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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
JUNE 21, 2022**

A meeting of the Salem Tree Commission was held on June 21, 2022 at 6:00 p.m., via ZOOM, an online video conference call system. Present on call were:

1. Chair Darleen Melis, Vice Chair Kirt Rieder; Members: Naomi Cottrell, Rachel McCarter, David Rowand and Susan Yochelson; Tree Warden Robert LeBlanc and Commission Clerk Joanne Roomey. Absent were Joshua Arenstam, Curtis Dragon and Paul L'Heureux.
2. **Tree Warden's Report**
 - The Salem spring 2022 tree planting operations have been completed. A variety of trees were planted throughout the city. This spring, the total of trees planted was 86. This brings the three-year total, starting in fall 2019 to 385 trees. All these trees are on a watering program, most are being watered through the tree planting contract by outside services and tree planting guarantees. One third are being conducted by DPS staff on a weekly basis and filling the bags on two to three days during the work week. Other trees, mostly set-back planting will be the responsibilities of the homeowners.
 - The Washington St. traffic island planting project has been completed for this spring. A cooperative effort with the city staff, outside contractors and the DCR forestry crews have renovated a desperately neglected planting zone in the city downtown. The existing soils were found to be extremely hard packed and had a 4" layer of soil that was impervious. Soils were brought in to improve the planting areas and the rest of the site was mechanically scarified. The irrigation system that was on site was found to be unsalvageable, with numerous breaks and punctures in the system. The main source of water to the site was exposed and will be renovated this summer and will continue to provide water to the site for the future plantings and augmentation of the traffic island.
 - The tree pruning on the entrance corridors to the city have been completed. The chosen routes of North St., Lafayette St., Essex St., and the Winter St. area were in desperate need of the tree canopy clean-ups that were performed. Three of the most prominent contractors in the area were used and all worked with professional expertise to achieve the desired results. Some trees were identified as beyond the pruning stages and should be considered for removals in the coming year and a priority focus should be placed on replanting in those locations. These actions will sustain the life and age balance of the tree canopy in those traffic corridors of the city for the future.

- On June 8th, the City of Salem was once again recognized as a Tree City U.S.A in Massachusetts. This marks the seventeenth year of this award and confirms the city's commitment to meeting all the standards set out by the National Arbor Day Foundation for tree care in a community.
- Twenty-five tree permits have been issued in the past month. All these tree permits were for excavation under the dripline of public trees and mostly are coming from the utility companies, as they are working at many separate locations throughout the city. The Salem I.T. department is ready to launch the read/write version of this permit and will allow a much faster turnaround for this required paperwork. The process will allow the applicants to choose from a series of "drop-down" boxes to get the permit they are seeking and view standardized Conditions for the permit prior to completing the paperwork. Additionally, if the need for a permit has a donation to the Tree Replacement fund as part of the permit, the applicant will be able to pay online directly to the Treasurer's Office. Many thanks to Rob Banks, Brandon Kelso and Giovanna Recinos who helped pull this together. There will be some situations where a permit has certain agreements that will need to be added, not in a standard selection to protect the Public and Protected trees in the city, but this process will be far superior to what is in place.
- The Reimbursement forms for the Greening the Gateway Cities Municipal Grant for FY2022 are complete with signatures. The city will receive a \$20,000 reimbursement for the Washington St. traffic island project.

3. **Greening the Gateway Cities**

Ms. Warren and Mr. Bresnahan were unable to attend the Tree Commission meeting. Ms. Warren and Mr. Bresnahan will attend the July 18th meeting to give a spring planting update.

Salem Sound Coastwatch will be at the Farmers Market on June 30th and Greening the Gateway Cities Program will have a vertical banner that is double-sided with Spanish on one side and English on the other.

4. **American Rescue Plan – Update**

Mr. LeBlanc said the project has been completed. The city was awarded \$200,000 and has spent \$172,557 for the pruning along entrance corridors and for this spring's planting. With a balance of \$27,443, Mr. LeBlanc will try to extend the allotment into the next fiscal year.

