

Tree Board Minutes

May 16, 2024

Town Hall Room 201

4:30 PM

Dick Stein, Ed Picard, Sarah Adair, Nathaniel Martin and Tree Warden Ben Sykas from the Board were present.

The April minutes were approved after Ed motioned to approve and Dick seconded the motion. All approved.

Arbor Day results were discussed and analyzed. We gave away 150 trees, made up of 50 dogwoods, 50 redbuds and 50 horse chestnuts. Public participation was very high, possibly record levels. We discussed ways to further improve future giveaways including: 1) pick high demand species such as Lilac, Norway Spruce, etc. 2) secure trees as early as possible, and explore vendor options, 3) secure plugs rather than bare root saplings to reduce mortality, and 4) physical handouts and pictures for each tree rather than QR codes. Ben thought we could possibly handle between 250-300 for next year.

Nathaniel provided an overview of a New York Times article that describes the ecological benefits of leaving dead trees in place, including food and habitat for animals. Ben discussed his report on the Jesup Green trees that would be removed and/transplanted if the additional parking were to be added to the upper part and the topic within the larger context of tree risk assessment. Ben discussed how arborists analyze risk, including tree health, tree location, risk to and volume of passersby, risk to property and infrastructure, etc. Ben described how we need better public education on topics that help support tree health and longevity. This includes reducing tree girdling, mulch volcanoes, soil compaction, removal of leaves/reduced biota, etc. that increase tree stress and reduce tree longevity. We discussed the *This Old House* video Sarah circulated which discussed the issue of mulch volcanoes and tree stress/mortality.

We discussed town and school maintenance contacts, and whether the tree board can provide input into performance standards. Sarah opined on the poor condition of the trees at Staples due to improper mulched and maintenance. It was suggested that the intern can create a document providing an overview of "10 Ways You're Killing Your Trees".

We discussed the project to install tree ID tags at public parks in town. Mike West, Parks and Rec Superintendent showed a willingness to consider the idea. The initial proposal is to select 15-20 trees at three parks, likely Winslow, Grace K. Salmon and Lillian Wadsworth Arboretum. We discussed the size and material of the ID cards and how they will be attached to the trees. A log would need to be kept by the Tree Warden, Parks & Rec and the Tree Board on which trees have the signs, when the screws are backed out of the trunk every couple of years. We discussed the possibility of having a tree scavenger hunt on the web page and as a brochure to support this initiative. The intern could possibly help pick trees and set up the scavenger hunt.

Another project for the intern could be to create a tree inventory spreadsheet of recent plantings, pruning and other projects where the tree board was involved and that the Warden has planted around town. Historically these projects have not been diligently recorded and it's not clear what trees have been planted and their survival rate.

Ben indicated he is open to the intern joining him in a tree assessment ride along in town.

We discussed the legal limits of regulating tree removal on private property in the state of Connecticut. It was noted that the City of Hartford has strict rules for tree removal, apparently requiring cause and/or sign off from an arborist. This may conflict with Connecticut laws protecting private property, however Nathaniel noted that the State does regulate natural resources on private property through hunting regulations, and use of private property is extensively regulated through zoning, building codes, health/septic codes, etc. It was noted that many towns in New York, including Westchester, have stricter regulations regarding tree removal.

The tree of the month is Staghorn Sumac.

The meeting adjourned.