

Draft Minutes

TOWN OF GUILFORD
Tree Advisory Board
Minutes – 18th February, 2021

The Tree Advisory Board held a virtual regular meeting on Thursday 18th February, 2021 at 4:00p.m. with Acting Chairman Kevin Magee presiding.

Present: John Cunningham (Member at Large)
Caroline Herrick (Leete’s Island Garden Club)
Shavaun Towers (Member at Large, joined the meeting at 4:20p.m.)

Also present: Tree Warden Kevin Magee

Liaison to Tree Advisory Board Dottie Colonese (Guilford Garden Club)

Excused: Shirley Girioni (Guilford Garden Club)

Absent: Patricia Keegan (Guilford Conservation Commission)

The meeting was called to order at 4:10p.m.

Eversource Tree Work Update: Present was Eversource arborist Jenna Turner. Ms. Turner gave a short PowerPoint presentation covering the proposed work in Guilford. She explained that Eversource worked on a 4-year cycle employing a variety of methods and depending on reliability and other factors – Scheduled Maintenance Trimming (SMT), Maintenance Enhanced Tree Trimming (METT) and Enhanced Tree Trimming (ETT). A window of clearance is created to prevent trees and vegetation from coming into contact with the power lines within the 4-year cycle (SMT). METT is where trees have been cut before and clearance is just being reestablished. ETT is for trees which are hanging over the powerlines and increasing the chance of power outages. Ms. Turner said she did not see much of this type of clearance for this year. She then reviewed the Consent Process explaining that due to COVID-19, customers were being contacted by telephone and email. The work is reviewed with the Tree Warden and Ms. Turner said as Eversource’s arborist she also reviewed the work to assure quality control. She then showed a map of the proposed area to be cut which included 9.66 miles (METT) and 43.61 miles (SMT) for a total of 53.27 miles. In conclusion Ms. Turner discussed an Enhanced Tree Removal Program (ERT). This involved identifying trees that were declining and which could pose a risk to primary wires and thus had the potential to cause power outages. Highest priority of tree removals for backbone lines included Little Meadow Road, Nut Plains Road, Stepstone Hill Road. Reliability Hot Spots were West Street and Wilburs Lane. Trees may be dead, declining, structurally unsound, or may have defects such as co-dominant leaders.

With the enhanced tree trimming Mr. Cunningham asked if there was a tree that Eversource wished to remove would Mr. Magee be notified. Mr. Magee replied that Eversource would have to follow the regulations and obtain a permit and the tree would have to be posted and a public hearing held if a resident requested this. Mr. Cunningham said if a tree had been pruned 4 or 5 times and it was the wrong type of tree to have under the wires it would make sense to remove it and replace it with a different, more suitable tree. Ms. Turner pointed out that the property owner might not wish to have the tree removed because it was not declining but was just the wrong tree for the space. She added that she was not doing any enhanced tree removal work at this time but just wanted to start a conversation about it. Mr. Magee asked if data collected from storms indicated if outages were from branches or from trees falling on the wires and creating hot spot issues. Ms. Turner replied that this data was not collected. However, an app was being created where anytime a tree fell crews would be rolled out to take photographs with a smartphone to make a record of the situation. The data collected could then be used to drive management decisions.

The Board agreed to change the order of the agenda to take “High Street Tree Work” next.

High Street Tree Work: Mr. Magee reported that he and Ms. Turner had looked at High Street and Mr. Cunningham had stopped by. Five trees were identified for removal on the north side of the road as follows: 3 trees at #17, 1 tree at #22 and #27. There are other trees which are growing under the wires but do not have heavy leaders going through the wires so these could be trimmed back at this time. Mr. Cunningham noted that there were Norway maples and Lindens under the wires. He said several residents had come out to talk and said they liked the trees but Mr. Cunningham felt if the trees were pruned the residents might like the street if it was a bit lighter. Ms. Turner said the trees were so overgrown and in contact with the wires that it was a safety concern and she was surprised that there hadn’t been more liability issues. She talked briefly about the difficulty of creating a power outage so the trees could be removed, and the possibility of planting some replacement trees. Mr. Magee noted there were trees on the south side with low branches which could be limbed up. Mr. Cunningham recommended working on the north (wire) side first before working on the south side of the street. Mr. Magee mentioned a resident who wished to have a tree removed at #36 and said he would begin with this project first.

