

Tree Board Minutes

April 18, 2024
Town Hall Room 201
4:30 PM

Dick Stein, Ed Picard, Sarah Adair and Tree Warden Ben Syskas from the Board were present. From the public, Louis Mall, Lawrence Tirreno and Charlie Tirreno were present.

Ed motioned to approve the minutes from March, Dick seconded the motion and Sarah, Ed, and Dick all approved.

Sarah asked if there was any input into the “recommended tree planting list” handed out at last month’s meeting. Sarah showed the Planter’s Choice catalogue with lists of trees in the back and mentioned that Dick had brought it yesterday as a guide for a list for the town Tree Board web page. Dick’s one concern was that the Board should not recommend ONLY natives. Ed, Ben and Sarah were in agreement. Ben thought the Planter’s Choice catalogue could be a good second source along with the Conservation Department planting list.

Sarah brought up the Staples intern resume to show to the board and asked that everyone come up with a list of suggested projects he could work on for the 66 hours he would complete in three weeks, starting May 20th. All agreed to come up with ideas for the Staples intern.

Sarah brought up the idea of creating Tree id signs for trees on walking trails in town parks. Members were concerned that the signs might not last. Ben suggested that we reach out to Mike West first to see if Parks & Rec would be willing to have signs on trees on Parks & Rec property. Dick brought up the fact that Westport doesn’t have a history of trees planted or donated.

Sarah brought up the idea of working with RTM Environment Committee and/or Conservation Department to sponsor a talk at Town Hall or the Library with a speaker to address Westport flooding, protection of tall, mature trees, birds. Sarah mentioned CT DEEP and CT Audubon have people that give talks. Dick questioned what audience we could get and agreed it would depend on advertising, marketing, and working with various groups to widen the conversation.

Ben reported that next week he will plant a tree in the back of Saugatuck Elementary School for Arbor Day. The kids will observe and record the changes throughout the year. He will pick up the Arbor Day plugs Wednesday or Thursday and drop them off with Dick Stein until Friday for the Arbor Day give away at town hall. We will have brochures for the proper planting of trees, Tree Board pens and pencils, and stickers to hand out. The town will provide the tables and

Dick will provide the tent. QR Codes will be laminated and on the tables for the public to get information on Red Bud, Flowering Dogwoods and Common Horse Chestnut trees. A QR Code for iTrees will also be there to show residents how to gauge contributions of individual trees. Dick mentioned it would be a good idea to have facts on comparisons of young tree contributions vs. mature old tree contributions. Ben gave an explanation of how comparisons aren't always accurate given the different access to resources by the different trees.

Ed asked how the price of a violation is determined when trees in the right of way are cut down without approval. Ben explained he tries to get back inch for inch and that the state Tree Warden statute allows him to charge reasonable amounts.

Ed chose the Balsam Poplar for the tree for May.

Lawrence Tirreno asked the Board about the vines strangling the trees along I-95 and what could be done about them. Ben discussed that there is a right time of year to kill the Porcelain vines and Bittersweet vines in order to be most effective.

Lou Mall spoke and wanted to thank the Tree Board for speaking at the RTM Environment meeting the night before.

Charlie Tirreno brought up his concern for the old oaks along the Saugatuck River and asked how the regulations or laws could be changed to protect the environment from cutting down the trees. Ben explained that New England states have strong private property laws that don't allow for the state to limit the use of the property owner. Changes would have to come at the state level. Hartford is the only city in CT that has an ordinance limiting the cutting down of trees by private property owners. But since state law supersedes city regulations, a private property owner only needs to sue Hartford and it's likely the ordinance wouldn't stand.

The meeting adjourned.