

DRAFT

**DUBLIN CITY COUNCIL
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

Friday, January 17, 2020

Minutes of Meeting

Mr. Reiner called the meeting of the Community Development Committee to order at 3:00 p.m. in Council Chambers.

Committee members present: Mr. Reiner, Chair; Mr. Keeler and Mayor Amorose Groomes.

Staff members present: Mr. Earman, Mr. Goodall and Mr. Hiatt.

Approval of Minutes

Mayor Amorose Groomes moved to approve the Community Development Committee minutes of November 6, 2019 and December 12, 2019.

Mr. Keeler seconded the motion.

Vote on the motion: Mr. Keeler, yes; Mr. Reiner, yes; Mayor Amorose Groomes, yes.

South High Street Streetscape

Mr. Earman provided a brief review of previous discussions regarding South High for Mr. Keeler's benefit as a new committee member. He shared a presentation illustrating the site limitations and current conditions on South High Street, noting such issues as: compacted soils, salt, signage, light poles, narrow tree lawn, low soil volume, site triangles at intersections, sidewalk root heaving, stairs, historical relics and underground utility lines. Staff members, including Engineering, Horticulture and Forestry, plus this Committee visited the site to obtain an understanding onsite of the issues. Mr. Earman characterized the South High Street site visit follow-up as having three phases.

- Phase 1: Treescape (South High Street specifically)
- Phase 2: Landscape Enhancements (South High Street specifically)
- Phase 3: Citywide Streetscapes (Urban vs. Suburban)

Phase 1: Treescape Plan: This phase begins in the immediate future and would be phased depending upon timing of the removal of overhead utility lines. It was understood by the Committee that we were looking at doing this phase sooner than later. Initiating a larger tree canopy at the outset would not be an issue in conflict with those utility lines. That is the approach being taken. There was a request to identify three or four preferred species and seek direction from this Committee about specific species. There is a desire to have an existing tree assessment, which will be conducted by a third party. This consultant will be on board shortly. There are some existing trees that are experiencing issues. But removal of those trees now would be a problem for the residents and business owners. This assessment will lay out what needs to be done. A soil volume analysis has been completed and options with quantity needed and estimated costs have been identified.

There are four species recommended in Phase 1: Basswood, Tulip Tree, Hardy Rubber Tree and Sweetgum.

Mr. Keeler asked if any of the four species blooms.

Mayor Amorose Groomes stated that the Tulip Tree has tulip-shaped blooms, but is not considered ornamental. (Mr. Goodall showed Mr. Keeler pictures of the various trees on his iPad.)

Brief discussion followed.

Mr. Goodall commented that Hardy Rubber is his preferred choice of these species.

Mr. Reiner summarized that the desire is to have a tree big enough to unify the street. The trees should have big enough heads to tie the downtown together and soften the appearance. He asked if Dublin's Code requires that all trees planted in the City must be from our hardiness zone or above.

Mr. Goodall responded affirmatively.

Mr. Reiner emphasized the same hardiness zone is a critical factor in survival of the trees.

Mr. Goodall commented that the trees purchased by the City are from our hardiness zone or higher – many purchases come from the New York area.

Mr. Reiner asked about the rate of growth for the species identified. Tulip trees are fast growing and the Hardy Rubber trees are also fast growing.

Mayor Amorose Groomes stated her preferred species would be Tulip trees and Hardy Rubber trees. She recommended seeing what is available in the market – is anyone growing them with a clear trunk height of 7 feet?

Mr. Goodall responded that one would be hard pressed to find that tree anywhere.

Mayor Amorose Groomes stated it is worth a field trip and she would be willing to accompany staff to select these trees.

Mr. Reiner asked about London Plane trees – is the scale too large?

Mr. Goodall responded affirmatively, as the site does not accommodate that particular tree.

Mayor Amorose Groomes stated that in Bridge Park, they planted a lot of Sycamores and London Planes.

Mr. Goodall added they can withstand a lot of stress, which is why they are able to be placed in an area such as Bridge Park.

Mayor Amorose Groomes stated that if we pick different trees for different streets, we have used the London Plane tree and Sycamores in Bridge Park. Therefore, we should pick a different tree for this street so that all streets do not have the same tree. She stated we need a visting tree particularly on the east side of the street where the buildings are very close. Her first choice would be the Tuliptree.

