



KIMBERLEY DRISCOLL
MAYOR

CITY OF SALEM, MASSACHUSETTS
TREE COMMISSION

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DARLEEN MELIS, CHAIR
KIRT RIEDER, VICE CHAIR

ROBERT LEBLANC, TREE WARDEN

MINUTES OF THE SALEM TREE COMMISSION
December 21, 2020

A meeting of the Salem Tree Commission was held on December 21, 2020 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, Paul L'Heureux, Rachel McCarter, David Rowand, Susan Yochelson and Tree Warden Robert LeBlanc and Commission Clerk Joanne Roomey. Absent were Naomi Cottrell and Curtis Dragon.

1. Tree Warden's Report

- Grant Updates:
 - The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has notified the City of Salem that we are on the list for the Greening of the Gateway Cities Program and a \$20,000 GGC Municipal Grant has been awarded for preparing tree planting locations, gas testing, materials and equipment to supplement 2021 plantings. Additionally, a GGC Non-Profit Grant for \$15,000 was awarded to Salem Sound Coastwatch organization for education, outreach and tree care. Right now, these are announcements, no paperwork has been forwarded for city officials to sign and send back to the commonwealth. The contract will be the signal that everything is in place, the start date will be identified, and the actual work can begin.
 - COVID-19 has hit the DPS working group that I supervise and the end of the month of November was difficult. Two of the staff were in direct contact at work with another individual from another department and those two were sent home, per protocol and sought medical testing to verify their exposure. Fourteen (14) days of quarantine followed, and the workflow was impacted. All other staff members requested to be tested and most of them are now tested weekly. The working conditions changed to a much more guarded posture and although weekly sanitation of all work areas was ongoing at the time, that is now more strict and daily health sheets are filled out and turned in to the Salem BOH.
 - On November 24th, a beautiful 40' blue spruce was harvested at a home on Sable Road, hoisted by a crane, laid on a flatbed trailer and driven to Lappin Park. Good thing we had Salem PD and a cruiser, as this tree was a full width evergreen and was quite a sight coming down Highland Ave. and Essex Street. The tree crew trimmed the tree and the 60-ton crane put it in place. For the next several days the tree crew and the bucket truck were busy doing holiday decorations in the downtown.

- The tree watering bags have been collected and stored for the winter on all the spring and fall plantings from this year. Ms. Melis asked that the bags on the four Century Trees also be collected for the winter.
- The Salem tree crew, since our November meeting has responded to two severe windstorm events, November 30th and December 5th and a Nor'easter this past Thursday. The damage to trees in Salem has been minimal, with only a couple of broken branches and trees tangled in wires. The regular tree pruning maintenance list is ongoing and the bucket truck is out almost daily. The tree crew will participate in (electrical hazard awareness) EHAP training this winter and it looks like we will partner with a private company to get that training.
- The Public Shade Tree Hearing that took place on August 5th, is complete. I have never been involved in a tree hearing that took as long as these two did, but permits were issued for two (2) public trees to be removed and the replacements are: five (5) at the #106 Bridge Street project and the proposed planting of three (3) on the Washington Square East project, one (1) tree on North Street and money was deposited into the Tree Replacement Fund of \$450. Mr. Arenstam mentioned that the WSE project added a tree on the Briggs Street corner behind the project sign in response to public comment during the hearing. Additionally, it was noted that the tree pit at 106 Bridge Street needs to be filled with concrete. Hard pack is acceptable until spring.
- Mr. Rieder added a reminder at this point that another donation to the Tree Replacement Fund, the value of one replacement tree, is to be expected from the owner of 413 Essex Street. Land from the fire station next door was transferred to the house in order to create a driveway thereby eliminating a city tree pit. The donation was a condition of the Planning Board decision that the applicant accepted without reservation
- National Grid has been working in the City now for the past three (3) months and the original completion date was December 31st, but that will be pushed out a couple of weeks into January. The power companies are required by law to submit an annual vegetation management plan to the City Tree Warden and I anticipate some discussion about next year's circuit pruning to be scheduled in the coming months. To date, there have not been any serious incidents with concerned residents and my inspections have found, for the most part, acceptable arboricultural work on the municipal trees.
- The Tree City USA application will be submitted by the end of the year.

