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**TREE COMMISSION**  
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DARLEEN MELIS, CHAIR  
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ROBERT LEBLANC, TREE WARDEN

***Touch the Future - Plant a Tree***

## **MINUTES OF THE SALEM TREE COMMISSION JANUARY 18, 2022**

A meeting of the Salem Tree Commission was held on January 18, 2022 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, Paul L'Heureux, Rachel McCarter, David Rowand and Susan Yochelson; Tree Warden Robert LeBlanc and Commission Clerk Joanne Roomey.

### **1. Tree Warden's Report**

- The Salem Tree Department has been working on winter pruning requests throughout the city. Each day they also help with chipping of Christmas trees from the curbside program of discarded trees around the neighborhoods. The Tree Department is still working at two men, with a third to return from Worker's Compensation next Monday, but with restrictions.
- Right now, working outside is extremely difficult and the wind chill makes working with chain saws and ariel lifts a little more of a challenge. Equipment takes longer to warm-up and hydraulic lines are slower to respond to lifting and maneuvering. The tree crew has kept working every day with very few mechanical breakdowns.
- On Sunday they had another high wind event, seems like this is now a weekly occurrence. Wind gusts were recorded at 60 mph. For reference, this is not normal weather, and this contributes to some of the tree failures over the course of a year in Salem. From the Tree Risk perspective, there is no way to predict or guarantee that tree branches will not break, or trees being uprooted with those wind velocities. Unfortunately, this is what adds to people's fears about trees in or around their yards. This event, there were ten reported incidents, and one tree was badly damaged and will need to be removed. Other un-seen damage that probably occurred will not be noticeable until leaf break this spring, when a broken branch fails to leaf out.
- The Holiday Tree was removed from Lappin Park on January 6<sup>th</sup>. This completes this annual project for the tree crew.
- The Massachusetts Tree Wardens and Foresters Association, Annual Conference is scheduled for January 11-12, was reverted to a virtual event, for the second year, due to the increased number of COVID outbreak cases and the lack of public confidence in hosting a large-scale professional gathering.

- A request by the Senior Planner at City Hall has been made to hang a piece of public art from a tree in Beatty Park this spring. The bronze butterfly has been proposed to be tied to a tree trunk, suspended above arms reach. Guidance was provided and technical support about the use of Arbor Tape and a couple of secure knots tied around the tree to accommodate the art piece. The art is supposed to be there for one year.
- The Tree City USA application for re-certification has been completed, signed by the mayor, and sent to National Arbor Day Foundation.

## 2. **Greening of the Gateway Cities**

- Barbara Warren, Salem Sound Coastwatch – community outreach
- DCR Forester David Bresnahan – trees for Gonyea Park, Northey Street

Ms. Warren said that they doubled their staff with two part-timers who are ready to go in the spring, one of whom speaks Spanish.

Mr. Bresnahan gave an overview of a GIS map by zones for 2021 plantings. There were 358 tree plantings on private properties. All of the approved street tree locations were gas-tested and will be watered by the homeowner, 24 public street trees were planted. Also planted were public trees at Salem Housing Authority complexes. Twenty were planted at Rainbow Terrace and an additional two were planted at Bertram Terrace at the corner of Summit Street and Willow Avenue. In all, 404 trees were planted by DCR since the program began in the spring of 2021. All the credit for the GIS maps goes to Gianna Hayes. Thank you, Gianna!!

## 3. **Presentation of tree planting plan for Gonyea Park – Flora Tonthat**

Gonyea Park is a small neighborhood park at 41 Northey Street that is located within one of the Greening of the Gateway Cities Program\* neighborhoods based on “lower tree canopy, older housing stock, higher wind speeds and larger renter population.”\* Ms. Tonthat was one of the active members on the Lorax Committee and is very familiar with the tree planting goals of the city. As president of The Bridge Street Neck Neighborhood Association, she approached the Parks and Recreation Commission to request permission to plant more trees in the park using the GGC program for free trees with no installation costs as previously agreed with Mr. Bresnahan. The P&R Commission granted the request provided the Tree Commission assisted with the tree plan.

