on the information that was gathered in August 2016 study done by New England Civil Engineering Corp.
- Criteria was established to identify target spots for planting, areas that restrict planting and how to accommodate the “right tree in the right place.”
- **Municipal Vulnerable Preparedness (MVP)** - Heat Island or Storm Water impacts.
- **Vulnerable Community** - Environmental Justice Area or Low-Income Housing.
- **Tree Planting Category** - Site conditions for tree selection and size.
- **Energy Conservation** - geographic location of the tree planting site and the benefits of choosing one side or another of a house - north, south, east or west.
- **Restrictions** - Planting site restrictions due to overhead lines, curb cuts, sidewalks or line of sight.
- **Plant site ownership** - Public or Private.
- **Special Conditions** - Empty tree pits, setback plantings or site re-design.
- **Priority Analysis** - Rating of 1,028 potential planting locations on a scale of 1-4.

This information will be further analyzed for the spring 2022 planting locations and future planting of trees in Salem.

8. **Trees for Mayor Anthony V. Salvo Multi-Use Path, Canal Street – Darleen Melis**

Through the city’s work with the MBTA, Mr. Knowlton has contacts within that organization who might be able to help with getting more trees planted along the multi-

use path. He will give Ms. Melis the contact person for the MBTA. Mr. Knowlton will coordinate with Mr. LeBlanc regarding the status of the upgrades to the streets.

9. American Rescue Plan – Representative Paul Tucker - \$200,000 to “plant trees and improve Salem’s tree canopy”

The first step in the ARPA funding process is that the Salem City Treasurer will receive the \$200,000 for planting trees and improving Salem’s tree canopy. Once the money is received, it will then go to the mayor’s office for her recommendations. Mr. Tucker estimates that the funds will be released by the end of January or February 2022. Representative Tucker will be in contact with Mr. LeBlanc and the Tree Commission on future progress.

Representative Tucker spoke to the commission and explained the process of Bill H.905, an Act Establishing the Municipal Reforestation Program. For further information, please see: <https://malegislature.gov/Bills/192/H905/Cosponsor>.

10. Poster for Century Tree – Darleen Melis

The Tree Commission discussed a proposed sign, “Touch the future, plant a tree.” Ms. Melis wanted to know if the commission thought a sign with a QR Code would be useful to get the word out for folks to either plant trees or plant Century Trees by contributing to the Salem Tree Donation Fund. The matter was tabled.

11. Update First Street development plantings – Kirt Rieder

Mr. Rieder stated that the developer’s landscape contractor planted the wrong trees. The planning department has advised the developer of the error and that they must submit an as-built landscape plan before they can get permission for the next phase. This is closed.

12. Approve Tree Commission Minutes of November 15, 2021

Mr. Arenstam made a motion to approve the Tree Commission Minutes of November 15, 2021. Seconded by Mr. Rieder. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion carried unanimously.

13. Tree Commission Meeting Schedule for 2022

The Tree Commission meetings are held on the third Monday of every month. If the meeting falls on a Monday holiday, it will be held on the following Tuesday.

14. New Business

Mr. Rieder spoke about Norman Street where a chain link fence has sealed off the post office driveway. If this is no longer an active driveway and may be considered the city’s property, we could plant trees there along the sidewalk. Mr. LeBlanc will speak with Dave Knowlton from the Engineering Department.

15. Next Meeting Dates: Tuesday, January 18, 2021 at 6:00 p.m. and Tuesday, February 22, 2022 at 6:00 p.m. via Zoom

16. 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**