Mr. Goodall agreed.

Mr. Reiner stated he would support that, but believes the Hardy rubber tree would be unusual and it is staff's first choice. Tuliptrees are a little lighter in their canopy.

Mayor Amorose Groomes stated she likes the way the Tuliptrees defoliate – they drop all of their leaves in a short period of time, keeping a clean streetscape. The best option would be to see what is available in the market.

Mr. Reiner stated it makes sense to plant a small-sized tree that will grow into a larger one

because by the time the overhead wires come down, there will be nice heads on the trees. We should have the smaller trees planted and let them grow for a couple of years until the overhead wires come down.

Mr. Goodall stated his concerns with that approach are making sure the lines are actually moved within a couple of years. The other point brought up by his long-term staff members was that the intent when the existing trees were planted was that the lines would be moved, however that did not happen.

Mayor Amorose Grooms stated this item will be included in the CIP to ensure it does occur. She added that she will be interested in seeing what trees are available in the market, as there is not huge availability of larger ones. She assumes that three-inch caliper trees will be what is available. Some three-inch caliper trees can be 12-feet in height, while some are 20 feet in height. It depends upon the growing environment. It is important to see the trees.

Mr. Reiner noted that a 2.5 inch tree may be fine for starting out. It depends on what is available.

Mayor Amorose Grooms suggested looking at the Hardy Rubber tree and the Tuliptree to see what is available, visit them, and select from there. The most important factor, however, is the soil volume availability and how to address that most effectively.

Discussion followed about options to be considered for improving the soil volume availability.

In summary, the list of preferred species was narrowed to Hardy Rubber and the Tuliptree.

Mayor Amorose Grooms stated this acceptable, provided they are available in the market. If not, we will have to look at another species.

Mr. Goodall noted he is confident he can find the preferred species; the issue will be with sizes, especially with the soil conditions in that area currently.

Mr. Earman summarized that staff will draft a report, based on the Committee direction, and allow the Committee to make that recommendation to the Council as a whole for a vote. Then the plan will be implemented.

Mr. Reiner suggested that the timing is important – the bid should be sent out in the next 30 days because of the lack of work for landscape companies.

Mr. Earman responded staff will draft a report and recommendation, but the monies have not been appropriated. For these reasons, it must go to Council as a whole.

Mayor Amorose Grooms stated it is a good time to do excavation work, as well. The excavation and soil amendment work could be done prior to the time the trees arrive. She would like to see the plant pits prepared before the trees are purchased.

Mr. Reiner stated that the winter is the perfect time to plant, as not as much water is needed because the trees are rooted in and settled naturally.

Mr. Earman stated that staff will do research on the availability of the Hardy Rubber tree and the Tuliptree.

Mayor Amorose Grooms stated that the desire is for taller trees with a nice head in order to take the clear trunk height up.

Mr. Earman reported that one of the requests of the Committee related to the tree condition on the east side. Staff did some analysis in August of 2019 and removed three trees, based on safety concerns. There are 19 trees remaining of various species and a variety of issues exists with each of those trees. Staff is looking at a lifespan of 5-15 years for the various trees. The third party assessment is due back that will provide more information.

Mr. Keeler asked if there are photos of any of those trees.

Mr. Reiner asked staff to share the slide depicting these trees.

Mayor Amorose Groomes stated that when we lay out the new cadence of trees, if some trees can remain for three-four years, that should be done. But she is willing to support removal of the ones that would interrupt the cadence of the new streetscape.

Mr. Keeler noted that if the pictures of the trees and safety issues are well documented, it is easier to support a decision to remove the ones that are in poor condition.

Mr. Reiner added that he agrees about the older trees – they should be saved if possible. Sugar maples cannot be used for a replacement tree as they cannot withstand the stress in that environment.

Mayor Amorose Groomes stated that all the trees to be installed will be of the same species – the Basswood and Tuliptree. She would leave the trees in place that do not interrupt the cadence, but remove them in a few years as the others mature. She would be willing to support sacrificing some trees that interrupt the cadence for the long-term gain.

