



City of Ashtabula

Ashtabula City Council

Community Development/Economic Development/Parks & Recreation Committee Meeting

Tuesday, July 11, 2023 at 4:00 PM

4717 Main Avenue, Ashtabula, OH 44004

Minutes

Opening of Committee Meeting

Call to Order

The meeting of the Ashtabula City Council Community Development/ Economic Development/ Parks & Recreation Committee was called to order at 4:02 p.m. by Committee Chair Haines-DiGiacomo.

Roll Call

Members Present: Chair: Ward 5 Councilor Jane Haines, Vice Chair: Ward 4 Councilor Jodi Mills

Absent: Member: President John Roskovics

Officers Present: City Manager James Timonere, Clerk of Council McKenzie Burgan

Parks & Recreation Board Members Present: None.

Visitors: Amanda Wood with The Holden Arboretum, Ryan, Jade, and LaVette- arrived after the roll call was completed

Sunshine Law Certification

A quorum was established as defined by the Ashtabula City Council Rules of Order. The meeting met the requirements of the Ohio Sunshine Laws Open Meetings Act.

Welcome and Acknowledgement of Visitors

Chair Jane Haines-DiGiacomo welcomed Amanda Wood, our guest speaker from The Holden Arboretum, and visitors Ryan and Jade.

Special Guest Presentation

Amanda Wood with The Holden Arboretum

Amanda introduced herself and said thank you for having her. She started her presentation off by having everyone present close their eyes and picture their favorite tree. She stated that trees provide a lot of benefits for your neighborhood and community that people do not realize. She spoke about the benefits of trees that are both seen and unseen. The state of Ohio has a decent number of forests. The northeast and northwest parts of the state do not have as many trees. We have been stagnant with our forest cover at about 40%. This includes urban spaces and wooded spaces. She stated we are much more forested than 100 years ago.

Some issues that have come along with having more trees are social inequities and issues and ecological threats. Climate change has made a big impact on our forests. A lot of work done at Holden is done in the Cleveland area as well as North East Ohio. In Cleveland, the tree canopy is at 19% and for Ashtabula County, we have about 41% canopy coverage. Amanda explained that in urban areas we have a lot of cars and in the woods, this is not common. Forests have more deer presence and invasive species. 85% of the woods in Ohio are privately owned, 11% are owned by

the state and at local levels, and 4% are owned federally. Their hope is to be able to help 85% of the forests, as they are privately owned, by helping them properly manage and maintain the trees. The health and fate of Ohio's forests are mostly on private land owners, but the city also can have a big role in terms of our urban forests as well. Private landowners need help managing woodlands, but this also applies to urban spaces as well.

There are a lot of environmental and socio-economical challenges that come with both urban and woodland spaces. There are invasive plant species, deer overpopulation, diseases, and pests. There are also inadequate resources and incentives for landowners to practice good stewardship. Bad timber harvesting practices, and "let it be" management and past land use are also challenges. People tend to say that it is the woods and it will do what it is going to do instead of looking to see what they can help with. This is all made more elevated and challenging by climate change in terms of having hotter summers and wetter springs and more pests and diseases as a result. She stated the reason why this matters is because it is impacting our urban trees. Urban trees are known as green gold and it is shown that communities thrive under a healthy canopy.

Some environmental impacts trees have are that they store carbon, intercept, and clean rainwater, reduce stormwater runoff, prevent erosion, and provide habitat for birds and mammals. Some economic benefits are that trees can moderate temperatures, reduce energy consumption, traffic calming, increase property values, and provide green jobs. Some health benefits of trees are that they reduce UV-B exposure, improve respiratory health, green exercise, improve mental health, and provide stress reduction.

Trees improve air quality by producing oxygen and by cleaning the air by absorbing CO₂. They also capture airborne particles such as dirt and dust soot. Some fun facts are that two medium-sized, healthy trees can produce enough oxygen for a single person for one year. Trees can also remove up to 60% of street-level air pollution including carbon dioxide, ozone, and small particulate matter. They scrub the air clean as they provide us with oxygen to live.

Trees promote beneficial water quality. Trees capture rainfall and gradually release the water so it contributes less flow and pollutants downstream. They reduce the volume of water runoff which slows down erosion and reduces pollutants. Tree roots and leaf litter promote slow absorption of water back into the ground, which is important for reducing flash flooding or pooling of water. In riparian areas, trees can moderate stream temperatures. With cooler water temperatures there are fewer bacterial problems. Visitor Jade asked Amanda if it was a possibility to create a dome-like structure to house the trees that are susceptible to invasive species and to also find what type of air quality and environment these trees need to thrive. Amanda asked if she is asking in terms of species conservation and Jade said yes, that this could protect trees from dying out while also allowing for us to figure out how these invasive species work and try to find a solution for them. Amanda stated this is a very complex question and she will answer this at the end if Jade reminds her to do so. She did state that one thing to consider is the cost that would go into building said dome and then paying for all the aspects that come along with having this dome structure. Amanda stated they do collect seeds and there is an international seed bank where seeds are collected from species and preserved for future conservation.

