

PUBLIC HEARING

LL1 of 2021: A LOCAL LAW TO ESTABLISH A TREE ADVISORY COUNCIL

Town of Ulysses

February 9, 2021

Audio of the minutes are available on the website at ulysses.ny.us.

The meeting was held via videoconference on the Zoom platform.

Notice of Public Hearings are posted on the Town's website and Clerk's board and noticed by Legal Ad in the Ithaca Journal.

ATTENDANCE:

The Town Clerk called the roll:

TOWN OFFICIALS PRESENT:

Supervisor- Nancy Zahler

Board members- Michael Boggs, Katelin Olson, Mary Bouchard, Rich Goldman

Town Clerk- Carissa Parlato

Conservation & Sustainability Committee (CSAC) Chair- Roxanne Marino

Attorney for the Town- Peter Walsh

Town Planner- John Zepko

Planning Board Chair- Linda Liddle

OTHERS PRESENT:

Anne Koreman (Tompkins County Legislator), Courtney Kempfski, George Myers, Marvin Pritts, Robert Oswald, Rob Cochran, Todd Parlato

OPENING THE PUBLIC HEARING:

Ms. Zahler called the meeting to order at 7pm.

Ms. Olson moved to open the Public Hearing at 7:12pm. This was seconded by Mr. Boggs and passed unanimously.

PURPOSE OF PUBLIC HEARING:

Ms. Zahler noted that the subject of the hearing is a local law to establish a Tree Advisory Council. She added that the date of the hearing was set by resolution of the Town Board on January 26, 2021, and a notice of the hearing was published in the Ithaca Journal on January 29, 2021.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Ms. Zahler noted that the Town Board members will listen to all comments but not respond- the board will discuss the subject at the town board meeting following this hearing. Comments were limited to 3 minutes. She further noted that she received several comments in advance of the meeting.

The following comments were made:

MARVIN PRITTS:

Mr. Pritts stated that he supports this legislation as we face unprecedented threats against trees, which lead to public safety issues. He further believes that this may assist with aging tree issues.

ROXANNE MARINO:

(The following was read in person as well as submitted in advance of the meeting).

The Conservation and Sustainability Advisory Committee has been working with the Town Board over the past two years on actions towards becoming designated a Tree City USA by the National Arbor Day Foundation in cooperation with the NYSDEC. Towards that end, the Town applied for and received an urban forestry grant last year to hold an Arbor Day event that included public outreach in collaboration with the Ulysses library, a proclamation, and a native tree planting event. In the proclamation, the Town Board recognized the pride we take in our natural resources and its commitment to environmental protection and sustainability.

The final standard to complete is before the Board tonight, to establish a tree advisory board as part of a tree care law.

As a resident, and as chair on behalf of the CSAC, I speak in strong support of the proposed law, and the Town's intention to become a Tree City. The law was developed collaboratively with the Town Highway Superintendent, Town Supervisor, our Town attorney, and a Ulysses resident who is a certified arborist. It establishes a volunteer, advisory-only committee with expertise to assist the Town with expanding its public trees and in identifying potential risks for public safety.

It does not add to the Town budget, and in fact can help to gain grant funds for tree management and improvement projects in partnership with other organizations in the Town. There are more than 150 municipalities in NYS that are recognized as a Tree City USA, and so have a tree law of some type. The Village of Trumansburg is one. It would be wonderful to have the Town of Ulysses also achieve this recognition for our community.

Thank you for your consideration and I hope that you will vote in favor of the proposed law to establish a Tree Advisory Committee.

ROBERT OSWALD:

Mr. Oswald agreed with other comments and thinks that this is a useful and important law that will enable the town board to utilize expertise in managing town trees.

Submitted in advance:

KEN KEARL:

Dear Ulysses Town Board Members,

I am very strongly against the very concept of a Tree Advisory Council, let alone enacting a law in the Town of Ulysses to actually establish such a government entity.

This type of law and its "governmental supervision" directly or indirectly encumbers the property rights of each private property owner in the town. Additionally, the proposed governmental "committee" activities provide no clearly defined benefit for each private property owner of land adjacent to the "public property" identified in the proposed law. I look at the unintended consequences of this type of unelected government supervision and wonder how it differs from socialism or communism? VOTE NO TO THIS TERRIBLE PROPOSAL !

ELIZABETH THOMAS:

Hello Town Board of Ulysses

I write in support of the proposed Ulysses Tree Advisory Committee. Board members are overwhelmed with a wide range of duties, and having an advisory committee to help with decisions regarding tree removal, planting, and management would put more "hands on deck" to help provide valuable information during your decision-making processes.