Mr. Earman stated this will all be included in his report, with suggestions for removal of specific trees if needed.

Mr. Earman stated that for options to achieve the desired soil volume, staff did not include the option of excavating underneath the road. They can consult with Engineering about that option.

The soil volume analysis indicates that the current soil quantity per tree is approximately 400 cubic feet. The desire is for something close to 1,000 cubic feet. Some borings were conducted in 2002 from an Engineering soil report. It indicates some granular base fill material, medium dense to dense sand and gravel, and appeared to be relatively strong and non-organic. There are varying degrees of depth from 2.3 feet to 16 feet to bedrock. There is significant limestone in this area. Staff has come up with the desired soil of a mixed native clay with organic hummus and sand etc. that are equally balanced like a silty loam. The chart he displayed provides the way forward.

Mr. Hiatt stated that the circle shows 385 cubic feet for the existing soil quantity per tree. The left shows the canopy diameter of about 18 feet and a 6 to 8-inch trunk – diameter at breast height. Following this chart, further up is taller canopy that requires a certain amount of soil. To have a tree over a 40-foot wide canopy, 1,500 cubic feet of soil is needed.

Mr. Reiner clarified that this is not the canopy needed for the subject area.

Mr. Hiatt stated that 1,000 cubic feet of soil accommodates a 16-inch caliper trunk with a 32-foot diameter canopy, which is a nice size.

Mr. Earman stated that staff considered curb bump-outs and how they could be staggered. However, 21 parking spaces are being eliminated that are prime spots and so staff is not advocating that. The curb bump-outs would add about \$6,000 per tree in cost but would also

require additional expense not identified. There is a Silva Cell -- suspended pavement -- type of system that is very expensive and very destructive to what exists. There are utility lines that would have to run parallel to these in any case, and if a utility issue occurred it would be necessary to dig up the tree and the Silva Cell to access the utility lines. The option the Committee preferred was excavation under the street and he will review that with Engineering.

Mr. Reiner asked about horizontal excavation. There is a greenspace there that could be dug up.

Mr. Earman stated he will report back on the excavation option.

Mayor Amorose Groomes stated she would be interested in this information and the cost.

Mr. Reiner stated that the asphalt could be excavated, put in the material that allows the tree to grow under the street, and then reinstall the curbs. Or the bump-outs could be done.

Mayor Amorose Groomes stated she would support making the soil amendments under the asphalt and reinstalling the curbs. This work could be done over the winter, and the tree planted later.

Mr. Earman stated he is hopeful for a compromise between the structural soils that are necessary versus the amended type of soils. Staff will check on this.

Mayor Amorose Groomes stated there are products similar to Silva Cell of a tighter graded network. The soil is placed on top and essentially holds the roadway up. There are grates that are set on top of Silva Cells to stabilize it.

Mr. Reiner stated he is interested in seeing the cost of this.

Mayor Amorose Groomes commented she does not believe the cost would be significant for 21 parking spots.

Phase 2: Landscape Enhancements (South High Street specifically) – Mr. Earman stated this is anticipated to be included in the operating budget and/or capital budget for 2021 to complement the work being done. There was a discussion about this onsite. There is a stonewall in place and consideration is being given to extending that.

Mr. Keeler asked if photos are available.

Mr. Earman stated he does not have photos, but he could accompany Mr. Keeler to visit the site. It is just south of the frog sculpture.

Mr. Keeler stated that the \$750 per linear foot stands out to him – that is roughly half of what AEP would charge to bury high voltage lines. One demands a huge trench and lots of engineering. This is simply a stone wall. Is this the typical cost?

Mr. Earman responded it is the current cost of this work.

Mayor Amorose Groomes added that it is based on prevailing wage.

Mr. Reiner stated that for reference, his company installs these for \$65 per face foot.

Mayor Amorose Groomes stated she assumes this would have a dry laid appearance but would be mortared.

Mr. Earman responded affirmatively, adding it would not be capped with vertical stone so that it could serve as a seating opportunity for parades, etc.

Mayor Amorose Groomes believes this type of wall is a desirable enhancement for the District.

Mr. Earman stated that staff can put an entire plan together if that is the desire of the

Committee.

