



CITY OF MOUNT VERNON

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Tree Advisory Board (TAB) MEETING MINUTES January 06, 2022, 4pm

A **REGULAR MEETING** of the Tree Advisory Board was held on Thursday, January 06, 2022, 4:05pm via Zoom.

Attendance:

Voting members: Eveline Feldmann/Chair • Marlene H. Wertheim/Vice Chair • Henry May • Marlon Molina.
Others: Jennifer Mastrogiorgio • Tanesia Walters. **Absent member:** Vincent DeVito

AGENDA

Approval of Minutes of Dec. 4

The document was approved unanimously.

Reports:

-Arbor Day Foundation Tree City USA

The submissions have been made successfully. The Arbor Day Foundation reported All New York applications should be notified by February 4th. For getting some Tree City USA street signs it has to be evaluated which roads and how many metal signs would be an adequate presence of our Tree City recognition. There are City procedures for installation. TAB would work with the Traffic Dept

-Tree Fund

Vice-chair Wertheim introduced the Chair to Darren Morton, the elected Comptroller. It was an educational and inspiring conversation regarding his experiences and plans in his new position. He understands our tree ordinance and gave us valuable recommendations concerning our 3 main focus points:

-First: The implementation of the TO

-Second: The integration of the TAB into City process and

-Third: The establishing and of process for the Tree Escrow Account. He will give us an update once he took position and already has recommended a quarterly review and monthly updates and promised to establish the necessary codes for the system for revenue and expenditures of the fund.

-Staffing, Technology and Workflow

In November, our legal advisor left her position. Corporation Counsel is aware of the need for the future, for we anticipate many inquires that will require legal review and counsel. The new City Counsel person Danielle Browne will be the link to our board, as Chair of Legislation and DPW. New staffing in City Hall that is in progress: Planning Commissioner, Chief of Staff. Under consideration now is the setting up of a sustainability role in Dept. Public Works with Shayne Brooks.

We need to learn about access to a TAB drop box or drive where we can make internal documents and educational literature accessible to our board members without having files being sent around as attachments.

Unfinished Business: TO implementation and TAB integration

-A process must be put into place whereby the TAB and Tree Surgeon are included in the regular chain of departments and boards receiving all development applications for review and comment.

-To be determined is how to formally catalogue violations or concerns. What is to be the mechanism for permit intake?

-A recent example of the Tree Ordinance in operation was noted regarding a site on Millington Street, where there are many trees to be considered. The developer is following the guidelines offered by the ordinance and is aware of his removal, replanting and payment options. It was noted, however, the TAB is awaiting a referral from the Planning Board requesting a recommendation for this application. There is work to be done, but progress is being made.

Tree Updates from our Arborist

Vinny is out ill, item was tabled

New Business: Tree Issues referred to TAB by the community

-Invasive Species: We’ve received a communication from Councilwoman Duarte about a resident having an issue with invasive bamboo. The question is how to report an invasive species. As the ordinance does refer to invasives we have not established a specific selection of invasive species presenting problems in our community. That would be established along the list of tree recommendations for the City of Mount Vernon. Question if we can expand the SeeClickFix drop down menu to generally accommodate reports in regard of TO violations.

-North MacQuesten Parkway: It was a blow to the surrounding community to have a clear cutting of 37 trees, a long strip of buffer shielding an apartment building and screening out train sounds. Among the removed were 4 street trees, crimson maples in good condition. This is a development approved prior to the Tree Ordinance, yet worthy of investigation. Why were the trees cut? Who approved this? Who gave permission to remove the street trees? Board Member Molina was helpful in providing a first requested document. The approved site plan documents would be reviewed prior determining any answers. He added that construction site violations are the domain of the Building Dept. He will investigate how complaints are received. We want to be able to respond to citizens upset by these events.

-East Birch Street: A good educational example was brought up by a resident. The flare of three trees was cut back when the sidewalk was repaired. Root/sidewalk conflicts are common in Mount Vernon, on public and private properties. It would be well worth our while to educate ourselves about resolution options.

-Hayward and E Devonia Avenues: On a positive note – A resident texted the Chair with a concern about “a tree being butchered by ConEd.” The Chair was able to assure her that the action was part of the storm preventative maintenance that is being carried out by DPW.

Watchful citizens lead to greater understanding of and engagement in what is going.

Announcements

-The City Council passed a resolution declaring an Arbor Day celebration on Saturday, April 30, 2022. Discussions about location and planning will follow at a later date.

Next meeting will be on Thursday, January 20, 2022

The meeting concluded at 4:50 p.m. A video of this meeting is accessible at:
<https://www.facebook.com/mountvernonny/videos/tree-advisory-board-meeting/700303578021631/>



Eveline Feldmann, Chair

January 20th, 2022

Date of Approval