

CONSERVATION ADVISORY COMMISSION
MINUTES

February 14, 2023

MEETING CONVENED: 7:02 p.m. Council Chambers/Microsoft Teams Hybrid

MEMBERS PRESENT: Sheila Smith (Presiding), Helga Huntley, John, Mateyko, Lauren O'Connor, Andrew O'Donnell, Mahi Palanisami

ABSENT: Beth Chajes, Mikayla Rypkema

STAFF: Joe Spadafino, Director of Parks & Recreation
Jeffrey Martindale, Chief Purchasing & Personnel Officer
Nichol Scheld, Deputy City Secretary

Ms. Smith called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM JANUARY 10, 2023:

MOTION BY MS. SMITH, SECONDED BY DR. HUNTLEY: THAT THE COMMISSION APPROVE THE JANUARY 10, 2023, MINUTES AS SUBMITTED BY THE SECRETARY.

MOTION PASSED. VOTE 5 – 0.

AYE: HUNTLEY, MATEYKO, O'CONNOR, O'DONNELL, SMITH.

NAY: 0.

ABSENT: CHAJES, RYPKEMA.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT:

None.

3. 2023 SPRING TREE GIVEAWAY/ARBOR DAY – JOE SPADAFINO

Joe Spadafino, Director of Parks & Recreation the previous year's tree giveaway was for the first time for the City and was a success with 155 trees and shrubs given away. Any requesting household was permitted two trees or shrubs during the spring giveaway and between 68 to 70 households received two plantings; most of the plants were distributed within a week of advertising the event. He acknowledged there was some trial and error during the registration process which would help staff run the next event more smoothly. During the fall giveaway, each household was able to receive one tree and 75 trees were given away. He explained that households that received a tree in the spring would be ineligible to participate in the fall giveaway and confirmed that educational information was provided to each household that received a planting.

Mr. Spadafino thanked the Commission for the financial support and requested \$15,000 to purchase a combination of 75 trees and shrubs for the 2023 spring and fall giveaway. Staff intended to spend roughly \$7,000 each season while considering fluctuation costs. He stated that \$9,000 was spent

for the 2022 spring tree giveaway and \$6,300 for the fall but included larger plant material. Staff requested that spring participants send photographs of their trees and he informed that if the demand was high again, the same restrictions per household per season would be put into place.

Ms. Smith asked for the combination of plantings per household in the spring and Mr. Spadafino stated that one tree or one shrub was permitted. Ms. Smith suggested staff indicate that previous participants may request another planting if there were leftovers because she was concerned someone would register for two years and not get a tree. Mr. Spadafino noted the event would be more manageable if registration was only be open to households that had not yet received a tree and then staff could notify residents two weeks later if there were any remaining trees that would be available to everyone.

Dr. Huntley requested photographs of successful plantings and reports of unsuccessful plantings. Mr. Spadafino added that Herb White, Parks & Recreation Superintendent, had worked with Delaware Forestry Service, under the Department of Agriculture, and the Division donated 70 two-inch trees to plant in City parks because of the spring giveaway. Staff intended to plant the donated trees on Arbor Day.

Ms. Smith stated that the Delaware Tree Stewards would provide assistance to organize City plantings.

Dr. Huntley asked if the City tree planting off Church Road was mowed over. Mr. Spadafino would check with Mr. White. Dr. Huntley asked for the plan to replace the diseased ash trees that were removed. Mr. Spadafino confirmed staff was still planning stages and informed that some UD students would do some plantings along the Valley Stream Area but had to cut back some invasives due to the fear that the invasives would overtake the new plantings.

Mr. Spadafino spoke with Mr. White to create an initiative to replant the areas where the ash trees were being removed and informed that there were many along Christina Valley Stream and many have survived the emerald ash borer. As predicted six years earlier, the trees became brittle quickly after infection, so City approved \$100,000 for ash tree removal and replacement. Dr. Huntley asked what types of trees would be used for replacement and Mr. Spadafino would defer to Mr. White's knowledge as an arborist to know which types would do best in the wet areas along the valley stream area.

