

Town of Odessa

TREE COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday August 8, 2023 @ 7:00 p.m.

Old Academy Building

315 Main Street

Odessa, DE 19730

In Person

Call to Order

Chairwoman Melaine Minear called the August 8, 2023 meeting of the Odessa Tree Commission to order at 7:15 p.m. since Commissioner Pyle was delayed by traffic while returning to Odessa.

Roll Call

Commission members Melaine Minear, Jeff Pyle and Quentin Schlieder were present. A quorum was present.

Consideration of Minutes from the July 11, 2023 Meeting

Chairwoman Melaine Minear inquired if there were any additions or corrections to the Minutes of July 11, 2023. Chairwoman Minear entertained a motion to approve the Minutes of the July 11, 2023 Odessa Tree Commission. Commissioner Jeff Pyle moved to approve the Minutes of the July 11, 2023 meeting. Secretary Quentin Schlieder seconded the motion which was adopted unanimously by voice vote.

Recognition of Visitors

No visitors were present at the meeting.

Old Business

Status of Tree Commission Vacancies

Secretary Schlieder reported that Chairwoman Minear and he met with Mayor Smith at 10:00 a.m. on Tuesday, July 25, 2013 at the Old Academy Building to discuss the vacancies on the Tree Commission and to review an orderly transition from the current members to new members. Apparently, Mayor Smith was under the impression that Chairwoman Minear would be continuing to serve on the Commission, but she advised him that she also had announced her intention to resign effective at the conclusion of the August 8, 2023 meeting as indicated in the minutes of the May 9, 2023 Tree Commission meeting minutes.

Mayor Smith expressed his support for the work of a Tree Commission and was hopeful of recruiting new members. However, he expressed concern over finding a qualified advisor. Secretary Schlieder noted that he and Chairwoman Minear will be meeting with Taryn Davidson of the Delaware Forest Service on Wednesday July 26, 2023 and would inquire if she might suggest a candidate. It was noted that Kyle Hoyd of the Forest Service had served in that role early in the establishment to Odessa's Tree Commission, so there is a precedent for having a representative of the Forest Service in that role.

During the meeting, Secretary Schlieder distributed photographs of several issues affecting trees at the Old Academy (Town Hall) property including damage to two dogwoods flanking the war memorial and large deadwood in the Sycamores in front of the building and more pressing, large oaks near the tennis/pickleball courts and children's play forms behind the building.

Secretary Schlieder noted that he had sprayed weeds around the dogwoods so that the lawn maintenance contractor's mowers do not need to cut in close proximity and further damage the flowering dogwoods, one of which is almost completely girdled. He noted that he will apply mulch around the trees once he is certain that the weeds he sprayed have died. He added that due to the surface roots, which are characteristic of dogwoods, it was not possible to dig out the crabgrass and other weeds without inflicting additional damage to the trees.

Secretary Schlieder recommended that the Town engage a qualified arborist to assess the condition of the Sycamores and the oaks and to provide a proposal to remove dead and compromised large branches. Again, he noted that the oaks near the tennis/pickleball courts and children's play forms should be the priority, noting that recently a large limb more than six inches in diameter fell from one of the oaks, as shown in one of the photographs. Mayor Smith agreed to contact an arborist to assess the condition of these trees.

Noting that rain, excessive heat and smoke from the Canadian wildfires have delayed completion of several initiatives, Secretary Schlieder advised that he is willing to continue working on unfinished tasks such as the inventory of the street trees on Main Street from the Appoquinimink River west to Route 13 North if the Town and new Commissioners have no objection. He also would be willing to prepare a smaller grant application to the Delaware Urban and Community Forest Service which could still be matched with volunteer hours, again with the concurrence of the Town and the new Tree Commissioners. Mayor Smith advised that he was agreeable to have Secretary Schlieder continue to work on these projects.

Secretary Schlieder offered to continue caring for the eight trees planted in the Autumn of 2022 and the Spring of 2023 including watering, pruning, staking, weeding, mulching, fertilizing and monitoring in order to protect the investment of time and material in establishing these new plantings, and at least until a new Commission can commit to their care.