Spring 2021 Tree Plantings: Ms. Colonese stated that she was applying for a grant again this year and the deadline was 3/11/21. This will require complete information on the spring planting plan. Mr. Cunningham recommended saying that 8 new trees @ \$500 each would be planted in the downtown area and he and Ms. Towers could determine locations at a later date. He did not feel specifics were needed for the grant application.

265 Old Whitfield Street: Mr. Magee said this property owner, Stephen O’Connor, wished to do some planting along his common property line with the Town of Guilford. Landscape designer Susan Fields explained that she had met with her client and then drawn up a planting plan but unfortunately one property line along Whitfield Street had been incorrectly drawn. Mr. Magee mentioned that two plum trees were planted several years ago. Mr. O’Connor said the rear of the house had no privacy and people could look into the house so he wished to install a privacy screen. He thought of planting trees but these would not provide the screening that he wanted. He did not want to have a wood fence and felt

a green privacy screen would be more in keeping with the surrounding area. Mr. O'Connor said he had tried to push out beyond the property line because of closeness to a leaching field and to minimize the risk of anything growing into the leaching field, and to keep it in line with the 2 existing trees. Mr. Magee said he had shown the plan to the Town Engineer and she was against having any kind of barrier in the Town's right-of-way. She was also opposed to arbor vitae but would accept some street trees as long as they did not create a visual property line along the street. This could make homeowners or future homeowners believe they had more land than they actually did. Mr. Cunningham queried the dimension of the edge of the sidewalk to the property line. Mr. Magee replied 19ft. Mr. O'Connor said the idea was to keep the plantings in enough so that the sightline to the stop sign on Summer Street was not blocked. Ms. Fields said the plantings at that corner were substantially lower than the arbor vitae – just a small perennial bed with some dwarf Japanese holly. Mr. Cunningham felt the Town Engineer might require 300ft. of visual clearance from the right-of-way when a car was stopped there. He felt the planting plan was fine but noted that the green giant plant material proposed was a form of arbor vitae and recommended being careful about its placement. One would not want it growing out into the sidewalk in the future. Ms. Towers said the Board was essentially suggesting that the plan be pulled closer to the house. Ms. Fields expressed concern about the septic system but Mr. Cunningham said he did not think the green giant root system would be a problem with the septic system. Ms. Towers agreed. Mr. Cunningham then asked Ms. Fields if she was thinking of removing the two plum trees. Ms. Fields replied maybe in the future. She said she was not a fan of plum trees but they were not part of this current plan. Mr. Cunningham said it would be good if the 4 trees on Summer Street were all the same variety. Mr. Magee noted that the plum trees had been planted by a previous owner who had purchased them before seeking approval. Regarding the arbor vitae Ms. Towers recommended looking at their placement relative to the ultimate canopy of the oak trees. In conclusion Mr. O'Connor said he understood the Board wanted the planting plan pulled in a bit and asked if he needed to resubmit it to Mr. Magee. Mr. Magee asked for a copy of the final plan.

Development of Guilford Tree Policy: Ms. Towers said she was still working on this project.

Other Business: 1) Refurbish Tree Grates on Whitfield Street: Mr. Magee said he had nothing new to report.

Public Forum: There were no members of the public in attendance.

Approval of Minutes: Ms. Towers made a motion to accept the Minutes of 21st January, 2021. Mr. Cunningham seconded the motion and it was carried unanimously.

Approval of Bills: Ms. Herrick made a motion to approve the following bill: Katharine Stewart, secretarial services. Ms. Towers seconded the motion and it was carried unanimously.

Mr. Cunningham made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 5:10p.m. Ms. Towers seconded the motion and it was carried unanimously. The next meeting of the Tree Advisory Board will be held on Thursday 25th March, 2021 at 4:00p.m.

Respectfully submitted: _____ Katharine Stewart, Recording Secretary