Trees reduce stress on stormwater infrastructure by slowing the rate of water entering the storm systems, which eases pressure on storm systems and pump stations and allows for fewer detention ponds needed. They also filter the water as well, so there are fewer pollutants, which allows for less chemical treatment of the water.

Trees moderate temperatures by providing shade and reflecting heat. Vegetated areas typically

reflect more solar radiation away from the surface than dark artificial areas. Some fun facts are that shaded surfaces can be 20-45 degrees cooler than the peak temperatures of unshaded materials. Shade trees can make time feel shorter. The more mature trees present, the shorter the wait time perceived.

Trees boost property values by increasing the sale price because you are adding greenery to your space. Trees help reduce the time your house is on the market, and these benefits spill over to neighboring properties as well. Trees can also absorb traffic noise and increase privacy.

Trees are good for businesses as it has been shown that they boost occupancy rates, increase property values, provide a buffer for pedestrians, and people tend to be more attentive and slow down while walking and driving in an area with tree coverage.

Trees are good for physical health. They reduce stress, lower blood pressure, promote an active lifestyle by initiating walking and climbing and therefore improving fitness, and also protect from harmful ultraviolet rays. A fun fact is that in a neighborhood with more street trees and other plants, people judge walking distances to be less and are therefore more likely to travel on foot, which has health benefits.

Trees are good for mental health. They can reduce stress, boost concentration, result in higher test scores, and provide relief from ADHD. A study was done on girls and greenery and showed improved self-discipline in the girls. A fun fact is that desk workers with views that include green elements were more satisfied and displayed an increased enthusiasm for work, improved patience and lower frustration, and fewer health problems.

Trees support wildlife by offering wildlife a protective cover along with seeds, nuts, and fruits for consumption, and a natural corridor for migrating wildlife. 2.9 billion birds have left the area or their presence has gone down since 1970. This is partially due to construction and loss of habitat. By planting trees we are potentially helping our bird species.

Trees create community. Trees are conversation starters. People are more likely to walk and jog on shaded streets, which encourages interactions and improves a sense of community. More social activities were observed in public housing common spaces that had trees compared to treeless spaces of the same size. A study found that urban residents dislike and fear treeless, empty common spaces. Trees and grass dramatically changed their perception of those spaces.

Demonstrating good forest management in both urban and woodland areas can move landowners towards an active, intentional, reciprocal relationship with their woodlands for the benefit of current and future generations of human and non-human life.

Chair Jane Haines-DiGiacomo asked about the tree initiative for tree planting they have going on. Amanda stated it is The People For Trees Campaign at Holden. They are trying to improve Cleveland's canopy coverage from 19% to 30% and this takes a lot of trees. They would need about 360,000 trees to get to 30%. This is not something one organization can do and at Holden, they realize this and have started this campaign asking people to pledge. By pledging, you are stating you planted a tree and will take care of it for the establishment and this can be counted toward their campaign. As a thank you, they send information in the form of newsletters and guides on how to properly care for the tree. Mrs. Haines-DiGiacomo asked what it would look like to sign up for this campaign. Amanda stated all you do is go to their website and click "make a pledge" located all the way at the bottom and then fill out the needed information and submit it. City Manager Timonere stated this is not Holden providing the trees and Amanda said that is correct. Holden, unfortunately,

does not provide the trees. However, they are going to be doing a community tree planting form where you will complete the form and they will provide 5 to 10 trees for you to plant.

Amanda shared that if we have a woodland that requires a professional's help we are able to contact our State Forester and they can assist us. This is paid for by our tax dollars. There is also a Forester for urban areas and she stated she would send us this information after the meeting.

Visitor Ryan asked Amanda if she had to advise somebody, without seeing the landscape, in areas where people will most likely not be caring for the trees what variety of trees would she suggest you plant there? Amanda stated she would not choose only one type of tree because if a tree gets sick and you plant the same tree in every location, all the trees are typically clones of each other, so if one gets sick it is likely that the others will as well. Having a variety of trees in those locations gives them a better chance of survival, even if one gets sick, that does not necessarily mean the others will. You will then have to think about whether you want to plant non-native trees or native trees. She stated a mixture of non-natives and natives would be best to do as our native trees grew up in forests and to put them in urban areas is harsh on these trees. There are a couple of tree species that are resistant to salt, which is important for our urban areas because if you do not rigorously water the trees after a winter with heavy salt, the soil will take the water from the tree and cause a drought. A Forester can assist you with picking the right trees for your locations.

