



KIMBERLEY DRISCOLL  
MAYOR

CITY OF SALEM, MASSACHUSETTS  
**TREE COMMISSION**  
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DARLEEN MELIS, CHAIR  
KIRT RIEDER, VICE CHAIR  
ROBERT LEBLANC, TREE WARDEN

***Touch the Future - Plant a Tree***

**MINUTES OF THE SALEM TREE COMMISSION  
OCTOBER 18, 2021**

A meeting of the Salem Tree Commission was held on October 18, 2021 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; Naomi Cottrell, Curtis Dragon, Paul L'Heureux, Rachel McCarter and David Rowand; Tree Warden Robert LeBlanc and Commission Clerk Joanne Roomey. Absent was Susan Yochelson.

**1. Tree Warden's Report**

- The Salem Tree Department continues to work their way through the See Click Fix requests. The number is still higher than we would like to see, but the work will be scheduled and get done.
- The tree planting was supposed to begin today, but the contractor was not confident that the number of trees and the logistics would prove to be productive right now in Salem. Most of the trees are at Mack Park in the holding area and they will be maintained by the contractor until November 1st. In the meantime, they will work on the tree pit locations and preparations of the soils and widening the paved areas, so when the planting crews arrive, they can get the trees planted, staked, and mulched.
- The total number of trees for this fall is sixty-five (65) right now, but this may change based on availability at the nursery. Both the nurseries and the growers are having a difficult time this season due to production problems in the field and with transportation.
- Two public shade trees were struck by commercial trucks in Salem during the day last Friday. Both trees were Callery Pears and had branches that extended out over the street and were close to the gutter of the road. One was on Essex St. and the other was on Rockdale Ave.
- Presently, the City of Salem has an internal posting for a tree climber. This must run for ten (10) days and then can go to the outside for hiring. This is a good sign for the Salem tree program as at least two (2) employees are always needed on the tree truck for safety. Right now one of the three tree crew members is having a knee replacement. He may be back to work in a couple of months but this is the type of unfortunate situation that explains why the tree crew is always short-handed.

- The tree crews during the rainy days have been out picking up the gator bags from the newly planted trees around the city. Mr. LeBlanc anticipates that there will be more than two hundred (200) bags to collect. They will be inventoried, cleaned, and stored for the winter.
- A family from Crescent Way has donated a 45' blue spruce to the city for the holiday tree at Lappin Park this year. The Salem tree crew will harvest the tree, load it onto a 40-ton flat deck trailer and bring it downtown on the Tuesday before Thanksgiving.
- There is a list of fifteen (15) high risk trees that have been subcontracted for removal. This work has been scheduled for the second week in November.
- The final submittal touches are being put onto the DCR Challenge Grant. With the generous survey help of James MacArthur, the \$7,500 match was achieved and the city will get its share back. The survey identified about 1,200 good locations for future plantings throughout the city. Mr. LeBlanc expects to have this report for the next meeting.

## 2. **Greening of the Gateway Cities**

Barbara Warren spoke to the commission regarding Dave Bresnahan's notes:

"To date, DCR has planted 343 trees in Salem through our program. This fall, DCR has planted 153 trees over 55 private properties. We have so far this fall planted three public street trees. We have put out four additional yard signs: one each on Summer Street, Calabrese Street, Endicott Street and Geneva Street. We have a backlog of 50 private trees for the fall. Ten public street trees are also on the list, including shade trees on Broad St., Winthrop Street and Geneva Street. Starting next week, we will be planting 20 trees at Rainbow Terrace. We will also be planting at Housing Authority properties in Lynn in the coming weeks."

Fall planting season runs until Friday, November 19, 2021. Mr. Bresnahan will work on a genus/species breakdown by ward, available to the Tree Commission after the fall planting season is over. Any new requests after this week will likely be backlogged until spring 2022.

Ms. Warren stated that the SSCW received the signed state contract today so they can begin working on the project again. She gave Stacy Kilb of Salem's Sustainability Department Greening Gateway and the Greenscapes Guides for the Farmers Market last Thursday, October 14, 2021. The Bridge Street Neck Neighborhood Association meeting will be on November 16, 2021 from 7:00 – 8:00 p.m. along with Stacy Kilb of Salem's Sustainability Department. Mr. Bresnahan and Ms. Warren are going to work on getting the schools ready for trees next spring. The three schools they are focusing on are: Witchcraft Heights, Saltonstall, and Carlton schools.