Mr. Earman noted that the Committee had discussed some issues relating to downspouts. They are bare and drain into mulch beds, creating an erosion problem and a silt build-up on the sidewalks, etc. Burying these downspouts and running them to the street could be not only expensive, but could be problematic in the long term, given the need to tear up the sidewalk to repair them.

Mayor Amorose Groomes asked about the possibility of a rain barrel project.

Mr. Earman stated that a rain barrel project or a river rock type of system collecting that water is possible.

Mayor Amorose Groomes added there are some nice rain barrels available.

Mr. Reiner stated that the water could be diverted to the street, given the short distance to the street from the buildings.

Mr. Earman stated that staff will consider some options for downspouts and include those in the design package for the upcoming budget cycles.

He noted that there is a desire to offer some landscape design assistance for the businesses and/or residents in Historic Dublin to help them understand how their design and selection could be complementary to all in the Historic District. The diversification of the landscape is important because of the breakup of the buildings. But new ideas could be offered to them and this would be much appreciated.

Mayor AG noted that all of the façade grant monies were not granted this year. Perhaps adding this beautification grant program to the façade program would be desirable, and perhaps the funding is available within the façade grant monies not expended.

Mr. Earman stated that if it is the desire of the Committee and Council to combine these two into one program, there could be design advice provided and a matching grant program available.

Mayor Amorose Groomes stated that the former Cup Cakery building on N. High Street has a new roof and the appearance is much nicer. She is pleased with the way that building is coming along. She believes the façade grant program is helping and does not require a lot of investment from the City.

Mr. Earman agreed, and stated this could be extended to the landscaping as well, if the Committee and Council so desire.

Mr. Reiner asked if the façade program is overseen by Parks.

Mr. Earman stated it is not, but all departments contribute to the review process for the façade grant program.

Mr. Earman noted that the other option discussed was a maintenance easement, whereby the City would actually maintain the entire strip of property of those who are willing to participate. This is not his preference, but it is an option. He is seeking feedback on this option.

Mr. Reiner stated he would prefer to have the other options considered first.

Mayor Amorose Groomes stated that she would not support having a maintenance easement, but prefers to explore the other options.

Mr. Reiner stated he does not support the City maintaining these private spaces. He agrees that

a unified maintenance approach works well, but other cities have tried such assessment programs to do this maintenance. He believes the property owners should maintain their own properties.

Mayor Amorose Grooms stated that if it got to this option, perhaps the City grant provided each year to the HDBA could potentially help the HDBA to find a contractor for this work. A portion of the City's grant money could be leveraged, should their members not want to maintain their own frontages.

Phase 3: Citywide Streetscapes (Urban vs. Suburban) – Mr. Earman stated this involves a long-term plan for all urban streets and some that may be part of the suburban areas. There was a request for staff to:

- Make a recommendation of desired species of less than and more than 40 feet diameter canopy trees as options.
- Soil volume requirements and type have been discussed.
- The 7-foot height in pruning is for protecting the eyes of pedestrians.
- Updating the street tree code to clarify diversity and uniformity.

He shared a list of the canopy trees and asked for feedback. The existing street tree code includes three groups of trees – small, medium and large trees. That is the citywide street tree code. This is for the urban street setting where there are limitations. This would probably need to be added to the existing Code to complement what already exists.

Mayor Amorose Grooms stated that the focus should be on just urban street trees. She does not believe the Code differentiates between urban and suburban settings.

Mr. Earman stated it does not. However, there are street tree provisions in the Bridge Street District Code. They will work with Planning on this Code amendment. He shared the current list. Mr. Earman noted staff can add more to the list if desired for the report to Council.

Mayor Amorose Grooms stated that there are problems with listing specific trees in Code because things change over time. She cautioned about placing specific trees in the Code, preferring to leave that up to the Forester's determination. A list is fine, but it should not be in the Code.

For the greater than 40 feet list, Mr. Reiner asked why the list does not include Red Oak, Scarlet Oak, and Black Oak.

Mr. Goodall responded that there are a lot of existing Red Oaks throughout the City. They constitute the majority of the street trees. There is a desire to diversify from that. There is some ongoing threat of potential diseases to those so not planting more is a proactive approach.