MOTION BY DR. HUNTLY, SECONDED BY MS. SMITH: THE CONSERVATION ADVISORY COMMISSION ALLOCATE \$15,000.00 OF THE CONSERVATION ADVISORY COMMISSION'S 2023 BUDGET TOWARDS SUPPORTING A SPRING AND A FALL TREE GIVEAWAY BY PARKS AND RECREATION.

MOTION PASSED. VOTE 5 – 0.

AYE: HUNTLEY, MATEYKO, O'CONNOR, PALANISAMI, SMITH.

NAY: 0.

ABSENT: CHAJES, RYPKEMA.

ABSTAIN: O'DONNELL.

Mr. Spadafino confirmed staff was still planning Arbor Day activities and Mr. White would like to attend the next Commission meeting to discuss Arbor Day initiatives to garner support and volunteer to lead different groups.

Dr. Huntley suggested a walking tour by someone with knowledge of the majestic trees around the City to highlight some of the special species to increase participation during the Arbor Day event. Mr. Spadafino explained that Arbor Day and Community Cleanup were closely scheduled to combine the number of volunteers; he added that some initiatives were planting trees behind Handloff Park and the right side of Apple Road bridge.

Ms. Smith requested clarification on plantings near schools. Mr. Spadafino informed that the City planted several trees at Downs Elementary and West Park Elementary twenty-eight years ago. Classes were educated about the importance of trees and proper planting.

4. NEWARK HISTORICAL SOCIETY FUNDING

Mr. Martindale informed that he had been working with Kaitlyn Tanis, President of the Newark Historical Society, over recent months for grant opportunities to improve the train station. He reported that the current evaluation was \$200,000 as the building would require between \$700,000 to \$750,000. Dr. Huntley asked if the cost was due to the current state of the station. Mr. Martindale explained that the City's Accounting Department evaluated the building to be \$200,000 and noted the City had a new insurance company that would perform a new evaluation through proprietary software and provide an updated number soon.

Dr. Huntley asked if the proposed investment was \$750,000. Mr. Martindale confirmed the \$750,000 would include the windows, new roof, awnings supporting the roof, plaster repairs and plumbing repairs which would increase the value of the building.

Mr. Mateyko wanted to know about the design team for the proposed project. Mr. Martindale informed that the City was still in the fund-raising stage and not yet at the design stage. He revealed the building was on the National Historical Registry so there was little re-designing and a majority of the cost was because many of the repairs would need to be custom made due to meet the specifications of the 1800's.

Mr. Martindale spoke to Ms. Tanis about presenting before the Commission because the train station window replacement included energy efficiency for a City facility which fell under the Commission's purview.

Ms. Tanis, President of the History Museum and the Historical Society, explained that the Newark Passenger Train Station was built in 1877 as part of a revitalization project created by the Philadelphia Wilmington and Baltimore Railroad Company. The project was conducted across Delaware, Pennsylvania, and Maryland. The building had been on the National Historic Registry since 1982 and while the Historical Society was established in 1981, it did not occupy the space until 1989, after the City purchased the building and conducted renovations; the City had owned the building since 1986. She continued that the Historical Society and Museum operated out of the building but were two separate entities. The Historical Society operated and ran the museum each year and the Historical Society was governed by a board of twelve volunteer directors who ran an organization of people who were interested in preserving, collecting, and retelling Newark's stories with residents and visitors. She noted that the Historical Society hosted lectures in-person and on Zoom, walking tours, bike tours, private tours, community days, as well as host author-talks and signings although some events were held at the Newark Senior Center due to the Museum's space restrictions. She emphasized that the building required extensive repairs but the most pressing were the Gothic revival windows which increased the cost. She reported the second largest repair

was the roof and unique awnings that were close to active train tracks while the interior needed electrical, plumbing and plaster repairs. She presented pictures of the extensive damaged and deteriorating windows and plaster and informed that because the windows were in such disrepair, the was extremely drafty so replacing the windows would create a seal that would help with energy efficiency. She informed historical collections were currently stored on the second floor, but the environment was not stable enough for proper preservation. The repairs would benefit the Historical Society and Museum and provide an updated system and building to control temperatures.