Visitor LaVette asked if Holden works with construction companies that build planned units to plant trees after construction. Amanda said yes and no. Most of their work is grant funded. One thing they are doing, through a grant, is working with Woodhill Homes by consulting after this new housing development is made by helping them with what type of trees they should be planting and if the planting was done properly. She said it takes a partnership and it is usually grant related. LaVette asked how people get this information as not many people even know about Holden. She asked if they work with elementary schools and communities. Amanda said yes they do a lot of educational outreach. Amanda stated if you wanted to reach out to her she could get you in touch with someone who does the outreach. LaVette stated she is getting ready to landscape her property and she is thinking about trees. She asked if she would be able to contact the Urban Forester and Amanda herself for help and Amanda said yes. Amanda said she is happy to provide expertise in terms of species but she is not able to guarantee she can do a site visit but she can provide recommendations based on pictures.

LaVette stated when she first moved here there were a lot of tree canopies, but she understands they were soft maples planted pretty much at the same time and they uproot sidewalks and people were cutting them down. She said two were just cut down across the street from her. Amanda said this is where planting the right tree in the right place matters. She said people tend to only think about the upper part of the tree but root space very much matters too.

Vice Chair Jodi Mills stated she receives calls about trees and that people do not want to maintain their trees. She said years ago they did not think about what type of trees they were planting where and now there is a big problem with them uprooting sidewalks. There are a lot of people who do not want to spend money on trimming their mature trees. Amanda said one thing the Cleveland Tree Coalition is doing currently is strategic planning and trying to find ways to incentivize individuals to do mature tree planting. She said this is Cleveland-specific, but this is something anyone can do. Unfortunately, to plant a mature tree it costs \$4,000. She said there may be some funding to help with this, but she does realize not everyone is going to be able to afford to do this. There is some inflation-reduction funding that was just released through the state through ODNR that may help with this, but this will not be available for a while as it was just released for a five-year cycle. She said she will send more information on this when she sends the information on the Urban Forester. LaVette

asked if this would help individuals or municipalities. Amanda stated it is not for individuals but for cities and municipalities and not-for-profit companies.

Mrs. Mills asked Amanda if she works with cities to help residents plant trees on their property and Amanda said yes and she was more than happy to help with this. She stated if we received trees through Holden during their giveaway she would be the one to help us plant the trees and find the best type of species for the locations and she would provide information on how to provide for the trees and also help plant the trees to make sure it is done properly. Amanda stated they acknowledge that a lot of landscaping companies are planting trees and they love this, but they want to make sure the trees are planted properly. The issue is usually either the trees are not planted properly or are not maintained properly, so they start getting into water lines. Trees follow available water sources and if your tree is not getting enough water, it will find a water source. If you are constantly watering it for the first couple of years, it should not go into your water lines, and as it gets older, if there is a drought, you can water it to keep it from going into the pipes.

City Manager's Report

City Manager Timonere stated they got all the new grills installed at Walnut Beach and there is also an ADA-accessible grill that swivels instead of lifts off so you can get closer to it. The mats for the beach are in and the guys are going to work on getting the land ready to roll the mats out at Walnut Beach so it is an extension of the boardwalk.

Smith Field came in way over our engineer's estimate. We thought we were going to be able to pick it apart and make it work, however, CDBG rules state this has to be rebid. There was only one person who bid originally and he believes this is why it was so high. They will probably chop this up into three different projects and put it out that way. They are working on seeing if this is an option. These three projects would be for the fencing, track, and basketball area. A final decision has not been made yet. Mrs. Mills asked how much the bid was over. Mr. Timonere said it was 10% over. Mrs. Haines-DiGiacomo asked with all this going on if this project will still be able to be done this year and Mr. Timonere said he hoped. He believes a majority of the work can be done in the fall. It has to go out to bid now though. They have a lot going on and with the supply chain and employee issues, they are doing their best to get everything done.

Mrs. Mills asked if there was something going on at Nappi Field as someone had mentioned some sort of construction going on. Mr. Timonere said he believes AQUA was doing a water line on West 10th or a gas line was being done.

Parks & Recreation Committee Report

Mrs. Haines-DiGiacomo asked Mr. Timonere if he had spoken with Julie Wayman from My Neighborhood Collaborative as she had brought some questions to the Parks and Rec Board. Mr. Timonere said no he had not.

Mrs. Haines-DiGiacomo stated that we all know that Mary Kiehl has stepped off of the committee due to a move outside of the city. She stated we still need people to fill the openings on this board and this creates another opening.

July Meeting Minutes

There was no one present from the Parks and Recreation Board.

Unfinished Business

None.

New Business

None.

Next Meeting

Tuesday, August 8th, 2023

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, August 8th, 2023, and our guest speaker will be Ryan Welpie with the Ashtabula County District Library.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:47 PM by Chair Jane Haines-DiGiacomo.

Attested by: Clerk of Council McKenzie Borgan