



**ALTOONA SHADE TREE COMMISSION**  
**Minutes of January 15, 2020**

*In attendance: James Batrus, Paula Over, Chris Harpster- Shade Tree Commission, Lee Slusser-Director, Marilyn Morgan, staff*

Paula Over, called the meeting to order.

1. The September 19, 2019 minutes were reviewed and a motion for approval of the minutes was made by, Paul Over and seconded by Chris Harpster. Motion passed.
2. **Public Comment** – There were no public comments at the meeting.
3. **Tree Requests – Arborists Report –**

**2009 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue** – Sacred Heart has requested removal of the street trees around their church property. Our consulting arborist stated, *“Five street trees are growing along the 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue side of the property, all in excellent to good condition. From north to south along 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue they are an 8” Japanese Zelkova worth \$1,200, 5” Honeylocust worth \$620, 8” Honeylocust worth \$860, 6” Hardy Rubber tree worth \$850, and 5” Ginkgo worth \$660. All the trees were growing in 5’ by 5’ or 5’ by 4’ sidewalk cutouts. Some sidewalk damage is evident by some of the trees. I would not recommend attempting to transplant any of the trees except the Ginkgo. It may survive if transplanted properly.*

**2006 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue** – *In addition to the request by Sacred Heart Catholic Church that was addressed in August, Mr. Tomassetti has requested removal of the Honeylocust adjacent to his Law Office. The reason for the request was the suspected damage to a sidewalk block and alleged damage to pavement on private property. Mr. Tomassetti also has indicated that the cutout for the sidewalk has now made the sidewalk non-compliant to ADA requirements.*

*I evaluated the tree and site on September 30, 2019., At the time of my visit, the sidewalk block at this location as well as others around the church property were already repaired/replaced. I have taken pictures of these repaired blocks and are available upon request. The tree of concern is an 8’ Honeylocust which is in good condition with a value of \$860. I do not recommend transplanting the tree due to the additional infrastructure damage that would be done as well as damage that may be done to the tree. I was unable to locate roots close to the surface within the tree pit that could account for the damage. However, the tree should be elevated over the roadway and pruned back from the building.*

*Based on research into regulations on ADA regulations, I was unable to find any new requirements that sidewalks be at least 5 feet wide. The existing sidewalk width appears to be adequate.*

*A 5” Ginkgo adjacent to the Honeylocust was not identified in the earlier report but was to be considered for removal according to Mr. Tomassetti. This was a 5” diameter tree in fair condition and worth \$700. I would not recommend transplanting this tree for the same reasons already discussed.”*

Mr. Slusser said that the arborist was not at all sure that the sidewalk damage was caused by the tree. He claims that some of the sidewalk damage looked as though it had been pushed down as if a car had parked on it, rather than the sidewalk being pushed up by tree root damage. The damage has already



been repaired by Bennetti Tree Services. Mr. Bennetti did not take any pictures of the damages, therefore there is no evidence that the tree caused the damages. The arborists have put a price of worth on each of these trees. However, these trees do need to be trimmed and the City of Altoona has not done that. Public Works is fully aware that that trees do need to be taken care of and have expressed a want to get a tree project together to take to City Council, but have not been able to do that yet. With the new City Manager in place, he has requested that proposals be ranked in order of priority.

A discussion was held by the commission, even though the repairs have been done, Sacred Heart Catholic Church and Mr. Tomassetti are still asking to have the trees removed. A motion was made by Chris Harpster that the church and Mr. Tomassetti may have the trees trimmed by a licensed arborist, but that they cannot remove the trees, and to feel free to come back to the commission with documentation if they encounter any damage at a later date. Motion was seconded by James Batrus. Motion passed unanimously.

**1512 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue** – A request was made to remove one or more trees adjacent to this property to improve visibility and replace with smaller ones. A 10" Honeylocust is located directly in front of the door of the building growing in a 4' by 6' tree pit covered by a cast iron tree grate. Is in good shape with a few dead branches but being girdled by the tree grate. The tree is valued at \$1,200. Our consulting arborist said, *"I do not recommend trying to move this tree. Its root system would be substantial and require the grate and surrounding concrete to be removed. However, I do recommend that the tree be deadwooded, the grate be cutout to accommodate the growth of the trunk, and a lower 4" diameter limb trimmed off to improve visibility of the building/business. The second tree is also a Honeylocust approximately 12" in diameter and located at the corner of the building and the open lot growing in the a 4' by 6' tree pit covered by a cast iron tree grate. This tree is in good shape, valued at \$1,400, but does have some deadwood in the crown and is being girdled by the tree grate. I do not recommend trying to move this tree due to the same reasons as the previous but the lowest 2" diameter branch, interior sucker sprouts and deadwood could be pruned to improve visibility of the building/business. The grate should also be cut out around the trunk."* This was brought to the commission earlier and the commission asked that Trade Secrets submit a proposed signage plan so that they can discuss the visibility issue, but as of this date they have not done that. A question was asked about whose responsibility it is to cut out the grates so that they don't inhibit the growth of the tree? Mr. Slusser said, it is the City's because we put them in. He offered to let Public Works know that these grates need cut. At the present time there is no action that needs to be taken by the commission.

#### 4. Other Business

Mr. Slusser mentioned that we now have a new City Manager, who is asking what needs to be done, priority wise. Both Public Works and Community Development will be advocating for a Street Tree Project, Also, if Council doesn't like the current ordinance or the new proposed ordinance, then they need to give the commission some guidance as to what direction they want to take.

#### 5. Adjournment – Motion was made for adjournment by Paula Over. Motion passed unanimously.