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**TREE COMMISSION**  
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DARLEEN MELIS, CHAIR  
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CONOR MORGAN  
ACTING TREE WARDEN

*Touch the Future - Plant a Tree*

**MINUTES OF THE SALEM TREE COMMISSION  
AUGUST 30, 2023**

A meeting of the Salem Tree Commission was held on August 13, 2023, at 7:00 p.m., via ZOOM, an online video conference call system in accordance with Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2023.

Present on call were:

1. Chair Darleen Melis, Vice Chair Kirt Rieder; Members: Cady Goldfield, Paul L'Heureux, Rachel McCarter, Jane Rumrill and Susan Yochelson; Conor Morgan, General Foreperson, Cemetery/Tree Division, DPS; and Commission Clerk Joanne Roomey. Absent was Naomi Cottrell.
2. **Conor Morgan, DPS Report**

One hundred tree issues reported in the month of July 2023, 42 were resolved; 28 were fallen city trees/ limbs; 2 were shrub overgrowth; 27 were tree health inspections; 8 were tree planting requests; 34 were tree pruning/trim/branch broken; 1 tree stump removal request, and downed branches were given priority as always.

As referred to at the last meeting, the tree crew's capacity had been vastly reduced by ongoing mechanical issues. Prior to these issues the deferred maintenance of various elements had been reduced to almost nothing. Likewise, the number of "SeeClickFix" requests and request waiting times had been reduced to almost nothing. During the period in which the bucket truck was out of action, a large backlog of requests developed. The repairs of the truck have finally been completed and the crew put to work as speedily as possible to clear the backlog. The crew now faces large staffing issues which we are working to remedy.

Activities at Greenlawn centered around the summer season chores of grass cutting and weed whacking. Ongoing efforts to develop Greenlawn in line with the Greenlawn Master Plan have focused on two areas of development. The columbarium development on the southern slope of the Dickson Chapel and the Burke Lot. The columbarium development has been led by Ms. Martha Lyons with ongoing discussions of the impact of the development on existing trees. We are still awaiting details beyond a concept sketch.

I have undertaken a detailed arboricultural impact assessment in the Burke Lot. We have engaged Mr. Misco and company to survey the ground there accurately locating the existing trees. I was then able to take caliper measurements from the survey undertaken by our colleagues at Salem State and Arbnet and use them to accurately plot the "Root Protection

Areas” of existing trees which we would like to examine for retention. Through close collaboration with our colleagues in Salem State and Arbnet, we were able to examine trees of high value. Together we were able to achieve what I believe to be an excellent compromise between the need to expand the cemetery and protect the majority of existing trees in the area. By removing a number of large trees in the interior of the lot we should be able to retain approximately 60% of the trees while also making usable for interment, approximately 60% of the Burke Lot. This should give us approximately 700 usable burial lots.

Regarding permitting issues in the last period, I have examined the potential arboricultural impact of proposed development by Crowley Wind Energy on Derby St. I have enjoyed making connections with the staff in the planning department and collaborating with them on a joint response regarding the trees there.

### **3. Greening the Gateway Cities Program**

Anna Sheridan, Project and Greenscapes Coordinator and David Bresnahan, DCR Forester did not appear. Will continue to next month’s meeting.

### **4. Salem Tree Steward Program (working title)**

Ms. Melis met a couple of weeks ago at Riley Plaza with Mr. Jodoin and Mr. Morgan to discuss recruiting volunteers to help with four small projects in non-traffic areas on Wednesday mornings from 9:00 a.m. until noon, on September 20<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> and October 4<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> led by Mr. Morgan. The commission suggested advertising for volunteers and will include the hours and list of duties to help the trees thrive. The participants will also have to sign a Waiver of Liability and Indemnity Agreement.

Mr. Reider made a motion to put the Salem Tree Steward Program together at Riley Plaza. Seconded by Ms. Yochelson. A roll call vote was taken and the motion was carried unanimously.

### **5. DCR Tree Steward Training resumes – October 13<sup>th</sup> in Amherst, October 27<sup>th</sup> in Newton <https://www.mass.gov/forms/dcr-tree-steward-training>**

Ms. McCarter and Ms. Melis both went to the DCR Tree Steward Training back in September of 2019. They found it very informative and recommend taking the training. It is designed for community tree board members, tree wardens, municipal staff, tree activists, planners, and green professionals. It is centered around the topics and issues of urban and community trees and forests.

### **6. Annual review of tree species recommendations – p. 22 – 25 Salem Tree Manual**

Ms. Melis discussed the Salem Tree Manual pages 22 to 25 regarding recommended large, medium and small street tree species. She suggested that Mr. Morgan had recently planted the following trees and recommended that they be added to the Tree Manual: *Catalpa speciosa*, *Quercus coccinea*, *Crataegus monongyna*, *Cornus Kousa*, *Magnolia virginiana*, *Quercus petraea*.

There were no objections to adding the above trees to the manual. The commission agreed to do whatever Mr. Morgan suggests.

**7. Essex Street Mall – status of trees between Washington and New Liberty Streets**

Ms. Melis discussed trees in distress on or around the Essex Street Mall.

- Crown damaged/too deeply planted trees in front of Cabot Wealth Management
- Dying Ash tree in front of Hotel Salem
- A dead tree on the side of Wicked Good Books was planted as part of the Municipal Vulnerability Program in Sept. 2019 but it was donated by the Institution for Savings as part of their 200th anniversary. The nearby Norway maples are sparsely leafed and need to be replaced.
- West side of Old Town Hall - two trees that should have been replaced during the Municipal Vulnerability Program in Sept. 2019 have now died and should be removed. One tree nearby has been removed and others need pruning.
- The walkway behind City Hall – maples are sparsely-leafed and failing. One tree has already been removed.
- Ginkgo trees next to the PEM plus those three that were painted blue two springs ago that are showing crown death (not due to the paint)

The commission discussed how we could avoid damage to tree plantings in the future - either by choosing different species, locations, or different techniques of planting.

**8. North Street – new tree planting failure at 8 North Street, possible gas leak**

Ms. Melis discussed the new tree planting failure at 8 North Street from a possible gas leak. She will follow up with Ray Jodoin about another gas testing.

**9. Revision of Mulching Poster**

The commission discussed a few updates to the poster. Ms. Rumrill will remove any reference to the season so that the signs can be reused. She will also make the dead branches of crown death due to over mulching more evident in the next version of the poster.

**10. Approve Tree Commission Minutes of July 17, 2023**

Mr. Reider made a motion to approve the Tree Commission Meeting Minutes of July 17, 2023. Seconded by Mr. L’Heureux. A roll call vote was taken and the motion was carried unanimously.

**11. New Business:**

There was a discussion regarding new trees being planted and how some people did not want the responsibility of taking care of them. Ms. Melis suggested sending flyers out to folks letting them know how to take care of the trees.

12. **Next Meeting Dates:** Monday, **September 18, 2023**, and Monday, **October 16, 2023**, at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom.
13. **Adjournment:** There being no further business to come before the Tree Commission this evening, Mr. Reider moved to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Ms. Rumrill. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion was carried unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at **8:12 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**