

CITY OF EAST PROVIDENCE-TREE COMMISSION
DOCKET-REGULAR MEETING

Meeting Minutes for October 16, 2024

7:00 PM

Conference room A, East Providence City Hall
145 Taunton Ave. East Providence, RI 02914

1. **Call to Order:** 7:00 PM
2. **Roll Call:** Present: Carol Auer, chair, Jennifer Tierney, co-chair, Dominic Leonardo (Planning Department), Meg Robinson, Joseph Gibson. Absent with notification: Anna Sousa. Absent without notification: City Tree Warden.
3. **Approval of minutes:** The minutes of July, 17, 2024 were provided. Approval was moved by JT, seconded by JG, and the vote showed unanimous approval.
4. **Public comment:** Mr. Marcus Alexander from the Roof Top Solar Company spoke to the Commission about the black oak street tree in front of 82 Padelford Drive, East Providence. Speaking on behalf of the homeowner, he asked that the street tree be removed so that the homeowner might fully benefit from the solar panels recently installed on the roof. Mr. Alexander emphasized the common ecological goals of the solar company, the homeowner, and the Tree Commission.
5. **New Business :**
 1. Appeal of Tree Warden's decision at 82 Padelford Avenue, East Providence: The City Tree Warden recommended retaining the healthy oak tree and this decision was appealed by the homeowner, Mr. Obasi Osborne. TC members heard the comments of Mr. Marcus Alexander (Roof Top Solar Company) and discussed the request for tree removal. They cited Doug Still's (licensed consulting arborist) risk assessment report which described the black oak as healthy, low risk of failure, and in good condition. Other comments from the commission focused on the value of healthy street trees to the neighborhood, and that the homeowner created the hardship by not checking the ownership of the tree before installing solar panels. JG moved to deny the appeal and to keep the tree without pruning, MR seconded and the motion was unanimously approved. CA will draft a letter to the homeowner informing him of the decision.
 2. EP Strategic Tree Canopy Plan and Street Tree Inventory report: The final report on the street tree inventory was provided to the commission. CA highlighted several key findings including the over-abundance of a few species and the need for biodiversity in the future. Additionally, the report emphasizes the preponderance of older street trees, the scarcity of trees in general, and the lack of younger trees to offset the die-off of older

trees. Commission members discussed efforts from the new USDA grant will help improve EP's tree canopy, but are not adequate to reach the suggested canopy goals. Setback programs and smaller trees were offered as solutions to the problem of overhead utilities in some areas.

3. CA reminded the commission that meeting dates for 2025 must be posted and suggested January 15, April 16, July 16, and October 15, 2025 with additional meetings added as needed. JG moved to accept, MR seconded, and it was unanimously accepted.

6. Old business:

1. USDA Urban and Community Forest Grant: Dominic Leonardo, interim liaison for the Planning Department reported being in touch with the USDA grant representative. Interviews to hire a new Planning Department staff person with responsibility for the grant are being conducted.
2. EP Strategic Tree Canopy Plan and Street Tree Inventory: CA scheduled a meeting with Mayor DaSilva in August and presented a powerpoint summary of the new reports. The Mayor expressed interest in a similar presentation to the City Council. JT proposed presenting this information to the Conservation Commission and other interested community groups. Dominic Leonardo proposed greater exposure through community events such as the EP Winterfest.

7. **Liaison Report from Conservation Commission:** MR was unable to attend the October, 15 Conservation Commission meeting. The next Conservation Commission meeting is scheduled for 11.18.24.

8. **Liaison Report from City Staff:** Dominic Leonardo (Planning Department) reported on the continued search for a new staff person. He will check on the addition of the two new reports to the web page about city trees.

9. **Adjournment:** 8:10 PM