

**VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION
TREE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING
JANUARY 22, 2014**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Nick Meyer, Rich Boyers, Paula DeMichele

ADMINISTRATION: Darby Mayville, Community Relations and Economic Development
Assistant

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:08 PM by Darby Mayville.

2. ETHICS POLICY

Rich Boyers and Nick Meyer gave Darby their signed Ethics Policy. Paula DeMichele said that she would drop it off tomorrow. She also explained to the committee that the best way to contact her was through the phone, and that she was a little hard of hearing, so to make sure to speak up when speaking to her.

3. TERM LENGTHS

- Nick: Three years;
- Rich: Two years;
- Paula: One year;
- Warren: One year.

Nick said that he spoke with the Village Manager, and he felt that it was important for all committees to have an odd number of members. As a result, the committee charter will soon be changed to state that the Tree Committee is a five-member organization.

4. CHAIR/VICE CHAIR ELECTIONS

Nick was elected chair, and Rich was elected interim vice-chair.

5. GENERAL COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Nick passed out a list that he developed of potential committee priorities to the group. They discussed the following:

I. Caring for Canopy Grant

Nick informed the group that the Village was awarded a Caring for Canopy Grant through the state of Vermont last fall. This grant will pay to hire arborists to prune

Village trees. He said that Warren has a good knowledge of the Village trees, and that he would ask him to do a ride around with Rick Jones, Public Works Superintendent, to determine which trees most need pruning. Nick also mentioned that some of the pruning may be able to be done by Public Works staff, which will reduce the cost.

Rich asked what the process of finding an arborist entailed?

Nick said that he thought that there needed to be at least three quotes for the work before a contractor was selected.

Paula asked when the money from this grant would run out?

Nick said that the grant period was technically over this summer, but that we could get an extension if needed.

Nick stated that another thing that they hoped to be accomplished with grant funding would be the development of a tree management plan. He hoped that the CCRPC could assist with this, and said that they may have a generic plan on file that the committee could use as a starting point.

II. Tree Care Workshop

Nick said that a staff person from the state Forest, Parks & Recreation could run a workshop sometime this spring. He said that Branch Out Burlington successfully runs these workshops. The group approved of this idea.

III. Arbor Day Planning

The group determined that Arbor Day is April 25th, which is a Friday. Nick said that last Arbor Day the Village got a free tree from a nursery in Charlotte. This was planted at Summit Street School. Rich said that it might be nice to try for multiple plantings this year, and also proposed the idea of having the tree care workshop on Arbor Day.

IV. Tree Planting in the Village

Nick informed the committee that there is roughly \$1,100 available for tree planting in this year's budget.

Paula asked if there were any specific Village planting priorities?

Nick said that it is important to focus on the downtown area. He said that trees have been planted in previous years at Brownell Library, the federal building, and on private property on Pearl Street.

Nick added that, due to the requirements of the grant funds that have been paying for recent plantings, Essex Junction has been buying 2.5 inch trees. In other circumstances,

smaller trees could be purchased for much less. He mentioned that Branch Out Burlington does a tree sale every year and sells trees for as low as \$50.

Nick mentioned that Essex Junction used to offer a fund to incentive private planting in the Village right of way, and that he thinks that it would be a good idea to bring this program back. He said that could also be used as a method of ensuring that homeowners are knowledgeable about trees before they plant them. The committee agreed that this is a good idea.

V. Defining the Tree Committee's Relationship with the PW Department and the Planning Department

Darby confirmed that the Planning Department would be staffing the committee. Nick said that he hoped to encourage the Village Public Works Department to spend more money on planting and tree care in the future.

VI. Outreach to the Community

The group began to brainstorm on potential outreach ideas. Darby said that the Bike/Walk Advisory Committee had been doing weekly informational posts, and that this seemed successful in getting the word out about their activities. Nick said that he hoped that the Reporter would be interested in doing press releases on their work. Paula suggested doing some type of education through the schools. Rich suggested a possible collaboration with the CVE Forestry program. Nick suggested that the committee could train the students to teach landowners how to care for their trees. Rich asked to have a table at the upcoming Village meeting, which all members of the committee agreed upon.

VII. Other Items

The committee decided to meet once a month, on the third Tuesday of the month, at 6 PM.

Nick suggested that all committee members review the website for the Urban & Community Forestry program, since there is a considerable amount of helpful information there. He informed the group that Essex Junction had recently won a tree steward award from this organization. He mentioned that the Urban & Community Forestry Program may also assist the group with workshop planning.

The committee started to discuss why some members of the public do not value trees. Nick said that since Vermont is 85% wooded, many people do not think of the benefits of urban trees. Paula said that she wished that the role that trees played in improving air quality was better regarded.

The committee then discussed their role in regard to the Village Planning Commission. Nick said that he thinks that current landscaping requirements are very weak, and he intends to suggest to the Commission that this board have a role in reviewing plans.

Paula suggested that master gardeners have a role in informing the Planning Commission, and Nick said that he would also suggest this to them. Nick said that he believes that the Tree Advisory Committee will become a very valuable resource to both the Planning Commission and Community Development Department.

Rich asked how Essex Junction differed from other communities regarding landscaping.

Nick told him that Essex Junction required that projects above a certain cost spend at least 2% of their budget on landscaping, however this also included hardscaping. Rich asked if there was a specific requirement to plant certain trees. Nick said only for new developments.

6. MEETING SCHEDULE

Next meeting

- February 18th at 6 PM

Agenda Items

- Minutes Review;
- Planning for Tree Care Workshop;
- Follow Up on Tree Management Plan;
- Report from Warren Spinner on Pruning Plans;
- Public Comments.

7. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by RICH, SECOND by PAULA, to adjourn the meeting. VOTING: unanimous; motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:10 PM.