



Town of Watertown
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Minutes
Tree Hearing
September 30, 2016

Chris Hayward opened the hearing at 11:30 am and made a brief introduction of the format of the meeting.

1) **Community Education and Information.**

Hayward made a presentation featuring a series of educational slides regarding the current drought conditions, invasive species and maintaining healthy trees.

- a. **Current Drought Conditions-** Hayward explained that we are officially 8 ½ inches below normal rain fall for this time of year. In addition to the immediate impact of a drought he said there will be further problems down the road. He explained that droughts weaken trees and weak trees attract critters that cause further damage. Residents were urged to be on the alert for sighting weakened trees and offered information on how to proceed if they encounter one.
- b. **Winter Moth Species:** Both male and female Winter Moths were illustrated and Hayward said they are prone to appear during the late November, Thanksgiving Season which is when they mate. Females are found sitting on the trunk of a tree waiting for a male to arrive for mating. The offspring are pale green larvae and are seen feeding from early April until mid-June.

Hayward suggested Home Depot which he says carries some brands of sprays which are non-toxic to humans and animals.

- c. **Asian Long Horned Beetles:** A slide of the Asian Long Horn Beetle was shown. Hayward said that the only way to eradicate this insect is to cut the whole tree down. This pest has not been found in Watertown to date.
- d. **Emerald Ash Borer:** A slide of the Emerald Ash Borer was shown. Hayward said that there was a recent sighting of the Emerald Ash Borer in Newton, and that there are very few publically owned Ash Trees in Watertown.

- e. **Gypsy Moth:** Hayward said that the Gypsy Moth is on the rise again and there was a large male flight that occurred this past June in Watertown. The female is too large to fly, so the male takes flight looking for females. Slides were shown of the moths as well as their egg masses.

Hayward explained that the egg masses can be sprayed with a strong dose of horticultural oil insect spray, later in the fall as well as in the spring before leaf break.

- f. **Maintaining and caring for trees in the first year of planting:** A slide of proper mulching versus improper mulching was shown.

Hayward warned that a secondary root system sets itself up underneath the extra layer of mulch. This poses a health hazard to the tree by enclosing the trunk in unnecessary layers of solid and liquid elements.

Proper mulching and watering was reviewed which stabilizes new trees while they root down into the earth for a healthy start to a long life.

- g. **What to do if you have questions about any tree related issues:**
Residents were urged to contact the Tree Warden with suspicions of spotting any of the invasive species reviewed at the meeting, or with any other tree related questions or concerns they would like to discuss with him.

- h. **Tree Planting Season and signing up for Notify Me:**
Hayward announced that the Trees Available for Planting in the 2016 Fall Tree Planting season would be posted up on the Tree Warden Web Site very shortly. Hayward said a “notify me” would go out at that time as well.

Residents were urged to contact the Conservation Office for assistance with Tree Planting season. The closing date for selecting a tree from the Trees Available List is October 11, 2016.

1) Public Hearing on 122 Grant Ave. – 40’ Silver Maple-

This tree was placed on the hearing list at the request of the resident who became concerned when the tree began losing branches at an increasing rate and appearing increasingly more brittle.

Hayward explained that Silver Maples have a very rapid maturation process to compartmentalize decay but make for a brittle tree in the maturing years. He noted the sparse canopy of the tree in the month of September, another clear sign of increasing distress in the tree. He said that removing too many branches would prohibit the tree from feeding properly and cause further decline.

Public Comments

Bonnie Dirr, the owner of the home and her mother Patricia Dirr, a resident from across the street were there to speak about their concerns with the declining health of the tree. They spoke about instances of falling branches and their concern that someone will be struck by one and harmed.

Opposition: There was no opposition to the removal of this tree prior to or at the meeting.

Hayward Recommendations: Hayward recommended removal of the tree and planting a new more suitable species in its space. Hayward will issue a work order to the DPW

Results: Tree will be removed.

2) **Public Hearing on 56 Bigelow Ave. - 14” Linden-**

This tree was put on the list for this hearing at the request of Hayward.

After a history of being maintained in the custody and care of the Coolidge Condominium Association at their own request, Hayward was recently contacted by the Association President Mary Dipietro to come out to evaluate the health of the 14 “ and 15 “ Linden trees.

Some slides were shown that pictured a row of Lindens with two trees appearing discolored and crowded out of the row. Hayward explained that these trees have outgrown the space and these two have been crowded out by the other thriving trees.

There was no immediate threat posed by these trees as described in the Public Shade Tree Act. Hayward pointed out the other species of vegetation in the area would also be competing for nutrients needed by these Lindens.