## 3. **SIFI NETWORKS SALEM FIBERCITY Optic Installation Project – Deb Duhamel**

Ms. Melis read Deb Duhamel's project update: "The pilot was started on September 20, 2021 and is not yet complete. SiFi and their contractor are working through some construction issues that arose during the pilot. The start date for the full buildout is not yet scheduled."

At this point in the meeting, the commission discussed the need for more trees along the Mayor Anthony V. Salvo Multi-Use Path that runs between Canal Street and the commuter rail tracks. Permission will be needed from the MBTA to allow trees to be planted either through the MBTA's last stages of the bike path planting or possibly through the GCC program as the Planting Zone includes this portion of the bike path (Mill Street to St. Paul Street).

**4. Tree Preservation Incentive Proposal – Liz Vago**

Liz Vago, an active member of Salem Recycles, spoke to the commission about incentive programs for constituents to preserve large trees. She was thinking about mechanisms or an ordinance for folks to follow. She also suggested some kind of incentive program, possibly a tax break or have a separate fund to reimburse private property tree care. Ms. Vago would like to start a pilot program. Mr. LeBlanc expressed support and the ideas may be taken up in the future.

**5. American Rescue Plan – proposal for funding of tree work**

The American Rescue Plan is a federal relief fund for Covid pandemic recovery. The commission proposal addresses, “The four broad categories [that] identify public health emergency and hospitality assistance, health pay, city revenue, and infrastructure. The Tree Commission asserts that there are aspects of 4 out of the 4 categories that are directly related to maintaining and expanding the Salem tree canopy.” (Attached.)

Barbara Warren is a member of the Salem review committee that will consider all of the ARP proposals.

**6. Election of Tree Commission Chair and Vice Chair**

The commission discussed election of the Tree Commission chair and vice chair.

Mr. Rieder made a motion to keep the current structure for Darleen Melis as **chair** and to review this matter annually. Ms. McCarter seconded. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion carried unanimously. Ms. Melis abstained.

Mr. Dragon made a motion to keep the current structure for Mr. Rieder as **vice chair** and to review this matter annually. Mr. Arenstam seconded. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion carried unanimously. Mr. Rieder abstained.

**7. Approve Tree Commission Minutes of September 20, 2021**

Mr. Arenstam made a motion to approve the Tree Commission Minutes of September 20, 2021. Seconded by Mr. Rieder. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion carried unanimously.

**8. New Business**

The commission discussed the Planning Board's requirements for trees on development projects and the importance of “as-builts” to be provided by the developer, to show that the planting specifications have been met.

Mr. LeBlanc also reviewed the trees planted at the Woodlands Estate. There are fifty (50) trees total including native species. However the last seven (7) trees are Callery Pears and as prohibited trees must be removed.

Plantings at Mooney Street and Nurse Way include 150 trees in the ROW including lots of oaks and red maples. The collaboration with project manager Ken Stedman was quite successful.

9. Next Meeting Dates: Monday, **November 15, 2021** at 6:00 p.m. and Monday, **December 20, 2021** at 6:00 p.m. via Zoom

10. Adjournment

Mr. Rieder made a motion to adjourn. Seconded by Mr. Arenstam. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion carried unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 7:25 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**



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***Touch the Future - Plant a Tree***

September 22, 2021

City of Salem  
Attn: Mayor Driscoll,  
Nick. Downing (Federal Funds Manager)  
Salem City Hall  
93 Washington Street  
Salem, MA 01970

Dear Mayor Driscoll & Mr. Downing:

The Salem Tree Commission responds to your request for feedback by providing the following bullet point suggestions for how a portion of this relief funding can make real, tangible improvements for all residents.

The four broad categories identify public health emergency and hospitality assistance, health pay, city revenue, and infrastructure. The Tree Commission asserts that there are aspects of 4 out of the 4 categories that are directly related to maintaining and expanding the Salem tree canopy.

