

April 17, 2017

Dear Mayor and City Councillors,

In the General Services Gazette Today was the following:

The [Arbor Day Foundation](#) [1] has named Concord, New Hampshire a 2017 Tree City USA community in honor of the City of Concord's dedication to forestry management.

The [Tree City USA](#) [2] program is a community improvement initiative started in 1976 by the Arbor Day Foundation, in collaboration with the USDA Forest Service and the National Association of State Foresters. Over 3,400 communities in the United States have achieved Tree City USA status by meeting four core standards: having a community tree ordinance, maintaining a tree board or department, spending at least \$2 per capita on urban forestry, and celebrating Arbor Day.

The City of Concord regulates three tree ordinances ([Article 5-6](#)) [3] regarding the protection of trees in the City right-of-way, adopted a [Street Tree Policy](#) [4] in 2015, has a consultant forester to manage City-owned forests and a licensed arborist directing the General Services Department tree crew, and spent \$6 per capita on urban forestry for fiscal year 2016.

The City of Concord has also been proactively addressing [invasive insect infestations](#) [5] by removing infected trees to discourage additional invasions. The City's continued investment in our urban forestry provides immense benefits to the community, including cleaner air, energy savings, improved biodiversity, and numerous other economic, social, and environmental benefits.

A Tree City USA flag will be presented to the City of Concord during this year's [Arbor Day Celebration](#) [6]. This year's celebration will be held at **Rollins Park** on Broadway to help restore some tree canopy lost from the insect infestations. Concord's Arbor Day Celebration will take place on **Friday, April 28, 2017** from **11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.** with opening remarks by Jim Milliken of Modern Woodmen of America, a proclamation by Mayor Jim Bouley, tree planting by our tree crew (tree donations sponsored by the Conservation Commission and Modern Woodmen of America), and a raffle prize drawing of the book *Ancient Trees: Portraits of Time* by Beth Moon donated by the Concord Public Library.

Links:

[1] <https://www.arborday.org/>

[2] <https://www.arborday.org/programs/treecityusa/>

[3] [https://www.municode.com/library/nh/concord/codes/code\\_of\\_ordinances?nodeId=TITIGECO\\_CH5PUWO\\_ART5-6TR](https://www.municode.com/library/nh/concord/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=TITIGECO_CH5PUWO_ART5-6TR)

[4] <http://concordnh.gov/streettreepolicy>

[5] <http://www.concordnh.gov/insects>

[6] <http://www.concordnh.gov/ArborDay2017>

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I am delighted to hear Concord is being presented with a Tree City USA flag on Arbor Day. I am also curious how it was earned. I respectfully request that a report be produced for the public to describe the award and qualifications and information including:

1. Is the Street Tree committee the "maintained tree board"? If so, is the Street Tree Committee going to continue to work on improving the urban canopy? If not, what is the maintained tree board or department?
2. How did Concord spend \$6 per capita on urban forestry in 2016. Does the \$6/capita include the plantings as part of the Main Street Complete Streets Improvement Project? If so does this spending account for the number of trees removed in advance of the project and those removed after – that is do they count as new? Does this per capita spending include the removal of trees at Rollins Park?

The plantings on Main Street are nice but the underground soil for these trees appears to be quite limited as observed during the construction. Time will tell if they replacement trees thrive any better than the previous trees on Main Street. In addition, many mature shade trees were lost in the process and were not replaced.

In many neighborhoods the removal of trees has been considerable while the plantings of new trees appears quite limited. In 2014 General Services produced a report on the status of street trees in the community. I respectfully request that a report of plantings and removals since the 2014 report be provided to the community for review.

3. Review data of tree removals and plantings including species, locations and success or failures of previously reported plantings. For example there are several trees along the airport fence and Langley Parkway North which have failed to thrive or survive. Around the Mall there have been considerable die-off of trees on D'Amante Drive. Will there be tree re-plantings to replace the dead and lost trees? Are replacements counted as replacements or new plantings?

Within the urban core many sidewalks have suffered loss of shade from the removal of tree limbs and whole trees. This pruning reduces the available urban canopy in the community and with it the livability. One challenge is to balance reliable overhead and underground services to customers while maintaining the livability provided by the urban canopy. Perhaps opportunities to reduce the conflicts can be explored with input and coordination between service providers and the City. Careful analysis of existing and planned service poles and underground utilities could pay dividends for livability.

The green space between sidewalks and roadways seem to be in decline as streets have been widened to accommodate motor vehicles travel and vehicle storage over decades. Could opportunities for reclaiming green strips for plantings be explored? Perhaps the departments of management, planning, engineering and general services could provide input to the tree board, or department identified in 1 above, to coordinate long term master planning.

4. Have there been specific improvements for streetscape? The 2014 General Services report indicated \$1.127M was planned in the 2014 CIPs for Sidewalk, Bikeway and Streetscape improvements. What portions of CIP funds have been identified for improvements of the urban canopy? Have any grant funded trees been planted since 2014 and are any future grants being sought?

Restoration of greenspace can provide space for urban canopy growth which improves livability. Real success goes beyond earning the Tree City recognition with improvements in the livability of the community.

Please contact me if I can assist in this matter. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Robert T. Baker  
Concord, NH

cc. City Clerk