2. DCR Urban and Community Challenge Grant – Survey update Mr. James MacArthur, Professional Environmental Services

James MacArthur, Professional Environmental Services, is working on the DCR Challenge Grant survey to identify suitable, street tree planting locations. Mr. MacArthur will prepare spreadsheets from the surveys and will focus everything by wards. He is working with Jack Nessen from GIS to create Excel spreadsheets from all the data that is collected. Mr. MacArthur is planning on presenting his updates and looking for feedback from the commission at the January meeting. He sent a Landscape Trees manual that he is interested in discussing in subcommittee. Any hours spent on review of the document should be recorded in the Volunteer Labor Log, Urban and Community Forestry Challenge Grant. Mr. MacArthur mentioned that volunteers can help with surveying Wards 3, 4 and 6 using his forms and that they will be logging their hours for this work as well.

3. Remarks from the Public - None

4. Approve Tree Commission Minutes of November 16, 2020

Mr. Arenstam made a motion to approve the Tree Commission Minutes of November 16, 2020. Seconded by Mr. Rieder. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion carried unanimously.

5. Salem Tree Fund – Century Tree sites for spring 2021 – PR efforts

The Century Tree tags have arrived. Once the Tree Commission webpage has been corrected, Ms. Melis will work with the mayor’s office to create a PR event around hanging the tags on the four (4) trees. A larger fundraising plan is needed but the tag hanging might be an introductory step to encourage donations to the Salem Tree Fund, which provides funds for more Century Trees.

The commission will start gathering suggestions for suitable locations for 2021. The Tree Warden will investigate the planting conditions and recommend promising sites for consideration. Susan Yochelson noted that the Greening of the Gateway Cities program may turn up some candidate locations for Century Trees.

6. Tree Care document – How to distribute

The Do’s and Don’ts of the “Newly Planted Tree Care Guide” are available in both English and Spanish on the city’s website: <https://www.salem.com/tree-commission/pages/tree-care-flyer-spanish-english>. Mr. Arenstam created a Twitter account, which is up and running at SalemTree.com. He is also working on an Instagram account with the city’s IT Department. The guide will be placed in common areas such as: City Hall, the Library and at DPW.

7. **Salem Tree Manual – Discussion of V. Street Tree Species Recommendations, Sections A., B., C.**

Mr. LeBlanc suggested to define the three sizes of street trees:

- Small – under 35’
- Medium – 35’ to 45’
- Large – greater than 45’

Mr. Rieder made a motion to define the language in the Salem Tree Manual, Section V. Street Tree Species Recommendations, to reflect the sizes of the trees. Mr. Rowand seconded. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion carried unanimously.

8. **New Business**

Mr. Rieder reported progress on a planning board issue at Pickering Wharf. The 98 Wharf owner has agreed to replace two ornamental trees with the three red maples approved by the planning board. This has not yet occurred, and the schedule is unknown, but the planting is expected in spring 2021.

Ms. Melis brought the Cataldo Ambulance redevelopment of the former HMA car wash site on Franklin Street to the commission’s attention. The land that is sandwiched between the Cataldo site and the North River Bridge embankment is city land. The land may present some opportunity for greening the area especially as it is part of the walkway that connects Franklin Street to the railroad station. She asked that news from the Planning Department or the Department of Public Services regarding this city land be brought to the commission’s attention.

9. **Next Meeting Dates:** Tuesday, January 19, 2021 at 6:00 p.m. via ZOOM and Tuesday, February 16, 2021 at 6:00 p.m. via ZOOM

10. **Adjournment** - Mr. Arenstam made a motion to adjourn. Seconded by Mr. Rieder. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion carried unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 7:20 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**