Mayor Amorose Grooms asked about locust trees.

Mr. Goodall responded that Black Locusts do not do well in this area. The Honey Locust is still a good choice, but has been heavily used throughout the City. The intent with the lists is to provide options of trees that have not been used extensively.

Mayor Amorose Grooms suggested that the locust trees be tried in the Bridge Street District.

Mr. Goodall responded that the issue with the locust trees is scale and heaving with the sidewalks, requiring their removal. They are hardy and long lasting, but have significant maintenance issues.

Mayor Amorose Grooms stated that Bridge Street District would be a good location for these,

as the sidewalks likely would not heave. It would be worth an experiment on a cross street. Mr. Goodall responded he does not object to this suggestion.

Mr. Earman stated that the locusts will be added to the list.

Soil Volume

Mayor Amorose Grooms stated that a general rule of thumb should be to achieve 1,000 cubic feet of soil volume.

Mr. Earman agreed.

Soil Type

Mr. Earman stated that this has been discussed including the reasons for using the type of soil recommended (mixed native clay with organic hummus and sand etc. that are equally balanced) unless there are structural concerns identified.

Updated Street Tree Code

Mr. Earman stated that the current language indicates that: "Along an individual street, uniform street tree plantings are desirable; however, overuse of a few species is inevitable without a conscious effort to vary plant species and family. Diversity is achieved in Dublin by varying species selected for each street." This language is contradictory. What is now proposed is: "Along an individual street, uniform street trees are desirable; a conscious effort to varying plant species and family citywide shall be achieved while maintaining the uniformity for each individual street. Diversity is achieved by varying species from one street to the next."

Mayor Amorose Grooms commented about the history of this. In most urban areas, there were Oak Street, Elm Street, Sycamore Street, Maple Street, etc. and that specific tree was planted on the entirety of that street. Diversity was accomplished through the various streets. The error made was that every street in Dublin was planted with ash trees of various species. The Emerald Ash borer caused the loss of ash trees throughout the U.S. On Emerald Parkway east of Riverside Drive, there are 15 types of trees planted – the City diversified the trees every 400 feet. Now, the desire is to return to diversifying by street – inter-street – not intra-street.

Mr. Reiner stated that the street tree was originally envisioned as a unifying element for streets with houses of varying designs. It is important to have one species planted on one street.

More discussion followed about the Emerald Parkway tree plantings and what could have been done better.

7 Feet Height Tree Pruning Preference

Mr. Earman stated that this would depend upon the size of the tree planted and the amount of canopy that can be removed. This would look at removing up to a maximum of 25 percent of that canopy at any one growing season to achieve that desired height. Staff would try to select taller trees in order to achieve that off the mark.

Mayor Amorose Grooms stated that as the canopy is raised, the trees will naturally grow taller. When we get close to completing this review, whatever tree is selected for South High Street will probably replace the Ginkgos on N. High because the Ginkgo grows so slowly. It will likely take 20 years to achieve a clear trunk height of 7 feet on those Ginkgos.

Mr. Goodall asked if the Committee would be opposed to doing some reduction pruning on those Ginkgos to keep them inside the tree well. A lot of those will take a while to grow, as the Mayor has indicated. Tightening up the width of that canopy is usually the recommended option as opposed to removing all of the branches 7 feet up.

Mayor Amorose Groomes stated she would recommending beginning with removing branches 5 feet up on these. Some of the lateral branches start as low as 32 inches. Her real preference would likely be to just replace these trees. The trees under discussion are in front of the library, and Mayor Amorose Groomes encouraged the Committee members to visit that site.

Discussion followed.

Mr. Earman asked for clarification about what to include in the report to Council – replacing the Ginkgos or pruning them?

Mayor Amorose Groomes responded that these trees should be left out of the report at this time, pending further review.

Mr. Earman commented that Mr. Keeler is new to this Committee, and much of the discussion pre-dates his service. He offered to meet with him regarding any questions he may have.

Mr. Keeler acknowledged that he has learned tonight that the other two Committee/Council members are very knowledgeable about trees!

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 3:57 p.m.

Deputy Clerk of Council