

Attending Committee Members: Mary Hogue (Chair), Jeff Minder (Tree Warden), Joe File, Geoff Steadman, Tom Corell, Dave McMahon, and special guest, Mary Ellen LeMay, Outreach Coordinator for H2H.

Administrative

Minutes – Tom Corell made a motion, Jeff Minder seconded and the Minutes of the February 20, 2018 meeting were unanimously approved.

Tree Warden Report

Storms

There were several storms in March and more coming. The March 8 storm caused over 700 incidents of downed trees and wires, there were 200 blocked roads and 22% of the town were without power, some for a day or more. (In comparison, there were 500 incidents and 97% of the town was without power from Sandy.) By March 10 4pm, there were 72 roads blocked, less than 200 households were without power. By March 11 4pm, all roads were open and less than 20 households were without power. It was noted that the vast majority (approximately 75%) were not in the area where ETT work had been completed.

Jeff Minder, Town Tree Warden, noted that the break down and refit of equipment requires the crews to spend time in the garage which means they are not out on the street removing the trees, which explains some of the time delay, though it must be noted that Jeff, and crew members, got approximately 8 hours of sleep on cots in the garage over the four nights of the clean-up. The bigger reason for the delay is that UI only provides a single “Make Safe” crew for each town. Even if a town is not hit, or not hit hard, the crew will not be reassigned to a town that has more severe damage. The “Make Safe” crew from the utility must be the first crew on the scene to ensure that the area is safe for work and then the DPW can do their work. A “Make Safe” crew will only go to areas where there is no other ingress or egress, i.e. a dead end, that is impassable with wires down. In other words, they will not clear main roads that have a tree and wires down because there is usually a detour that can be made. The committee discussed contacting PURA about the safety and health issues this policy creates; no decision was made.

Utility Enhanced Tree Trimming (ETT) Program

Jeff Minder reported that UI was finishing up the last of the 2017 Program work.

Tree Planting Program (TPP)

2018 Tree List

Jeff Minder reported that the bid will be going out today for 200+ trees.

2018 Neighborhood foci

Tom Corell reported that he has been working with two neighbors in the Eastlawn Road / Veres Park area. Mary Hogue noted there is not a neighborhood association in that area so this was unusual for the Committee.

The plan is for a letter to go out from the Fairfield Forestry Committee followed up by local captains going door to door with handouts and possibly with one on one meetings to encourage tree planting.

Commemorative Tree Planting Program

Mary Hogue reported that she, Tom Corell, and Jeff Minder have been working with Susan Barrett, among others, to have a tree planted in honor of the late Judge Dan Caruso in the Burr Gardens near his office at the back of Sullivan Independence Hall. In order to plant in this area Mary has also been working with Laura Fasano, chair of the Burr Gardens Advisory Council, and has coordinated with Mike Jehle, Executive Director of the Fairfield Museum and Historical Center.

The plan is to have this tree planting be part of the 2018 Arbor Day Celebration.

Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD)

Mary Hogue reported that she had heard from Zoning that they will be updating the town's POCD this year as per state statute.

Mary Ellen Lemay, also chair of the Trumbull Conservation Commission, noted that the Trumbull POCD was updated in 2016 and she felt it could be a good resource for Fairfield. She noted that the Town Planner at the time, Jaimie Bratt, who is now in Hartford, did a wonderful job.

Hudson to Housatonic Greenway (H2H; h2hrpc.org)

Mary Ellen Lemay presented on the Hudson to Housatonic Greenway project. The Committee was very impressed and felt that this program, which works to connect open green spaces the Hudson to the Housatonic Rivers, is something that we should try to incorporate into our Community Forest Management Plan update due in 2019.

Mary Hogue asked for volunteers to work on the Plan update. She, Dave McMahon, and Geoff Steadman agreed they would be the sub-committee to create a draft for the full committee to review.