From the trees at the edge of the Fairgrounds, to best management practices for trees along the easily erodible slopes near the lake, this advisory committee can lend expertise to tree management issues as a whole.

I am grateful for the resident volunteers spearheading this effort.

SUZANNE HILLMANN:

Dear Town Board,

I am writing in favor of the Town of Ulysses passing a local law to create a Tree Advisory Council. Such a council, as described in the draft local law, would be a benefit to all who live, work, visit, and play here in Ulysses.

The expert advice to the Town from a Tree Advisory Council will help our elected and appointed officials to be informed stewards of our community forest.

Thank you.

PAMELA MARKHAM:

Dear Town of Ulysses board members and Supervisor,

I am writing to you in support of establishing a tree advisory committee for the public areas of our community. As a former and long-time (more than 15 years) member of the Shade Tree Advisory Committee for the city of Ithaca I am well aware of many benefits of regulating tree installations and maintenance and strongly urge our beautiful community to adopt some guidelines for the protection of our landscape.

In broad terms, these measures will attempt to:

Protect existing trees of value from damage or destruction by irresponsible development.

Prevent the planting of invasive plant species for groundcover or canopy. I and others have spent many grueling hours of volunteer time removing Buckthorn, Multiflora Rose, Privet, and Celastrus orbiculata from the Jacksonville Park trying to restore a more balanced habitat of native plants to nourish migrating and native birds and support beneficial insects needed for pollination and destructive insect control. Original specimens of these invasives were planted in a misguided attempt to enhance aesthetically this common area without knowledge of the environmental effects of rapidly increasing invasives and the destructive effects on the native wildlife.

If you want to see how the oriental bittersweet has broken and pulled down large native white pines and other species, check out sections of the Black Diamond trail where this invasive is actually choking many trees to death.

Protect taxpayers from unscrupulous landscapers and purveyors of cheap trees and shrubs who may offer plants to the Town with "lowest bids". Often these attractively priced plants are not compatible with environmental conditions and are produced easily and fast (They are INVASIVE)!

Possibly serve as an educational resource for property owners who wish to consult with educated professionals for advice concerning their landscape choices.

To summarize, i would do anything i can to protect our native woodlands , ravines, and gorges from damage by invasive species and irresponsible development. Oversight of new planting in public areas would be a welcome assist to those of us interested in the present and future health of the local habitat. To my concerns for my own property, my back woods are an unpleasant jumble of invasive vines, shrubs, and ticks and I am faced with the unpleasant task of utilizing herbicides and strenuous mechanical force just to make my land safe and attempt to restore a healthy environment for my family and pets. Because of someone's uninformed choices of landscape plants in the neighborhood I had to spend over 5 grand just to clear through the dangerous mess to be replanted with appropriate species.

Thank you for your attention to these problems and the proposed efforts to control planting and maintenance of the public areas of Ulysses.

BARA HOTCHKISS:

"“This is not our world with trees in it. It's a world of trees, where humans have just arrived.”

— Richard Powers, The Overstory

To whom this concerns:

I would greatly appreciate any/all effort that the Town of Ulysses would take to steward any/all trees that are in common, “public” areas. (It is clear that it is not, and will not, be within the proposed tree advisory council power to affect any changes to trees on private property. As a community of humans, we need to take care of/for these fellow inhabitants, on which we depend, in our natural world! Thank you!

BECKIE CARDINA:

Having read the proposal regarding the formation of a Tree Advisory Council for Ulysses- I am writing in support of this idea and to state that I am in favor of the local law to provide for the formation of a tree advisory council for Ulysses.

This seems like a very worthwhile and commendable effort.

RENE CARVER:

Having just read through the proposed law creating the Tree Advisory Council, TAC, I'm writing to express my enthusiastic support. The creation of the TAC requires no increase in the town's budget. But it formalizes a wonderful opportunity to increase awareness of environmental impacts. of our community forest. Taking advantage of the expertise of our community members to assist the Highway Superintendent in managing Public Trees is, I believe, a significant positive step for the Ulysses community. Further, the TAC has the potential to introduce other seriously beneficial thinking about the role community trees can play in improving living conditions for all. Concepts of produce bearing trees, flowering trees, trees for timber; all these and so many more open up a broad learning context for community members of all ages.

Thank you for all the effort involved to prepare this law and I do hope it is enacted at this evening's meeting!

BILL WRIGHT:

Seems to make common sense to have this law. Please pass this.

CLOSING THE HEARING:

With no further comments, Mr. Goldman made a motion to close the hearing at 7:13pm. This was seconded by Mr. Boggs and passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted by Carissa Parlato on 2/19/21.