

City of Northampton, MA  
Urban Forestry Commission (UFC)

Date February 1, 2023

Meeting Minutes

Submitted By: Bonnie Netto

**Meeting Called to Order**

Richard Parasiliti Jr., Ex-officio Chair called the meeting to order at 4:33 p.m. and announced that this virtual meeting would be recorded to the Cloud via the Zoom platform.

Members present and absent/introductions:

<b>Member</b>	<b>Present</b>	<b>Time if arriving late or leaving early</b>
Richard Parasiliti Jr., Ex-officio Chair	X	
Susan Lofthouse, Vice Chair		
Molly Hale	X	
Jennifer Werner	X	
Rob Postel	X	
David Lukens	X	
<b>Staff &amp; Visitors</b>	<b>Present</b>	<b>Time if arriving late or leaving early</b>
Bonnie Netto, DPW Clerk	X	
Devorah Levy	X	
Wendy Parrish	X	
Carole Horowitz	X	
Abdulaziz Hanif	X	
Deidre	X	
Jackie Balance	X	
Jacqueline	X	
Jordan Friede	X	
Kent Johnson	X	

**Public Comment**

- Carol Horowitz sent Rich an email with a link to the Mayor’s proposal to establish a new Climate Action and Project Administration (CAPA) department. She wondered if it makes us feel more positive. She thinks it is a great time to get going on the Significant Tree Ordinance. The link to the mayor’s proposal is:

<https://northamptonma.gov/AgendaCenter/ViewFile/Item/20750?fileID=177150>

**Review/approve minutes January 18, 2023 meeting**

- A motion was proposed, seconded and a roll call vote was taken. There was no further discussion.

Motion	Motion By:	Seconded By:	Vote:
To approve the meeting minutes.	Molly Hale	Jennifer Werner	Yes 5, No 0, Abstain 0

### **Chair/Tree Warden Report**

- There is a public shade tree hearing at 367 Coles Meadow Road on Thursday, February 2, 2023 at 2:30pm. Rich has received no objections to date. The applicant agreed to pay all mitigation fees.
- Rich Parrish filled out an application to become a member of the Commission.
- Devorah donated a copy of Dirr and Warren's The Tree Book. This is the go-to reference to more than 2,400 species and cultivars, from two of the biggest names in horticulture.
- Devorah also expressed interest in joining the committee, more as a volunteer, maybe in a subcommittee role.
- Rich has a Zoom meeting with students from The Conway School of Landscape Design. They are doing a tree preservation research study for another municipality and crafting bylaws to protect trees on public & private property.
- Rich is still working on getting Professor John Rogan to join us as a guest speaker. He has been working with The Department of Conservation and Recreation. They are interested in possibly using us as one of their survey communities.

### **Significant Tree Ordinance (STO) Update**

- Rich met with the Mayor today discussing the draft changes. The Mayor supports the changes and will speak to Carolyn Misch. She will also sponsor the ordinance at a City Council Meeting. Then the Council will debate the item, then vote on a first reading. From there it gets referred out to the committee on Legislative Matters and the Planning Board, where they weigh in on the ordinance which includes public hearings. Once this is completed they will refer the ordinance back to City Council with or without recommendations. The Council will deliberate and have a second reading of the proposal, if adopted it will become part of the zoning code of ordinances.

### **Goals/Objectives for 2023 (continued from last meeting)**

- Molly shared her updated version of the goal spreadsheet. It was broken down into things to work on, things to possibly work on, and things that will not be done this year. Much discussion was had about each project and names were assigned to projects that will be worked on.

### **Tree Selection Criteria for Public & Setback Planting Document**

- Rich emailed a document that Jen put together that explains the process of tree selection. Jen wonders if we can post it on our website or possibly others, such as Tree Northampton. It was approved by all members and is attached to tonight's minutes,

### **Spring Planting/Arbor Day Update**

- Seedlings have been ordered. Rob is working on a bare root tree order as well as more grow bag trees.
- Susan was not at tonight's meeting but Rich said she has been in contact with the Rotary Club regarding Arbor Day and is looking for a day in April that works for everyone.
- April 22<sup>nd</sup> is Earth Day and would be a good day for planting.
- Jen did a walk around at the High school. They have groups that are excited about helping us bag the seedlings.
- Rich and Jen will be meeting with the grounds foreman at Leeds School on Monday, February 6<sup>th</sup>. Leeds is thinking about 25 trees that could be planted around the building and playground.