Commissioner Jeff Pyle inquired how long it takes before the trees do not require regular watering. Secretary Schlieder noted that generally after one growing season the tree should be sufficiently established that regular watering is no longer required, however, he noted that in the case of drought, additional watering may be warranted if the tree exhibits stress, like wilting leaves.

Chairwoman Minear added that she and volunteers would also like to continue pruning the street trees as they have for the past two years, if the Town or the new Commissioners did not object. It was noted that beginning October 1, 2023, these volunteer hours could be used to offset the expense of the Delaware Urban and Community Forest Service grant. Mayor Smith agreed that these volunteers provide a valuable service to the community and should be encourage to continue their work.

Chairwoman Minear stated that she was no longer able to use her car to transport the brush for the yard waste container. She inquired if an older used truck might be purchased for that purpose. Secretary Schlieder noting the expenses of insurance, repair, fuel and other costs might make it more cost effective to either rent a truck, or schedule an intensive pruning project and have Trees, Inc. chip the brush at the conclusion. Mayor Smith noted he was open to considering the chipping option.

Secretary Schlieder offered to continue to maintain the Odessa Delaware Tree Log on Facebook until the new Commissioners are confirmed. He noted that useful information on pest control, tree selection and other matters are an important aspect of the Tree Commission's education outreach to the community. Mayor Smith concurred. Secretary Schlieder advised that he would be happy to relinquish this activity to the new Tree Commission members if they would like to assume the responsibility.

Secretary Schlieder also noted that he would be happy to assist in continuing the qualification for the Town of Odessa to maintain its credentials as a Tree City USA community, including assisting with the Annual

Arbor Day planting if the new Commission is unable to perform that required activity. He also offered to assist in any way possible to assist in a smooth transition including sharing any electronic files for items like the brochures, they might like. Secretary Schlieder thanked Mayor Smith for his assistance in filing the application for the Tree City USA program which was awarded in late April.

Town Secretary Amy Marie Ottinger arrived and noted that the amended Ordinance with final edits was approved and returned from Barrett Edwards, the Town's solicitor. She noted that the new Ordinance No. 2023-3 could be placed on either the August or September Council Agenda, and would only require one reading. Chairwoman Minear and Secretary Schlieder offered to attend the August meeting to answer any questions posed by members of the Town Council and the public.

Finally, Chairwoman Minear presented Mayor Smith with a draft copy of the Odessa Tree Commission's January-August 2023 Report. They thanked Mayor Smith for his time and concluded the meeting at 10:55 a.m.

Facebook Page – Odessa Delaware Tree Log on Facebook

Secretary Schlieder noted that he has posted informative videos on two spectacular native trees, Black Gum and Willow Oak. As noted previously in the meeting, Secretary Schlieder has agreed to maintain the Facebook page until a successor is found.

Inventory and Mapping

Secretary Schlieder advised that with cooler temperatures returning he hopes to commence the inventory of the street trees along Main Street from the Appoquinimink River west to Route 13 North later this month. He has offered to continue this project even after his retirement for the Tree Commission at the conclusion of this meeting.

Amendment of Ordinance Nos. 2002-1/2005-3

Chairwoman Minear reported that she and Secretary Schlieder attended the Odessa Council meeting last evening and Ordinance No. 2023-3 was adopted unanimously. This new ordinance includes the recommended changes to the original Tree Commission Ordinances No. 2002-1 and 2005-3, and among other things establishes a tree bank and new planting standards sought by the Tree Commission.

Dogwoods on Main Street Near Post Office

Secretary Schlieder reported that he has not, but will, contact Ms. Derrickson regarding the dogwoods planted along Main Street near the Post Office. Chairwoman Minear noted that she had provided secretary Schlieder's telephone number to Ms. Derrickson.

Care of Trees planted during Spring 2023

Chairwoman Minear noted that she has been monitoring the trees planted last Autumn and this Spring and has watered and weeded them as needed. She noted that the continued rain events have made the watering schedule less intense this year.

