

**TOWN OF ORONO
TREE BOARD VIRTUAL MEETING
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 2021 AT 5:00PM**

WATCH ONLINE AT

<https://zoom.us/j/94550771557>

For Dial in Only call 1-312-626-6799 Webinar ID: 945 5077 1557

(LINK AVAILABLE AT ORONO.ORG)

*Comments can be submitted via email prior to the meeting start time
at info@orono.org and during the meeting by using Zoom comment features.*

MINUTES

1. Roll Call

Present: Cindy Blease (Co-Chair), Dave Thompson (Co-Chair), Pat Thompson, Jessica Leahy, Tim White and Public Works Director/Tree Warden Rob Yerxa

2. Agenda Review

Under “Tree evaluations”, Mr. White uploaded a template for the Board to use to evaluate the trees and to have a watch list. Mr. Thompson talked about including language in the Ordinance about the type of dwarf trees the Board would plant under wires, like crabapple and dogwood and where they would be planted.

3. Approval of Minutes of January 13, 2021

The previous minutes were not available for review. They will be ready for the next meeting.

4. Tree evaluations:

- **No Pending Evaluations for the Board**
- **Tree Warden Update**

Mr. Yerxa spoke of a delay with the cottonwood tree at 20 Crosby Street, due to the contractor having mechanical problems. Once that work is done, he will move on to Forest Hill Terrace. Ms. Leahy asked Mr. Yerxa to take onsite photos for the shared drive for future reference.

Mr. Yerxa noted he keeps a tree activity log (since 2012) on what has and has not been done, but he would like to clean it up before sharing it. He suggested having a separate “watch list” (under a different tab) that can be added to the “activity log” file. Mr. White suggested a column that says “watch” or “activity”. Mr. White and Mr. Yerxa agreed to work on creating something that works for everyone.

Ms. Leahy supported keeping the tree activity history as is and not overwriting any information. Mr. Yerxa noted the GIS system will be a great tool that would allow data to be tracked and

mapped. Mr. White supported the idea of adding the date to the GIS system.

In regard to public information, Ms. Wilson stated Tree Board members are public officials and explained what constitutes a public meeting, that agendas and minutes should be available to the public and that any Tree Board emails should be archived for public records. Ms. Leahy confirmed the Board already copies emails to Mr. Yerxa. When asked about looking at trees together, Ms. Wilson spoke of the importance of holding discussions and making decisions publicly as a group.

5. Review and Recommended Revisions of the Vegetation Ordinance

Mr. Yerxa asked for input from the Board on revisions to the Vegetation Ordinance (Chapter 38).

Ms. Leahy suggested having broader language on forest health, tree pests and disease. She noted keeping Dutch Elm Disease language and adding other subsequent tree disease language. Mr. Yerxa suggested having a general statement at the beginning that gives the Board authority to act on any potential disease and not list all the diseases. He noted the Dutch Elm Disease could be left as an example of potential actions that can be taken by the Board. Mr. Thompson cautioned on language for all situations because certain pests and diseases are handled differently. Mr. White suggested utilizing documents that already exist as reference tools versus updating the ordinance.

Town Manager Wilson suggested: establishing a preamble to the ordinance; giving the Tree Board the authority to regulate trees, illnesses and infestations; and, then allowing the Tree Board to create policies, approved by Town Council and made available to the public.

Ms. Leahy expressed concern about using broad language that speaks of all public trees versus trees on private land as with the Dutch Elm Disease. Mr. Yerxa commented that a public health emergency such as that would involve other public health groups and action by Council. Ms. Leahy offered to send Mr. Yerxa information from the Maine Forest Service on updated vegetation ordinances.

Mr. White noted some inconsistencies in the language that speaks of the public trees that should include “within the rights-of-way”.

Mr. Yerxa asked whether the ordinance language should be broadened from the current requirement that “57% of the Board should be sufficiently trained in arboriculture”. Ms. Wilson reviewed the board requirements: the full membership does not need to be present for a meeting, but any affirmative action of the board required four affirmative votes.

The board discussed how long the chairperson should serve. Ms. Wilson explained that different boards are set up different ways, but all should have a point of contact (i.e. chairperson) and a system in place as to how that person is appointed and how long they serve. The Board discussed having the chairperson serve a one-year term. Mr. Yerxa will work on the language.

In regard to membership requirements, the Board agreed that preference should be given to someone with arboriculture, forestry, other natural resources or plant science background.

Mr. White asked about creating standards for the selection/planting of public trees and how to make them available to the public. Ms. Wilson explained they would be posted on the website, Council would review them with possible legal review and the Tree Board would vote on them. The Board talked about having a Tree Management Plan to house all of the information.

Mr. Yerxa talked about having a formal tree permitting process for public land. He could be done through the Code Enforcement program. Mr. Yerxa also explained that in order for a contractor to dig in the right-of-way, they need a street opening permit. Mr. White suggested making it part of the ordinance.

Regarding tree protection during construction, Mr. Yerxa stated snow fences around the drip edge of a tree is unrealistic, unless you were doing some work around a tree. Ms. Leahy suggested the language should focus on the outcomes, i.e. avoiding injury.

In regard to Enforcement and Penalties, Mr. Yerxa will have the Town Manager look at revising the language. Mr. Yerxa will revise the language based on the discussion tonight.

6. Open Board Position - Approval of the Announcement

The Board reviewed the Tree Board Opening Announcement. They noted some spelling errors that need to be reviewed before posting. Mr. Yerxa stated it will be posted on the Town's Facebook page and the Town's website.

7. Monthly Tree Board Activity Update

Ms. Leahy stated the two UMaine students are ready to present their Emerald Ash projects at the May 5th Tree Board Meeting at 5 p.m. or 6 p.m. Their information is on the shared drive. Ms. Leahy stated she was approached by an Old Town resident that wants to talk about a Brown Tailed Brigade which can be discussed at the next meeting. It may be another UMaine service learning project.

Mr. Yerxa stated the next Tree Board meeting will be March 3, 2021.

8. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn by Tim White and seconded by Jessica Leahy. All voted in favor, 6-0. The meeting adjourned at 6:05 p.m.

Minutes are summary only. A video recording of the meeting is available on the Town's website at www.orono.org under Agendas and Minutes.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy W. Ward
Executive Assistant