

City of Concord
Conservation Commission
Tree Sub-Committee

Minutes of December 6, 2019 Meeting

Meeting was convened at 8:00 am at City Hall, 41 Green Street

In attendance:

Subcommittee Members: Ted Diers, Heidi Lemay, Zib Corell, Craig Tufts, Peter Breu

Subcommittee Members Absent: Guy Petell

Conservation Commission Members: Rick Chormann

Staff: Beth Fenstermacher (Planning), Chip Chesley (GSD), Jim Major (GSD), Ryan Rambeau (GSD)

Others: Cory Keeffe (State Community Forester), John Regan (resident/volunteer)

1. Call to Order.

Ted called the meeting to order shortly after 8:00

2. Minutes of November 1, 2019 meeting

The minutes of November 1 were approved unanimously.

3. Tree Inventory

Ted gave the group an overview of the tree inventory trial that Ted, Zib, Craig, John, and Cory conducted on November 21 along Franklin Street. He and others who were there reported that they learned quite a bit from their experience. There were questions on how far back from the street we should inventory trees, discussion on being specific when identifying tree species, comments on the skill/training required to judge condition and to measure crown width etc. It was noted that because of the complexity it may be better or more effective to hire a professional to do the inventory rather than rely on volunteers. Zib noted that a benefit of using volunteers for the inventory is that it engages the public more and would allow for interactions on the street.

Discussion turned on to the purpose of the inventory. In the short term, there is a need to inform City Council on the street tree conditions. To do this, volunteers can verify on paper the tree canopy compared to what was collected in 2001. Longer term, TreeWorks is likely to be the best fit and should probably be collected professionally. It was noted that the data points entered into TreeWorks is similar to those Ted (and the committee) had put together and tested out in the field.

Jim Major noted that the city will plant trees in the Right of Way and within 10 feet of the right of way for the sustainable tree program, but only maintain trees that are in the right of way. It was suggested that it may not be appropriate to inventory trees that are outside of the city's right of way.

At the next meeting, Craig will provide a large map of the area with the 2001 tree points. The committee will divide up the area into pieces for volunteers to do an inventory. Each volunteer will be provided a map of their area to check on the trees that are in the 2001 dataset to see if they are still there and estimate their condition. It was not decided if new trees not present in 2001 should be noted or if spaces for potential new trees should be noted. Property lines can be included on these maps, along with a unique tree ID value.

4. Tree Replacements – Draft Letter

Beth had distributed to the committee before the meeting a draft sample letter to send to property owners who are not in compliance with their Planning Board approved landscape plan. There was extensive discussion on the tone of the letter. There was reluctance to sound too harsh. It was decided however that the letter needed to remain factual. When people call in (as the letter requests), that is the opportunity to be friendly and flexible if needed. The last paragraph in the letter that includes information on the benefits of trees was agreed to be a good addition and a positive element.

Properties that fail to comply or are not implementing a plan to comply will be forwarded to Code, where enforcement actions would take place.

Beth said she had an initial list of properties known to be out of compliance that would be the first to receive letters. After that the committee may need to do a little work.

It was also discussed that along with a copy of the approved plans, they be sent some additional information on suggested tree species, etc.

5. Outreach to Committees and Boards

Ted and Zib reported on their meeting with the Energy Committee. The energy committee is now focused on energy production, particularly solar energy, but was complimentary to the work the tree committee is trying to do. Ted and Zib agreed it was positive to reach out to them.

There was discussion on who next to reach out to. We already reached out to Parks and Rec, but should try to get on a future Recreation & Parks Advisory Committee agenda. It was suggested that the Zoning Board would be a good next fit. The ZBA could be informed on the positive benefits of trees. The ZBA has the ability to grant variances that allow applicants to not plant the required trees or landscaping. They could consider it a “hardship”, and there may be decisions for example on trees versus parking that the ZBA makes. Ted, Zib, Peter, and Craig indicated an interest in going to the ZBA meeting in January if their schedules allow.

Other future groups to reach out to are the Schools and the Transportation Policy Advisory Committee.

6. Other Business

The group agreed it was a good meeting and we are making progress as a committee!

7. Next Meeting: Thursday January 9 at 8 am City Hall

Meeting adjourned at approximately 9:10 am

Respectfully Submitted,
Craig Tufts, Secretary

General To-Do List

Craig would prepare a map of the 2001 tree inventory so the group can divide it into sections for volunteers

Beth and Ted would see about getting on the agenda of the January ZBA meeting and invite Craig, Zib, and Peter.

Beth would make any minor edits to the enforcement letter and advance that effort.