Opposition: A written objection to the public hearing to cut down two or more public shade trees on the east side of Bigelow Ave. was filed by George Omartian. In addition to voicing an objection to the removal of the tree, the letter requested Hayward to clarify through town counsel whether or not Bigelow Ave. is a legal public way under Ch. 183 Sec 58.

The filing of an opposition under the Public Shade Tree Act took the decision of what to do about the trees out of the hands of the Tree Warden and into the hands of the Town Manager. Hayward said he will prepare a full report of this matter to the Town Manager.

Result: To be determined by the Town Manager

3) Public Hearing on 56 Bigelow Ave. - 15" Linden-

This is the second tree up for review at this public hearing by request of the Coolidge Condominium Association. Hayward explained that sap rot decay is present on the limbs which is indicative of branch dieback and that the tree is clearly stressed and on the way to becoming a hazard to the community.

Hayward explained that he will take Mr. Omartian's letter to Steve Magoon, the Director of Community Development and Planning and consult with the town's legal advisor over the public way issue.

Public Comments

Al English of the Coolidge Condominium Association reported attending a meeting with Roy Bray, Condominium Facility Manager, and Mary Dipietro. He wanted to go on record stating that no one from the Condominium Association, with the exception of Mr. Omartian has any opposition to the removal of these two trees in order to correct the issue of overcrowding in this space.

Hayward Comments

Hayward reviewed photographs of the trees from a couple of angles. He explained that the trees will continue to decline if something is not done to remedy the lack of nutrients available in the immediate area.

Hayward explained optimistically that the view will be more aesthetically pleasing when the remaining trees are able to extend their branches in the way that they want too when the space is provided.

Hayward reminded attendees that he will write a report to give to the Town Manager once he has obtained the requested information from the town's legal counsel.

Result: To be determined by the Town Manager

4) Public Hearing on 153 Bellevue Rd. – 20" Honeylocust-

The 20" Honeylocust on for public hearing was a request made by the resident Richard Moynihan on the basis that the roots are seriously damaging his private walkway and the steps into his residence and driveway.

Hayward explained that a Massachusetts resident has the right to maintain their property but can be held liable for causing harm to a tree if pruned or treated incorrectly.

Resident Comments

Mr. Moynihan explained that he was required to pave his front walkway with pavers at graduated heights in order to accommodate the mass of roots from the tree pushing up the earth. Moynihan explained that the tree has been extremely well fed by his residential lawn care system so the tree looks beautiful and is in robust health.

Moynihan explained that many of the visitors frequenting his home have experienced difficulty navigating the pavers on his front walkway and yard due to the graduated heights. He said he needs to remedy this dangerous situation for the people entering and exiting his home.

Moynihan said he hired a contractor and is planning a renovation for his front walkway, steps and driveway at an estimated cost of \$30,000.00. He is seeking assistance from Hayward to avoid completing the project only to experience the root system pushing up the earth and newly installed materials after the project is finished.

Opposition

Hayward read the oppositions that were filed in the Conservation Office into the record. Maureen O'Sullivan suggested altering the height of the pavers to allow roots additional space, or a partial root trim with observation over the future. David Jay wrote and urged use of root barriers which will contain the roots but asked that the neighbors not be deprived by taking the tree down. Annie Clark wrote and asked Hayward to save this public shade tree. Libby Shaw wrote that Honeylocusts survive well even in drought conditions and this could be the best species in dry periods such as this one.

Public Comment

Dennis Mercurio, a friend of Moynihan's, and Watertown resident was present to confirm the dangerousness being caused by the tree and attest to Moynihan's diligence trying to find a solution on his own.

Hayward Comments

Hayward considered the healthy condition of the tree, oppositions that were filed to the tree being removed and the list of alternatives available to resolve the issues.

Hayward Recommendations

Hayward offered to support and assist Moynihan by working with him and his contractor to find the most feasible and liberal solutions to the issues being posed by the tree. Hayward said he was committed to work with him into the future.

Result: Tree to remain

5) **Public Hearing on 63 Grandview Ave.-38” Silver Maple-**

Hayward initiated the review of this tree when he noticed brittle branches that are falling as they age. His concern was intensified with this tree being adjoined to a school with children frequenting the area.

Hayward Comments

He explained that Silver Maples tend to become very brittle as they age and said that this tree has trunk decay at the base which indicates there is some deterioration underneath which could allow for the tree to blow over in strong winds.

Hayward will issue a work order for the removal of this tree based on their being no objections filed.

Result: Tree will be removed.

Tree Hearing Closed.