

Tree Task Force Minutes
April 10, 2024 6:30
(weather postponement from April 3)
Town Hall Conference Room

Attendance present - Tyler Kolle, Kristen Dorsey absent - Eric Horne

Updates

2024 Tree Plantings/Budget: email from Earl - "*With all the wind storm and icing events... the cleanup cost of the down trees and rental of bucket truck will use remaining funds.*" Therefore, the rest of this year for TTF will not involve planting trees, unless public donations are made. Likely, we will not know what we are exactly doing for the remainder of 2024 until after the TC presentation. TTF is scheduled to 'sunset' in 2025.

If the town does decide to pursue Tree City designation, that will trigger the requirements: 1) a permanent Tree Committee / 2) Tree Ordinance / 3) document **at least** \$2 per capita toward the planting, care and removal of city trees—and the planning efforts to make those things happen / 4) an annual Arbor Day proclamation and observance.

Consideration should be given, during the next budget cycle, to the expenses of storm cleanup being distinct from a separate annual allowance for **new** tree plantings/maintenance. Freeport canopy is predominantly mature, therefore more vulnerable to extreme weather events- so every year, there would likely be very limited funds to actually plant new generations of trees. We are concerned that the stalling over the past couple of years, and seemingly low prioritization of our work (in particular the Tree Ordinance and draft Zoning amendments) , has/ will continue to see dwindling public tree populations, treeless development and parking lots.

New Business

-Town Council Presentation on 4/23 - Confirm this date with Sophia and clarify what exactly is expected to happen. Other questions we have to include in the email inquiry:

- 1) What is the sequence of TTF-involved processes that need to occur to get Freeport to designation as a 'Tree City' by the National Arbor Day Foundation?
- 2) Can FSAB/TTF send out an appeal [via Municipal Bulletin and/or a mailer?] for citizen donations designated for tree planting, in conjunction with Maine Arbor Week (3rd week in May)?
- 3) Is there a possibility for FSAB to bring our draft Zoning amendments to the Planning Board sooner than the completion of the Comp Plan renewal (a 2-year [?] process) - maybe in conjunction with Climate Plan Actions?
- 4) Reviewing the town Charter language (below), it was in our purview to "*assist in the establishment of standards for the selection, planting, maintenance and removal of public trees (the Ordinance) ... formulate and continually update a management plan for public trees*" (also almost done!). The Questions arise - a.) shouldn't we be presenting the Management Plan too, and, b.) What distinction did the TC have in mind between a "tree program" and a "management plan"?

SECTION 617 – MUNICIPAL TREE TASK FORCE 617.1 Establishment The Municipal Tree Task Force is hereby created and established. The Tree Task Force shall report to the Sustainability Advisory Board and shall consist of three community members appointed by the Sustainability Advisory Board. The term of the members shall be for two years. In consultation with the Sustainability Advisory Board, the Town Council shall assess the effectiveness of the Municipal Tree Task Force in 2025. The Task Force shall end on June 30, 2025 unless this Ordinance is amended by future action of the Town Council. 617.2 Duties and Responsibilities The Municipal Tree Task Force shall determine the needs of the Town of Freeport in connection with its public tree program. The Tree Task Force shall meet at least semiannually. It shall assist in the establishment of standards for the selection, planting, maintenance and removal of public

trees, and in the dissemination of news and information on these standards and on the public tree program. ITEM # 32-20 TREE TASK FORCE The Municipal Tree Task Force shall formulate and continually update a management plan for public trees. Such plan shall be presented to the Freeport Town Council, and, upon acceptance and approval by the Council, the plan shall serve as the basis for the public tree program.

-Comprehensive Plan/Climate Action Plan - According to Sophia, these become the foundation for ordinance and policy development; currently, looking at projects through the lens of tree canopy or natural space preservation/expansion is not standard. As a recent example, not a question or comment was made about the loss of trees during the skatepark proposal presentation, to site it in Gorman park; nor during the 22 Main Street development proposal in regard to the 3 mature street trees /natural rain garden stand of trees that would have been destroyed. Again, concern for waiting on these municipal processes to be completed, before any meaningful action is taken to preserve and increase canopy. The Comprehensive Plan draft Chapter: 'Natural and Water Resources' is available on futurefreeport.com having been reviewed by the Planning Board and consultant. Could use some more explicit language in regard to green infrastructure. Our understanding is that FSAB, along with all other town committees, will be invited systematically to weigh in on each chapter.

-Gorman Park/Skateboard Park proposal - was praised and moved forward by TC, although Sophia has suggested TC develop procedural framework for supporting projects brought to the council. Unclear what the status currently is or process for public input or relevant town advisory committee consultation. A loss of public natural space and unaccounted loss of tree canopy.

-Arbor Week (5/21-27) - private donation appeal in Municipal Bulletin and FSAB mailing list? Otherwise, Kristen will ask what/if FSAB might do to celebrate.

-Audubon Consultation- For demonstration plantings at Park and Ride / Starbucks Pocket Park / Bartol Library, we agreed that it would be useful to re-establish contact to find out the contracting structure and costs. Could be an FSAB expenditure, if we want to do an initial phase this year? Otherwise, we'd be ready to launch next Spring...

-Next-generation Tree Species Diversification - see current Tree Management Plan for over/underrepresented species. Tabled until after TC presentation/ town manager guidance.

Next Steps

Email Sophia with questions.
Confirm Eric 4/23 attendance?
Audubon follow up.
Seek FSAB input re: Arbor Week

Next Meeting May 1st

Recorded by Kristen Dorsey