Our tree canopy incontrovertibly contributes to the character and comfort of both our residents and so many of our crucial tourist destinations and streetscapes. Without trees, the Witch Memorial, the Common, Chestnut Street, and countless retail corridors would be significantly less attractive pedestrian environments to draw tourists to, and for the hospitality industry to perform in.

Of primary importance, during the pandemic lockdown residents turned to walking in their city. It was striking to see how many residents sought out the relief of shaded walks: Derby Street to Winter Island was particularly popular.

COVID-19 has exacted a toll on the city personnel tasked with maintaining the public tree canopy and responding to emergency removals necessitated by intense weather

changes. As a result, our collective plans for making a dent in tree replacements at a rate greater than removals has not quite been met. A reduction in funding blunts this effort. With funding cut in half for FY 2021, just 18 trees were planted in fall 2020, and 39 in spring 2021. Pruning has likewise been hampered due to tree crew illness and injuries, further curtailing efforts to maintain momentum.

Lastly, the increased intensity and frequency of storms has negatively impacted our tree canopy through weather damage even as trees are a crucial natural system in our municipal resiliency quiver. Trees are a key component of combatting the urban heat island, as described in the World Bank's Primer for Cool Cities <https://esmap.org/primer-for-cool-citiesreducing-excessive-urban-heat>.

With this preface, the Tree Commission makes the following proposals for your consideration for allocation of American Rescue Plan funds to:

1. Plant more trees to mitigate increasing urban heat island temperatures and to reduce surface storm flow by taking up more water via tree roots. This would reverse the budget cuts to tree planting-related costs, including proper soil volume and preparation, the trees themselves, and the 2-year after care for establishment.
2. Hire a short-term forestry team to supplement the Tree Warden's small crew, to the end of the 2024, allowing this crew to focus on planting shade trees in those neighborhoods not covered by the Greening of the Gateway Cities program. We have heard from multiple residents who want a tree for their backyards but are not within the designated Gateway neighborhoods. The primary objective is to incrementally re-plant back property lines on private parcels as part of a one-off municipal initiative. This would require a legal waiver, absolving the city of any obligations to maintain these trees once planted.
3. Hire a private tree company to prune mature public trees not subject to utility trimming operations. The mission is tree preservation. Proper pruning will extend the life of very large, and therefore irreplaceable specimens in need of maintenance but which are generally not on the roster for immediate care by the Tree Warden team. Contract to sunset in 2024.
4. Hire a private tree company to prune public trees planted in the last 2-5 years to shape them for strong future growth. Contract to sunset in 2024.
5. Execute a pilot project to retrofit existing, sun-exposed municipal parking lots with permeable vehicular pavements, sand-based structural soils, and shade trees,

transforming what are currently the worst contributors to storm flooding and generators of elevated temperatures. The goal here is to create demonstration projects for the numerous backyard parking pavements built during condo conversions. Candidates might include lots at schools, the YMCA lot, the Church St lot, city parks (especially Winter Island). The Universal lot on Bridge Street may be a candidate for phytoremediation planting that would help mitigate known contaminants. Permeable paving is also a key component of "cool cities."

6. Add more flood-tolerant tree species to flood-prone parks, including Leslie's Retreat, Collins Cove, Forest River Park, and along the various municipal constructed bike paths and sidewalks.

Planting trees is not simply a linear process of dropping a tree in a hole and hoping for the best, especially in an unforgiving urban environment. A robust municipal canopy depends on proper planting preparation, and that means providing sand-based structural soils in the volume necessary to sustain tree life for decades. This also means a continuation of the Tree Warden's efforts to provide water during the crucial two years of establishment.

While we could conceivably provide a calculated cost per tree for each of these slightly different topics with Tree Warden input, the fundamental fact is that we can craft a way forward for whichever task(s) the City of Salem is most interested in pursuing. Planting trees is not an all or nothing proposition, rather, we can apply what funding is made available to us, and deploy it for maximum public benefit, for the decades to come.

We would be happy to answer any questions or modify our request in any way possible to access some portion of the American Rescue Funds.

Sincerely,

*Darleen Melis*

Darleen Melis  
Chair, Tree Commission



Kirt Rieder  
Vice-chair, Tree Commission  
Vice-chair, Planning Board