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CONOR MORGAN
ACTING TREE WARDEN

Touch the Future - Plant a Tree

**MINUTES OF THE SALEM TREE COMMISSION
SEPTEMBER 18, 2023**

A meeting of the Salem Tree Commission was held on September 18, 2023, at 7:00 p.m., via ZOOM, an online video conference call system in accordance with Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2023.

Present on call were:

1. Chair, Darleen Melis, Members: Naomi Cottrell, Cady Goldfield, Paul L'Heureux, Jane Rumrill and Susan Yochelson; Conor Morgan, General Foreperson, Cemetery/Tree Division, DPS; and Commission Clerk Joanne Roomey. Absent were Rachel McCarter and Vice Chair Kirt Rieder.

2. Public Notification of Intent to Remove Trees on City Property

Ms. Melis presented a recent situation where trees were removed from city-owned property on Bridge Street without 14-day notification as required by Chapter 43 of the Tree Ordinance, Article III – Public Tree Preservation. DPS had perceived the site cleanup to be routine maintenance of an unsafe and overgrown area, however neighbors complained. Ms. Melis reiterated that the intent of this section is to give the public a chance to comment on removal of sound trees. A permit is not required when a sick tree needs to be removed.

3. Conor Morgan, DPS Report

One hundred and nine tree issues were reported in the month of August through See Click Fix; 25 were fallen city trees/ limbs; 2 were shrub overgrowth; 1 was obstruction of the public way; 4 were shrubbery overgrowth; 31 were tree health inspections; 3 were tree planting requests; 43 were tree pruning/trim/branch broken; and 1 was an internal Tree Warden inspection. Eighty-seven work orders were closed out. Downed branches were given priority as always.

Last period's issues of mechanical breakdown in the tree department were overcome after only a short period when we were faced with a serious lack of personnel. Two members of the tree crew have been out due to injury and the remaining two took other jobs. This has left us with no tree crew at this time.

The cemetery crew is also beset by staff issues with one operative leaving for a long term of convalescence and another man scheduled to do the same in early November. The one-season employee also came to the end of his usable term. This leaves us with no tree crew and four operatives in the cemetery.

Emergency branch removal from the public way have been attended to by the cemetery crew. There have been discussions about deploying personnel from parks for this purpose also when needed. Once contracts are in place with outside contractors, they will be employed to clear some of the backlog of tree issues around the city. Work is being done to recruit new staff and rebuild the tree crew. Training these raw recruits will take a large investment in time and effort.

Activities at Greenlawn Cemetery centered around the summer season chores of grass cutting and weed whacking. Ongoing efforts to develop Greenlawn in line with the Greenlawn Master Plan have focused on two areas of development, the columbarium development on the southern slope of the Dickson Chapel and the Burke Lot. Regarding Dickson Chapel, we had a very productive meeting with Landscape Architect Martha Lyons who has produced further design vignettes showing the extent of grade change. Unfortunately, this, as expected, will require the removal of the vast majority of the trees in this area. Only a small number of peripheral trees can be saved. Various designs were discussed all with a similar tree loss.

Regarding advances in the Burke Lot Development, a detailed survey by a miscellaneous company was examined, and a scheme which provides an excellent outcome for all sides was outlined. The vast majority of trees will be retained including a very large *Abies fraseri*. Nearly all trees on the periphery will be retained. This scheme will allow us to mark out enough lots to last us for six to seven years.

There has been a lot of activity in the tree permitting system with large advances in important developments such as Crowley Wind Farm and Franklin Street condos.

For next spring's planting, I have visited all 105 planting locations listed in Mr. MacArthur's survey re: the Greening the Gateway Cities grant. I have noted some locations which are not suitable and suggested alternatives. About the remaining locations and new alternatives, I have made detailed notes on suitable species and methods by which the planting pits can be improved. We have scheduled a meeting to discuss these matters with DCR this coming Thursday.

In the satellite cemeteries there have been further issues of both damage by contractors and vandalism. The grass cutting contractor has damaged a foot stone at Friends Cemetery. Two crypts in Broad Street have been damaged by vandalism. Fragments have been removed and safeguarded. Arrangements for some repairs have begun.

4. Greening the Gateway Cities Program

Neither Anna Sheridan, Green Scape Coordinator, nor David Bresnahan, DCR Forester were able to attend the meeting. Ms. Melis submitted the following report by Mr. Bresnahan: "DCR fall planting begins September 5. One hundred fourteen trees will be planted on private property, 12 on public property (street trees and parking lots), plus additional trees at Salem State and Salem Housing Authority property.

We have a fully staffed planting crew.

To date, DCR has planted 767 trees in Salem through Greening the Gateway Cities. Trees are being planted in the order requests are received . Interested residents and business owners inside the planting zone can request trees through Maurbancanopy.org or by calling 617-626 -1502.”

5. Salem Tree Steward Program (working title) – Delayed until SPRING

The commission agreed to delay the volunteer Tree Steward Program until spring because of staffing issues.

6. Roadside tree clearing in the Right of Way – Darleen Melis (review of Tree Ordinance)

Ms. Melis brought to the attention of the Commission that trees cannot be removed from a public Right of Way without a permit. The ROW is where the city has the right to install water lines, fire hydrants, utility poles, etc. as well as to plant trees. Illegal tree removal in the ROW is subject to fines. This happened recently on Old Road. Resources for determining the ROW are available online through Salem’s GIS and through the Engineering Department. (See images below.)

7. Revision of Mulching Poster – authorize printing costs

Ms. Rumrill redid the mulching poster and improved the message with dramatic graphic changes. It is posted on the Tree Commission’s homepage. It was decided that posters should be put up only during the spring and fall planting seasons. Ms. Cady made a motion to authorize printing costs for 20 posters. Seconded by Ms. Yochelson. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion was carried unanimously. Printing costs will be paid through donations to the Salem Tree Fund.

8. Century Tree tags – plans for installation

There will be a Century Tree Tagging Ceremony held on Wednesday, **October 4th** at 11:00 a.m. on the Salem Common, rain or shine. We will be recognizing the generous charitable organizations and individuals who donated to the Salem Tree Fund to make planting of 8 trees on the Common possible: Salem Five Charitable Foundation, William J. Lundregan Esq., Friends of Salem Common and the family of Jerome F. Twomey. In addition, we would like to recognize the donation of an elm tree to the Salem Willows by Timothy Obert. Century Trees are tall, majestic trees planted throughout the city that will be enjoyed by generations to come. All donations are welcome for future plantings in our neighborhoods.

9. Approve Tree Commission Minutes of August 30, 2023

Ms. Yochelson made a motion to approve the Tree Commission Meeting Minutes of August 30, 2023. Seconded by Mr. L’Heureux. Ms. Cotrell abstained. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion was carried unanimously.

10. New Business:

There was a discussion regarding the trees near Old Town Hall and the problems on Essex Street Mall with the trees doing poorly and what should we do next.

11. Next Meeting Dates:

Monday, **October 16, 2023**, and Monday, **November 20, 2023** at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom.

12. Adjournment:

There being no further business to come before the Tree Commission this evening, Ms. Yochelson moved to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Ms. Cottrell. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion was carried unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at **8:22 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**

Salem Tree Manual

Figure 1: Setback Area for Tree Planting

