

March 20, 2023  
Parks and Recreation Commission

**RE: BOR Resolution 4159 – Encouraging the Mayor to allocate funds to the FY 2023/2024 budget to better manage and care for trees on city property.**

Dear Members of the Board of Finance,

I'm writing on behalf of the Parks and Recreation Commission to support funding for BOR Resolution 4159 To Better Manage and Care for Trees on City Property for the following:

- A geographic information system (GIS) tree inventory to locate and identify existing trees on City property, including Cove Island, Cummings, West Beach, Kosciuszko, and Scalzi parks.
- At least one water truck. Currently the City of Stamford does not own one. Watering newly planted trees for the first two years is vital to their survival.
- The purchasing and planting of new trees in the City's downtown areas in cooperation with Downtown Special Services District. This is the start. We would like to plant trees throughout the city, especially in areas considered tree deserts, and in our city parks.
- Hiring at least one additional Parks maintenance person. This person would be able to assist in watering the newly planted trees and helping to prune trees.

Funding this resolution will help Stamford's public parks sustain a healthy urban forest. Our public parks are an essential piece of infrastructure, made abundantly clear over the past several years of heavy usage during the pandemic.

**Why Stamford Needs City Wide Tree Planting, Including in the Parks**

Most U.S. cities are experiencing declines in urban forest cover over time, with a net loss of 4 million urban trees every year, or about 1.3% of the total tree stock.<sup>i</sup> New tree planting isn't keeping pace with the mortality of existing trees, either from natural causes or from clearing of trees for new development.<sup>ii</sup> Trees should be considered as vital city infrastructure.

- Stamford is now the second largest city in CT. The Nature Conservancy of CT did a study of tree canopy for the wealthiest to poorest urban areas in CT. Stamford was in the top 10 of largest disparities in tree coverage between neighborhoods.
- The mature, majestic trees in our parks have been hit hard by extreme weather events and the emerald ash borer invasive species.
- Nationally, trees in urban parks remove up to 7,111,000 tons of toxins from the air annually at a value of \$3.8 billion to cities. Green spaces also filter rain, reducing water pollution, protecting drinking water, and decreasing the rates of waterborne illness.<sup>iii</sup>
- Green space, including parks and street trees provide cooling effects in urban areas.
- To prepare for the effects of climate change and the urban heat island effect.
- Fulfill Stamford's Sustainability Amendment from 2010, submitted to Sustainable CT in 2018:

(1.C.4.) Increase the urban forest and develop a street tree and urban forestry master plan that includes a city tree inventory. Comprehensive management of the City's tree resource promotes optimal carbon dioxide sequestration, induces people to walk, and facilitates tree maintenance needed to maximize safety during storms.

2019/2020 Forestry Div. **Removed 375** City trees (**Does not** include trees removed/felled by storms.)  
2019/2020 Forestry Div. **Planted 146** City trees (streets and parks).

2020/2021 Forestry Div. **Removed 300** City trees (**Does not** include trees removed/felled by storms.)  
2020/2021 Forestry Div. **Planted 102** City trees (streets and parks).

2021/2022 Forestry Div. **Removed 350** City trees (**Does not** include trees removed/felled by storms.)  
2021/2022 Forestry Div. **Planted 85** City trees (streets and parks).

Note: All Forestry numbers were provided by Ron Markey, Landscape Specialist and Tree Warden for the City of Stamford.

A capital budget request of \$50,000 for one fiscal year allows the Forestry Division to plant approximately 71 trees at \$700 each for the entire City of Stamford, far short of the number of trees the city is losing each year. There is no operating budget money for planting trees, making the capital request imperative. Additionally, plant stock prices have risen, and the number of trees planted with the same budget has been reduced from prior years.

While planting trees is crucial for Stamford, it cannot be accomplished strategically without a GIS map of all of Stamford's street and park trees. GIS mapping is an essential management tool to track high priority areas in need of trees, addressing tree equity, locations of diseased trees, species of trees, health of trees, and where tree maintenance is required. Many towns in CT already have a type of GIS tree mapping or are in the process of tracking.

It is vital that the City of Stamford includes street and park trees as part of its infrastructure. It is unacceptable for a city the size of Stamford to depend on capital budget requests to help replant its urban forest, especially if the capital request is not approved in varying years. As the previous Forestry Division fiscal year numbers show, Stamford is losing a large number more trees each year than is being replanted. **With the passage of the Inflation Reduction Act, there is an unprecedented amount of funding allocated to urban forestry.** If Stamford doesn't act quickly, we are at risk of missing grant opportunities because we do not have basic tree programs in place to adequately fulfill the requirements.

On behalf of all City of Stamford residents, we hope you will support the funding of BOR 4159.

Sincerely,

Paul Newman, Chair  
Melanie Hollas, Vice Chair  
Angela Adetola  
Jessica Katz  
Michael Tedder

Parks and Recreation Commissioners

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<sup>i</sup> Nowak, D.J. and E.J. Greenfield, Trees and impervious cover change in U.S. cities. Urban Forestry & Urban Greening, 2012. 11: p. 21-30.

<sup>ii</sup> The Nature Conservancy and The Trust for Public Land, Funding Trees for Health: An Analysis of Finance and Policy Actions to Enable Tree Planting for Public Health, 2017. P.8.

<sup>iii</sup> City Parks Alliance: <https://cityparksalliance.org/about-us/why-city-parks-matter/>