**Any other business not anticipated by the Chair**

- Rich and a staff member are working on an updated list of everything that has been planted. Once this is done, they will give it to Kent to create charts. It would be good to track species diversity and mortality.
- A motion was proposed, seconded and a roll call vote was taken. There was no discussion.

Motion	Motion By:	Seconded By:	Vote:
To adjourn.	Rob Postel	Jennifer Werner	Yes 5 , No 0 , Abstain 0

Meeting adjourned at 6:01 p.m.

**Attachments**

**Tree Selection Criteria for Public and Setback Plantings**

Cooperating Partners: City of Northampton Urban Forestry Commission, Tree Northampton, and City of Northampton Tree Warden

There have been increasing numbers of inquiries regarding the tree species selection process for the City of Northampton’s tree planting program. This document is an effort to provide you with insight into the thought, care, and expertise that goes into each tree species selection. Choosing a tree is a highly complex process, with many moving parts. Every effort is made to provide the city with sustainable, long lived tree plantings, following the guidelines of “Right Tree Right Place”.

- **Site evaluation:** Each site is personally visited by trained volunteers and reviewed by the Tree Warden, who evaluate available soil rooting volume; overhead wires or other above or below ground obstructions/safety considerations; use of site; salt exposure, heat, and moisture; overall potential growing space.
- **Species diversity Goals:** Species diversity across our urban forest is a key frontline prevention approach to pest and disease mitigation and overall canopy health and longevity. In 2016 a professional street tree inventory was completed for the City of Northampton. From this inventory, we can determine which tree species are under and overplanted. We try to follow Cornell University guidelines of no more than 5% of a single species, 10% of a single genus, 20% of any family represented in our urban forest.
- **Tree Species Availability:** Sourcing tree species we would like to plant can be a challenge. Over the years we have developed relationships with several excellent nurseries that meet our criteria of high quality tree stock. In the nursery industry, there exists competition from other planters, supply chain challenges, and crop failures. Many times we have to be flexible and substitute available tree species that will fit the planting site.

- **Use of Native Trees:** Every effort is made to include as many native tree species as possible in our plantings. However, due to climate change and challenging urban environmental pressures (heat, salt, drought, compact soils etc.) many of our beloved native trees just don't survive well in public street side plantings. We stay updated on the newest tree varieties being developed that enable some of our native tree species to survive better in urban conditions. Climate change is also a challenge to many of our native trees. The decline of Sugar Maples is a perfect example of this phenomenon. To assist and increase our native palette of trees we participate in "assisted migration". Assisted Migration is a well-documented, researched, and supported technique from the scientific community. We are planting some East Coast native trees that naturally grow slightly south of our current plant hardiness zone. Planting these tree species will help our urban forest be more sustainable and resilient in the face of climate change.

Finally, planting native trees is further constrained by the introduction of invasive pests. Trees that we can no longer plant, or can only plant in limited numbers due to the risk of loss include: American Chestnut (Chestnut Blight), Green and White Ash (Emerald Ash Borer), Hemlock (Hemlock Woolly Adelgid), American Elm (Dutch Elm Disease), American Beech (Beech Leaf Disease, Beech Bark Disease), Red Maple and Sugar Maple (Asian Longhorn Beetle).

- **Climate Change Considerations:** In addition to the information mentioned above, we continue to seek out tree species whose growth structure have been reported to be more resilient in severe storm events.
- **Updated Tree Varieties:** Plant breeders and nurseries continue to develop tree varieties that are better adapted to urban growing conditions. We strive to keep abreast of these newly developed varieties and include them in our updated planting lists.
- **Monitoring Future Pest Threats:** Keeping updated on new invasive diseases and insect threats also plays a part in tree selections. Invasive species are an ongoing threat to our urban forests. Asian Longhorn Beetle and Emerald Ash Borer are recent examples. Most pests tend to prefer trees that are related, in the same botanical family or genus. Although we don't have a crystal ball, monitoring new, potential pest threats, evaluating their hosts and determining how many hosts we currently have in our urban tree population can affect our tree species choice decisions.
- **Planting Guidelines Booklet:** Northampton's Urban Forestry Commission (UFC) (previously the Public Shade Tree Commission) developed "The Tree List and Planting Guidelines" which is updated periodically. This is a list of appropriate trees for our area, tree characteristics, and other helpful information on planting and caring for trees. This broad list is a starting point for choosing trees. In addition, this document is supplied to all applicants, developers and contractors whose project requires site plan review. This document is also available to all members of the public on the City of Northampton website. [City of Northampton Tree List & Planting Guidelines](#)

2/2/23JW