Ms. Tanis confirmed that past fundraising efforts would be put towards the \$700,000 goal and, since August of 2022, the Historical Society had donated \$5,000 from its operating budget, accepted ongoing donations, and applied for a National Park Service Grant. She informed that over \$16,000 was collected during a Giving Tuesday event and all efforts had raised over \$25,000. She shared that the Historical Society would be a part of the Do More 24 Fundraising Day in March and Founders Day Weekend in April, which had traditionally been an opportunity for the Historical Society to celebrate the signing of the Newark City Charter and the opening of the museum. The museum was generally only open between April and November each year and the exhibits were completely changed during the downtime to attract different visitors every year.

Ms. Tanis informed that the Historical Society would push a large fundraising event during the first weekend of April by hosting the first Fun Run 5k on Saturday. The run currently had 15 sponsors, but staff was seeking more. On Sunday, April 2nd, there would be a celebration at the museum with food trucks, live music, and new exhibits. She informed that the Historical Society had applied for several grants and would charge for special lectures; the focus was to set the society up for success beyond the repair project. They had created a new logo, completed a guide star profile to help with future grant applications, and created a money market account for only donation funds which generated more interest than a typical savings account. She recently started working with UD Student Capstone on developing membership software.

Ms. O'Connor had no questions.

Mr. Mateyko spoke with someone in the Planning and Development Department regarding the windows three or four years earlier and one of the main concerns was to move away from fossil fuels. Dr. Huntley asked for clarification about the current heating system and Ms. Tanis was unsure of the current model but confirmed it had not been updated since 1980. Dr. Huntley asked if the system was gas heat and Ms. Tanis confirmed. Mr. Mateyko wanted the windows to be repaired and not replaced. He referred to a guide from the National Trust for Historic Preservation titled "Ten Things You Should Know About Retrofitting Historic Windows". Ms. Smith thought Mr. Mateyko made good points and agreed with using green energy for the heating and not replacing the windows. She explained that Commission provided Mr. Martindale and Ms. Tanis a time limit for the presentation and suggested that Mr. Mateyko continue the discussion offline. Mr. Mateyko felt the process for the restorations was out of order and suggested for the Historical Society to engage a design professional. He also advised researching individuals who might do pro-bono work and repeatedly referenced the guide from the National Trust for Historic Preservation. He strongly opposed replacing the windows as it would not save energy or money. He did not believe the path was the proper way to execute historic preservation. He assumed the replacement of the windows would cost the Historical Society and the City hundreds of thousands of dollars because future grant applications would claim the building was no longer an 'intact fabric' and had been degraded by replacing the windows.

Mr. Martindale suggested the discussion could move offline and, as a procedural note, reiterated that Ms. Tanis and the Historical Society were heading the fundraising efforts for the project while the engineering, and construction phase would be administered by the City. He confirmed there would be multiple phases to the restoration.

Dr. Huntley asked why the windows needed to be replaced instead of repaired. Mr. Martindale explained the design was included in the 2018 Capital Budget and, at the time, replacement was suggested because it would be the more expensive option, but refurbishment had now become part of the discussion and design process.

Mr. Martindale referred to Ms. Tanis's photographs which proved that windows had failed substantially so refurbishment might not be an option. Dr. Huntley asked if the windows were a major inefficiency in the train station. Ms. Tanis confirmed and explained that staff felt the air shift within the museum and different materials warped, especially the exhibit materials, because the energy could not be kept at a stable level.

Dr. Huntley asked for the exact issue with the windows and Ms. Smith stated that the windows were rotted. Ms. Tanis confirmed that the windows were indeed rotted, lacked a preventative seal, and were riddled with gaps. Mr. Martindale explained that the damage to the wood from water seeping into the building.

Mr. O'Donnell deferred his time.

Ms. Smith agreed to hold the vote on this topic until after the discussion for Item 5.

Dr. Huntley reminded the Commission that the item was put on the agenda specifically for a vote due to timing for the repairs. Mr. Martindale had told Ms. Tanis that the request would be made by the Historical Society for the Commission to match the Giving Tuesday donation prior to Founder's Day.

