

## URBAN FORESTRY COMMISSION

Minutes of January 22, 2025

### IN PERSON MEETING

Room 208 Municipal Building

#### MEMBERS PRESENT:

Steven Cronkite, Chairperson  
David Meyering  
Jon Morris  
Pat Ludwig  
Carl Lecce  
Bob Grimm

#### ALSO PRESENT:

Rick Romano, Sidewalk and Construction  
Inspector and Deputy Tree Warden  
Robert Russo, Acting Dir. of PW (via Teams)  
Brian Gartner, Acting Deputy Dir. of PW (via  
Teams)  
Michael Maier, pending UFC member  
Charles Barden, resident

### ROLL CALL

Steven Cronkite called the meeting to order at 4:32 pm, in room 208 of City Hall. The roll was called, and the quorum was determined.

### REVIEW OF MEETING MINUTES HELD December 18<sup>th</sup>, 2025

Minutes approved by unanimity as issued, with no objections.

### OLD BUSINESS

- a. **Tree Warden Report:** Rick reported that J&J completed tree work near Wesleyan during the school's break, on 12/29 and 12/30 at: 223 College St. (Bid #27, removal); 161 College St. (pruning); 67 Butternut St. (pruning); also at Broad Street, Silvermine Rd., Bear Hill Rd., Congdon St., and West St.
- b. **Public Works Report:** No update.
- c. **Urban Forestry Account Balance:** \$4,765.90
- d. **General Fund Tree Account:** \$52,880.24. Steve noted that it appears \$8,600 was transferred from UFC General Admin. account to Tree Service account. Rohan has agreed to meet with Steve in early February to review the budget and the reason for the transfer. Rick has submitted a written request to the Acting PW Director for \$10K for stump grinding.
- e. **Downtown Business District tree pit project:** The last 19 trees will be planted in Spring.
- f. **Other Proposed Planting Locations:** 10 other non-Main St locations are already staked and ready for planting after Main St completed.
- g. **Need for a back-up planting contractor.** Gabe Russo has confirmed to Steve Cronkite that Forest City is committed to planting the trees this Spring. Per Brian Gartner, future renewals of Gabe's sole source planting contract will need to comply with the City's new sole source contract criteria -- or be procured using an open bid process.
- h. **Outreach improvements:**
  - **Outreach items** (events calendar, updated email contact address, newsletter, etc.) were provided to Bobbye to update the City's UFC page on the website. Steve will contact

Bobby Russo and Brian Gartner to determine next steps.

- **Fall Newsletter:** Steve issued the Fall/Winter Newsletter on December 15<sup>th</sup>.
- i. **Arboretum Labels:** Jane looked into prices from two companies that we have done business with and we have been paying \$13-\$15 per tag, depending on volume; they come with a QR code for each tree. We could look into a grant from the Rockfall Foundation. Steve counted 136 trees w/ diam > 4". 17 have good labels, another 18 just need loosening/repair, and so 101 tree labels needed. However, not every sugar maple needs one, or a group of 3 elms can have one label, etc. Perhaps 70 or 80 needed. A motion to fund an estimated \$900 for labels passed. However, the Rockfall Foundation subsequently committed to donating up to \$1,500 for the labels. Steve will recommend specific text fields and content and gather Commission input before ordering.
- j. **Potential Volunteer Tree Inventory Demonstration Project.** Michael Meyers offered to help lead this effort. Surveying during summer would help any non-expert volunteers ID species.
- k. **Zelkova at Green Street parking lot:** Status of compensatory funds and available planting locations – no updates. Steve will check with Christine Marques to confirm Bobby told her about the Commission's recommendations.
- l. **Commission member re-appointments and vacancy.** Jon Morris, Bob Grimm, and David Meyering were reappointed in the January 5<sup>th</sup> Common Council meeting. Steve anticipates Michael Maier will be appointed at the February 2<sup>nd</sup> Common Council meeting.
- m. **Tree City USA designation.** Steve submitted the application on January 16<sup>th</sup>. It is being reviewed by CT DEEP.
- n. **Arbor Day 2026 planning.** An event room at the Wadsworth Mansion has been reserved Friday morning April 24<sup>th</sup> by Jane Harris and Meagan Bush. Event will be at 10am and we need to be out by noon. Guy Russo (Gabe's father) will be an honored in memoriam. We need other people to honor. Steve will find out whether there are set criteria for selecting honorees.

### NEW BUSINESS

- a. **CTPA meeting take-aways.** Pat and Steve summarized the topics discussed in the January 15<sup>th</sup> CTPA meeting, including research on native bee species, efforts to restore the American chestnut, and Best Management Practices to protect trees during construction, including use of AirSpades.
- b. **Potential Tree Care Demonstration:** Pat discussed ideas for a public educational event to demonstrate tree care and invasives removals. She may recruit Cathy Donnelly to assist.
- c. **America250 (Semiquincentennial) tree.** Deborah (Debby) Shapiro is the City's representative to the CT America 250 Commission. White oak seedlings are available to plant to honor the Charter Oak. Steve requested more detail on cost, size. If they are free, he will request one for the City to plant. UConn may have some seedlings available that are direct descendants of the Charter oak.

### OTHER & CORRESPONDENCE

- a. **2026 UFC Calendar:** Steve distributed the approved UFC meeting calendar.
- b. **Prayer Flags in the arboretum.** The Commission discussed whether the prayer flags draped over the memorial buttonwood tree should be allowed to stay. No resolution.

**PUBLIC COMMENT** (none)

**ADJOURNMENT**

A motion was made and seconded to adjourn the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 5:36 pm.