5. **Salem Common – Landscape architect – next steps**

Ms. Cottrell said the bids will come back tomorrow and she should know who will get the contract and for how many trees. She will keep the commission updated.

6. **Salem Tree Donation Fund – Using the two tree funds – augment tree pits at Rockafella's and Tobias Jewelry for London plane trees?**

Ms. Melis asked the commission what they should do with the funds that have not been encumbered and wanted to know what is in the Tree Donation Fund now. She suggested a

project that would focus on larger tree pits especially in front of Rockefeller's on Washington Street where the large London plane trees are showing die back in the crowns. Mr. LeBlanc said we need to be careful how much is in the budget because it is expensive to open the tree pits and jack hammer them out. Ms. Cottrell observed that the new tree pits at Derby Square look great. Mr. LeBlanc enlarged those tree pits from 5'x7' to 9'x10'. The pits were surrounded by 4" slabs of reinforced concrete over dense gravel so it was a large undertaking.

7. **Tree Manual – Final review especially new section, “Community Benefits of Tree Planting”**

The commission thanked Ms. Melis and Ms. Yochelson for their contribution to the Tree Manual. It is ready for publication on the Tree Commission's webpage, although Ms. Yochelson would like to adjust a few wordings.

Mr. Rieder made a motion to accept Ms. Yochelson's additions with the understanding that the Tree Manual will be posted on the city's website by the week of July 4th. Seconded by Ms. Cottrell. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion carried unanimously.

8. **Distribution of Tree Manual, change of mulching practices in Salem**

Ms. Yochelson will draft an email and send it to the following departments and boards with a few introductory comments for the staff member to use when distributing the manual: Parks and Recreation; Engineering, Jay Carroll, P.E.; Planning, Conservation, Design Review, Salem Redevelopment; and Chamber of Commerce.

9. **Approve Tree Commission Minutes of May 16, 2022**

Mr. Rowand made a motion to approve the Tree Commission Meeting Minutes of May 16, 2022. Seconded by Ms. Cottrell. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion carried unanimously.

10. **Openings on the Tree Commission**

According to the Tree Ordinance Chapter 43-12 (2), one member of the commission would be appointed by the mayor from the LORAX Task Force. At the end of that term, the Tree Commission may recommend an individual for appointment by the mayor. Paul L'Heureux was initially appointed and is willing to serve another term.

Mr. Rieder nominated Paul L'Heureux to the mayor for consideration as a member of the Tree Commission for the period of July 2022 – July 2025. Seconded by Ms. McCarter. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion carried unanimously.

11. **New Business:**

Ms. Melis described a conversation she had with Rev. Nathan Ives, priest at St. Peter's Church in Salem who as a Rockport native has organized a volunteer effort to replant elms in Cape Ann <https://www.capeannelms.com/> His program solicits property owners to sponsor elm cultivars for their land. He purchases bareroot whips 6' – 8' tall for about \$30 – \$80 apiece from Bigelow Nurseries in Northborough, MA. Orders are placed in January and Bigelow gives him a 1 – 3 day notice that the trees have been dug and will

arrive shortly. The Rockport volunteer team plants all of the bareroot stock in 2 days. So far, they have planted 175 elms.

She introduced the commission to the idea that a similar bareroot program might be an inexpensive city pilot program for Ward 7 where the GGCP does not extend. She explained that Councillor Andy Varela thought the idea might be workable given that the Mack Park Farm group has a great many volunteers who might find the project interesting. The goal would be to plant the whips on front lawns where more soil volume would be available. Such volunteer programs are authorized by Sec. 43 – 13. (9) under the coordination of the Tree Warden.

12. Next Meeting Date: **Monday, July 18, 2022** at 6:00 p.m.

Mr. Rieder made a motion to proceed with July's meeting and to cancel August's meeting. Seconded by Ms. Yochelson. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion carried unanimously.

13. Adjournment at 6:45 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**