Ms. Smith asked if the request was to match the donation or a challenge to match. Mr. Martindale suggested to donate \$15,000 and advertise that the donation was part of a match to incentive the public. Ms. Tanis stated that the optional match was for the Do More 24 Fundraising Day at the beginning of March.

Mr. Martindale added that staff coordinated with WILMAPCO as well as the Greater Washington D.C. Partnership and some contacts in Maryland; the new governor of Maryland had made an effort to push on public transportation and included half a billion dollars for transportation improvements the budget. He continued that the City and WILMAPCO had worked to expand the MARC train system to Newark which was the last gap in the Northeastern Corridor.

5. SPENDING POINT SYSTEM IMPLEMENTATION – MAHI PALANISAMI AND ANDREW O'DONNELL GIVEAWAY

Mr. O'Donnell introduced an excel spread sheet to be used as a tool to help spend funds responsibly, remain objective and organize specific categories. He explained that the key was to make the categories successful would be to make them as distinct as possible and stated that weight multipliers delineated the importance of each category. The scale would be weighted from one to ten to show how each category met the Commission's value.

Ms. Smith asked if the members were to evaluate each idea per category per individual, and then combine the results and Mr. O'Donnell confirmed. Ms. Smith found the categories useful and would help the Commission make quicker decisions.

Ms. O'Connor did not have any questions.

Mr. Mateyko did not have any questions.

Dr. Huntley felt the framework was very well done and thought that "outreach" was a Commission goals that should be a separate category or be under the "CAC Goals". Ms. Smith added that outreach was in the CAC's mission statement. Dr. Huntley suggested to add a way to support an existing project or timeliness. Mr. Martindale suggested to add "time sensitivity" or make it a separate category and set "outreach" as a tie breaker. Dr. Huntley noted the framework appeared to be a ranking system, but the Commission had budget enough to fund everything. She asked if the system would be used to exclude the initiatives with a low point value even though there was enough money and some of the criteria was met. She questioned how members would assign the points to the different categories.

Mr. O'Donnell confirmed the sheet was a ranking system and if something did not score as high as another, then the proposed idea would be placed on a "hold" until the end of the year with the assumption there were no time constraints to the proposed idea.

Mr. Martindale supported the suggestion with the possibility of having 75% of the yearly budget spent by mid-year, then the proposed ideas on "hold" could be reevaluated or reviewed if other ideas were proposed. Dr. Huntley suggested to either remove items that had already been approved or leave them as an education tool to determine how the process would work.

Mr. O'Donnell noted the Parks and Recreation Tree Giveaway had been approved and suggested for each member to complete the ranking exercise, sort the ranking, and then spend half of the yearly budget on the top ideas within the first six months of the year, as long as other ideas were not time sensitive.

Mr. O'Donnell adjusted the chart and stated each member would receive an email with the document for each to rank the remaining ideas. As the commission had to vote on the proposed recommendation to support the Newark Historical Society with their Do More 24 Fundraising Day, Mr. O'Donnell accepted each member's verbal ranking.

MOTION BY MS. SMITH: THAT THE CONSERVATION ADVISORY COMMISSION ALLOCATE \$15,000.00 TO THE NEWARK HISTORICAL SOCIETY TO COMPLETE ENERGY EFFICIENCY IMPROVEMENTS AT THE HISTORIC NEWARK PASSENGER RAIL STATION.

Dr. Huntley requested a point of order to hear each commission member's thoughts. Ms. Smith reminded the Commission of the time constraints and personally felt the project was very worthy but perhaps outside of the Commission's purview at the dollar amount requested.

Ms. O'Connor requested clarification on the March Deadline and Dr. Huntley explained that the Do More 24 Fundraiser was in early March and the Commission could advertise that it was pledging to

contribute an amount if the Historical Society could raise an equal amount from private donors or other conditions so the Society could have leverage with fundraising.