Community members working with Ms. Tonthat included Chris Burke, formerly of the P&R Commission and horticulturalist Cady Goldfield. Tree Warden LeBlanc visited the park and determined that five of the existing trees are showing signs of stress and disease and need to be removed. He also confirmed Curtis Dragon’s opinion (following his site visit) that the trees had been too deeply planted in 2011, which explained why the trees are so stunted. Ms. Cottrell advised on the tree layout and Ms. Melis used the i-Tree Design program to ensure that the large canopy and fruiting understory trees would not conflict even after 35 years of growth. Ms. McCarter shared the PowerPoint presentation that she had created to illustrate what the mature trees would look like while Ms. Tonthat narrated the presentation and explained the species planting list and the planting map.

**4. Proposed endorsement by TC of Gonyea Park Planting Plan- Discussion and vote**

The commission discussed the Gonyea Park Planting Plan. They were pleased with the plan and the tree selection.

Mr. Arenstam made a motion to endorse the recommended, tree species planting list and the plan for 15 trees at Gonyea Park if the park were to be maximally planted. Seconded by Mr. Dragon. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. LeBlanc and the Tree Commission will follow-up with Park and Recreation.

**5. Tree trunks and root flares – Bob LeBlanc**

The Gonyea Park project brought to the fore the importance of properly planting trees so that the root flare, the transition from trunk to roots, is visible either at or even 2” above ground level. If planted too deeply, the tree’s roots are unable to obtain oxygen and the tree will not thrive. Additionally, if the root flare is covered by increasing mounds of mulch, the tree will develop secondary roots that can circle the buried trunk. These extra roots are called girdling roots because, like a too-tight belt, they cut into the bark and slowly kill off the tree, erasing the time, effort, and cost of tree planting.

Another serious problem at Gonyea Park and throughout Salem, is the use of mechanical weed trimmers so close to the tree trunk that the bark is cut away, stifling the flow of nutrients. One method of keeping trimmers away from trees is to lay 2” of mulch over the roots out to the drip line, although the mulch should stay 3” away from the trunk. Another method is to use plastic trunk guards to protect the bark. Mr. LeBlanc has purchased 50 such guards and will use some of them on the new trees at Gonyea if they are planted.

Mr. Dragon and Ms. Melis are willing to conduct a training session at the park to demonstrate the restoration of the root flare.

To learn more about this topic, visit the Tree Commission’s website, “Quick Links” section. A click on “Mulch Properly to Prevent Disease” will connect to a video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fl12XNNqldA>

**6. American Rescue Plan – Update on Rep. Tucker’s \$200,000 to “plant trees and improve Salem’s tree canopy”**

On January 12, 2022 there was a message that the governor’s office will send instructions on how to access the American Rescue Plan funds. Representative Tucker will get the request under way and will follow-up with Ms. Melis and Mr. LeBlanc.

**7. Approve Tree Commission Minutes of December 20, 2021**

Mr. Arenstam made a motion to approve the Tree Commission Minutes of December 20, 2021. Seconded by Mr. Rieder. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion carried unanimously.

**8. Approve updated Tree Commission Schedule for 2022**

Ms. Melis stated that Juneteenth is a city holiday and the offices are closed on Monday, June 20, 2022. Since the Tree Commission meetings are held on the third Monday of every month, that meeting will take place on Tuesday, June 21, 2022.

**9. New Business**

Ms. Yochelson is interested in working with volunteers on a community outreach program incorporating Mr. Arenstam's Instagram account.

**10. Next Meeting Dates: Tuesday, February 22, 2022 at 6:00 p.m. and Monday, March 21, 2022 at 6:00 p.m. via Zoom.**

**11. 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 7:30 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**