Meeting with Taryn Davidson of the Delaware Forest Service

Chairwoman Minear and Secretary Schlieder met with Delaware Urban Forester Taryn Davidson to discuss upcoming changes to the Odessa Tree Commission. Ms. Davidson was provided a copy of the final draft of the Ordinance No. 2023-3 which she was advised is being considered at the August 7th, 2023 Odessa Council meeting. She was informed that the new ordinance proposes to establish a dedicate Tree Bank and would set new planting standards based on the recommendations of the Arbor Day Foundation and a study "Street Tree Life Spans" published in *SCENARIO 04: Building the Urban Forest* in Spring 2014 which concluded from data studied that the typical street tree mean life expectancy is 19-28 years.

Ms. Davidson provided the new packet for the Tree City USA Program which included decals for a street sign and a plaque indicating that the Town of Odessa had participated in the program for 15 years. Commissioner Jeff Pyle suggested that the sign designating Odessa as a Tree City USA community be installed at the Odessa Memorial Park on Route 299 west of Route 13 South. Secretary Schlieder agreed noting that Smyrna's sign is located at George C. Wright Memorial Park. The recommendation will be forwarded to Mayor Smith.

Chairwoman Minear and Secretary Schlieder advised her that they will be retiring after the August 8, 2023 Tree Commission meeting, but plan to provide any assistance requested by the new Commissioners and will dedicate their efforts to assure that the Town continues to fulfill its obligations under the Tree City USA Program. Secretary Schlieder noted that he plans to continue working on the tree inventory for Main Street from the Appoquinimink River west to Route 13 North and Chairwoman Minear plans to continue maintenance of existing trees including the trees planted in Autumn 2022 and Spring 2023. Chairwoman Minear thanked Ms. Davidson for her past guidance and support and asked that the Delaware Forest Service continue its assistance for the new Commissioners. Secretary Schlieder advised that he hopes to prepare a grant application for Main Street based on the inventory and looked forward to future meetings with Ms. Davidson in this regard. Ms. Davidson confirmed that volunteer service hours accrued after October 1, 2023 could be used to fund the grant if the application is approved for funding.

They noted that any assistance she might provide to refer an advisor for the Commission with forestry or horticultural background would be deeply appreciated by Mayor Smith.

Chairwoman Minear reported that Delaware Urban and Community Forestry Coordinator has left the Delaware Forest Service for a position with the US Forest Service. Hopefully, Taryn Davidson, who has expressed interest in replacing Ms. Braunskill, will be appointed to the position.

New Business

Proper Mulching of Trees Educational Poster

The Commission discussed the proposed poster on proper mulching which was distributed at the July 11, 2023 meeting. Secretary Schlieder noted that he was able to fix the QR code which previously did not work. The Proper Mulching Poster was approved on the motion of Commissioner Jeff Pyle which was subsequently seconded by Secretary Quentin Schlieder and approved unanimously by voice vote. Copies of the poster will be provided to Town Secretary Amy Marie Ottinger for posting at appropriate venues and on the website.

Transition to New Tree Commission

As noted earlier in the meeting, assistance will be provided to the Town and the new Commissions to assure a seamless transition to the new Board.

Interim Services Offered to Maintain Tree City USA Status and the health of recently planted trees until new Tree Commission is confirmed

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Chairwoman Minear added that she and volunteers would also like to continue pruning the street trees as they have for the past two years, if the Town or the new Commissioners did not object. It was noted that beginning October 1, 2023, these volunteer hours could be used to offset the expense of the Delaware Urban and Community Forest Service grant.

Secretary Schlieder offered to continue to maintain the Odessa Delaware Tree Log until the new Commissioners are confirmed. Secretary Schlieder also noted that he would be happy to assist in continuing the qualification for the Town of Odessa to maintain its credentials as a Tree City USA community, including assisting with the Annual Arbor Day planting if the new Commission is unable to perform that required activity. He also offered to assist in any way possible to assure a smooth transition, including sharing any electronic files for items like the brochures, they might like.

Next Meeting Date and Time

No meetings are planned until New Commission members are appointed. This is the final meeting for the current Tree Commission.

Adjournment

There being no further business, Chairwoman Melaine Minear adjourned the meeting at 7:36 p.m. on the motion of Commissioner Jeff Pyle which was duly seconded by Secretary Quentin Schlieder and adopted unanimously by voice vote. Chairwoman Minear again thanked the Commission for its service to the community.

Respectfully Submitted,

Quentin C. Schlieder, Jr.
Secretary