

CITY OF EAST PROVIDENCE

East Providence Tree Commission

Regular Meeting, January 19, 2023

1. CALL TO ORDER: 7:01 PM. Dr. Carol Auer, Chairperson
2. ROLL CALL: Present: Dr. Carol Auer; Joe Gibson, Jenn Tierney, Johanna Walczak. Absent: Commission member Claire Tierney, Council member Anna Sousa, with notification; Tony Viera, Parks Department; Ronald Nawrocki, Tree Warden.
3. Approval of last meeting minutes: J. Tierney moved to approve minutes of Nov. 14. J. Gibson seconded. Unanimously approved.
4. Public Comment Period:
 - A. Candy Seele (Keep Metacomet Green) spoke about design guidelines for the Metacomet property. Heather Andrade (KMG and Save Our Historic Lands) spoke about nominating the Veterans Memorial Parkway for national preservation. Dan Baudouin (KMG) spoke in support of KMG guidelines and hoped to save the buffer trees.
 - B. Kim Wagner (city resident) expressed an objection to the removal of a tree at 151 Redland in Rumford. She noted that the tree is a valuable in terms of its environmental benefits and hopes the tree can be saved.
 - C. Two city residents spoke in favor of removing the tree at 151 Redland. One resident spoke on behalf of the homeowner. He said the tree is lifting up the asphalt on his driveway. Another Rumford resident said that the homeowner is elderly and that the tree is an obstacle for him.
5. Old Business
 - a) EP Tree Commission webpage. Dr. Auer and City Liaison J. Walczak developed web pages and FAQ pages related to urban trees and city policy. The web pages were briefly presented to the group.
 - b.) City Forester Position. Dr. Auer noted that the current fiscal budget doesn't fund a full-time position and she has discussed the budget shortfall with the Mayor. A hiring delay could provide funding for a full time position later in the year.
 - c) Tree Planting Projects
 - 1) Hennessey School. The site was selected by the RI Infrastructure Bank for technical assistance for engineering and stormwater management. J. Walczak showed a design and budget for roadside tree pits. Phase one planting could occur this spring.

- 2) Kent Heights park renovation. The Commission is waiting on the design in order to give species recommendations.
- 3) Bullocks Avenue planting. The Commission hopes to plant six trees this year, as well as additional trees on the street under the City's Setback program.

6. New Business

- a) Appeal of Tree Warden's decision regarding a tree at 151 Redland Avenue, Rumford. J. Walczak provided background information regarding the request for tree removal, the Tree Warden's report supporting protection with monitoring, and two responses from neighbors after notification of potential removal. A packet of information was distributed to Commission members who have each visited the tree. The homeowner submitted a written appeal regarding the city's decision to protect and monitor the tree. C. Auer asked for a motion from the Commission members. J. Tierney made a motion to support the Tree Warden's decision to protect and monitor the tree. A vote was taken: two commission members voted yes to the motion; one commission member voted no. The motion was approved. C. Auer agreed to draft a letter to the homeowner and have it reviewed by Commission members. The approved letter will be sent by J. Walczak to the homeowner within 5 business days. The homeowner can go to the Municipal Court for further appeals.
- b) Waterfront Commission guidelines for 500 Veterans Memorial Parkway. J. Tierney made a motion to send a letter to the Waterfront Commission expressing support for tree preservation on the property. The motion was unanimously approved. C. Auer will draft a letter explaining four actionable items pertaining to: tree preservation at all stages of development, planting of new trees, and protecting ecological function. The letter will be reviewed and then sent to the Waterfront Commission.

7. Liaison report

J. Walczak reported that in 2022, the City planted 147 trees. The administration has set the goal of planting 200 trees in 2023 with emphasis on "low canopy" neighborhoods. The tree planting setback program will be launched for 2023 on February 1. The City's Comprehensive Plan has draft chapters under review including a Natural Resources chapter that will be shared with Tree Commission. The City is participating in workshops to build capacity for urban forest management and climate change resilience.

Draft minutes prepared by J. Tierney on January 19, 2023.