Mr. Mateyko found the Commission's position confusing and noted that there was no data available on how to proceed with the windows. He would vote against the motion to underscore the seriousness of the situation. He maintained that the windows should not be totally removed, and he did not determine that any were seriously damaged through his own inspection. He believed that a 150-year-old window should look as such. He wanted to support the request with a small sum and maintained that the project was very important; the window issue should be resolved as quickly as possible. He did not believe that he would be the only concerned person. He referred to the Commission's \$100,000 budget and believed that planting trees and starting gardens was an excellent use of small funding amounts; otherwise, he felt the Commission should shift its funding to different communications. Ms. Smith was unsure how Mr. Mateyko's suggestion would be useful that evening and summarized that although Mr. Mateyko thought the project was important, he was unsure that the Commission should commit such a large amount. Mr. Mateyko stated that the project was one of the City's most important and reiterated his belief that the windows not be replaced. Ms. Smith explained that the issue was for the City to decide.

Dr. Huntley interjected that the City was pricing for window replacement because it was the most expensive possibility. The Society wanted raise enough money to cover the highest amount and if it was determined that the windows could be refurbished for half the price, then the windows would be refurbished. She repeated that the budget was for the most expensive possible outcome which did not mean that the decision would be made to proceed with the most expensive, simply that the money needed to be raised to cover the option if deemed necessary. Mr. Martindale confirmed and added that funding would be needed to start the engineering piece upfront, which the Society did not have.

Dr. Huntley wanted to support the Historical Society and was willing to support them at the \$15,000 level. She continued that if most of the Commission believed the request to be too high, then Commission should consider offering \$5,000 for the Society to have something to use for the March event and the Commission could revisit more funding later.

Ms. O'Connor understood both sides of the conversation.

Mr. O'Donnell also understood both sides and agreed with Dr. Huntley's suggestion of lowering the amount to \$5,000 and possibly contribute more at a future date. He biggest concern was that if a family in need also had leaking windows, he wanted the money to support a family over a building.

MOTION BY DR. HUNTLEY, SECONDED BY MS. SMITH: TO AMEND THE MOTION TO \$5,000.00.

AMENDMENT PASSED.

VOTE: 5 - 1.

AYE: HUNTLEY, O'CONNOR, O'DONNELL, PALANISAMI, SMITH.

NAY: MATEYKO.

ABSENT: CHAJES, RYPKEMA.

MOTION BY MS. SMITH, SECONDED BY DR. HUNTLEY: THAT THE CONSERVATION ADVISORY COMMISSION ALLOCATE \$5,000.00 TO THE NEWARK HISTORICAL SOCIETY TO COMPLETE ENERGY EFFICIENCY IMPROVEMENTS AT THE HISTORIC NEWARK PASSENGER RAIL STATION.

MOTION PASSED. VOTE 4 – 2.

AYE: HUNTLEY, O'CONNOR, O'DONNELL, SMITH.

NAY: MATEYKO, PALANISAMI.

ABSENT: CHAJES, RYPKEMA.

6. 2023 GOALS – SHEILA SMITH

Ms. Smith reminded that the goals were included in the December minutes and asked that Commissioners review and submit their assignments to her as soon as possible. She asked that members review the 2022 goals, decide what to keep, and what to add.

7. NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS PROJECT SUGGESTIONS – JOHN MATEYKO

Postponed.

8. MONTHLY CONSERVATION ARTICLE WITH THE NEWARK POST – SHEILA SMITH

- December – Undecided Topic – Mikayla Rypkema
- January – Soil and leaves cooling – John Mateyko
- February - Tree Canopy (Oak Trees) – Sheila Smith
- March – Greenhouse Gas Inventory – Beth Chajes
- April – Green Incentives – Helga Huntley
- May – Tick Species in Delaware – Lauren O'Connor

9. OLD/NEW BUSINESS

Dr. Huntley requested that Mr. Martindale to update the Sustainability Plan progress. Mr. Martindale explained that the intent had been for AECOM to take over the reporting but Dave Athey, the project manager, passed away recently. Staff was in discussions with Chris Rogers, the new project manager, and would give the reporting over formally.

10. NEXT MEETING – MARCH 14, 2023

The Commission reviewed the draft March agenda.

The meeting adjourned at 9:08 p.m.

Danielle S. Mapp-Purcell
Administrative Professional Paralegal

/dmp