



2019 Report to Council

For the last 6 years the Swanton Tree Commission has provided the Village of Swanton with volunteer services to help them maintain the asset of a Village urban forest. We provide programs, education and services that raise public awareness and support the Village infrastructure. 2019 proved to be a very busy year with many unplanned events providing opportunities we had not anticipated.

Over this last year the Commission consisted of the following voting members: Walt Lange, Jim Lammon, Joyce Miller, Rickey Heffner, Zack Wertz, and Roger DeGood. Also serving as liaisons from the Village were Ann Roth, Rosanna Hoelzle, Paul Dzyak, and Curt Smith.

Some of our major accomplishments over the past year are:

Tree Commission Academy

Rickey Heffner and Joyce Miller presented their final theses in Waterville, Ohio, completing a 40-hour course of study and becoming our most recent graduates from Tree Commission Academy, a nationally acclaimed course in Urban Forest Management for tree commissioners presented by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Forestry.

Arbor Day Celebration

As part of the requirements for Tree City designation and to help educate area youth, a tree planting celebration was held at Swanton Middle School in honor of Arbor Day. To further promote awareness of Arbor Day, this event was reported in the Swanton Enterprise.

Student-led Tree Valuation Exercise - Pilliod Park

Middle School students counted and identified all trees in Pilliod Park and calculated their value using the National Tree Value Calculator provided by the US Forestry Service. The annual cost savings generated by these trees in such things as storm water retention, energy, and environmental health approached \$10,000.

Gypsy Moth Redux

In the fall of 2018, the Ohio Department of Agriculture reported to us that their gypsy moth suppression program had not been as successful as planned. Therefore for 2019, additional applications of a nontoxic-to-humans biological insecticide was necessary. The area to be sprayed (2 applications) was increased to include all of the heavily wooded northeast portion of the community. The weather conditions during the application window were much more favorable this year to the growth of the natural fungus that would infect the gypsy moth larva resulting in a 90.3% suppression rate. It should be noted that this is not an eradication but a suppression. Expect there to be additional applications in an approximate five year time frame due to the many untreated woodlots in the area and our proximity to Oak Openings. Residents should stay vigilant and report any observed gypsy moth activity the Village.

Tree City USA Awards Ceremony

Tree Commission members attended the Tree City USA Awards Ceremony in Crestline, Ohio, where we were awarded Tree City USA status for the 5th consecutive year and a Growth Award for the third consecutive year.

For 2019, we expect to receive Tree City USA status again with a potential Growth Award for programs above and beyond expectations. Awards will be made May 6, 2020, in Bowling Green.

Division of Forestry 40th Year Celebration

Commission Members attended the Division of Forestry 40th Year celebration in Columbus and attended several training sessions dealing with tree risk prioritization and other topics.

Tree Risk Assessment in Swanton Memorial Park

In March 2019 former Mayor Roth contacted the Division of Forestry about performing a tree risk assessment of the trees in Memorial park. Before that study could be initiated, Mother Nature took its course and felled a large red oak during a windstorm, destroying an adjacent shelter. The Tree Commission, along with Division of Forestry Regional Urban Forester, Stephanie Miller, a certified tree risk assessor, inspected the park and performed an assessment of all the trees associated with potential risk. Seventeen trees were found to be at risk of falling within the next calendar year on nearby consistently populated targets. The Village subsequently contracted for the immediate removal of seven of these trees. The remainder will be removed during the winter months of 2020.

Tree Risk Assessment Workshop

The Memorial Park incident prompted us to request additional training from the Div. of Forestry in tree risk assessment. In July 2019 Swanton then hosted a Tree Risk Assessment Workshop for other tree commissions, public works employees, arborists, private landowners and other governmental personnel. This course on Enhanced Level One Tree Risk Assessment was taught by Stephany Miller and Alan Siewert, NW Ohio and NE Ohio Urban Foresters, respectively. The workshop was attended by 90 students from across the state from as far away as Cincinnati, Ohio. This type of event brings recognition to the Village across the State and provides a positive image to the Village and area. It also provides extensive networking opportunities for Village personnel and Swanton Tree Commission members.

Tracking citizen requests

As public awareness of our street trees continued to expand, it was noted that the Village had no means of tracking citizen input and monitoring any action. To keep these inquiries from falling through the cracks a system was developed, with the help of Ms. Hoelzle, to identify, track and drive to conclusion this type of inquiry. Forms and procedures were developed and implemented to dispatch field assessors, record findings and get responses to the citizen in a timely manner while recording these actions for further reference.

Our team of assessors was called upon to review and report on approximately ten city street trees that residents had concerns over. They were able to review tree conditions and provide informed data on such things as tree health, sidewalk irregularities and sewer interferences. When necessary, trees were prioritized and placed on the list for future removal. All of this information was recorded in an organized fashion, compliant with established norms, and presented to the Village Administration for consideration and formal notification of the citizenry. This type of service is similar to that provided by

other communities whose budget can afford to employ a fulltime arborist, but was done in Swanton entirely with volunteer hours.

Swanton CornFest

As we have in the past, we provided an informational booth at the Swanton CornFest, answering many questions from residents regarding street trees or trees on their property. We also were able to provide additional informational brochures from the International Association of Arboriculture regarding proper planting and care. We passed out "Tree Cookies," small coaster-sized slices of branches to open conversation with adults and to engage children.

Young Tree Training

The Tree Commission revised its approach to the replacement of removed trees and new plantings by deciding to devote more of our budget to care of the existing, recently planted, forest. To remove this work item from a largely un-trained and overworked Public Works Department, we recommended that a private arborist be hired to provide young tree training (pruning) to our existing recently planted trees so they continued to grow correctly formed. This work has been completed as of the week of January 12th, 2020, at a relatively small fee. This work will be repeated (on a smaller scale) on a two to three-year interval based upon need.

Tree Lawn Maintenance

It was also noted the most of our plantings have gone uncared for by residents with the important mulch beds disappearing or becoming weed infested. We advised administration that a local landscape company should be contacted to provide a proposal to re-do the mulch beds and bring them back to a productive and visually appealing condition. This contact was made and a proposal requested to be delivered to the Village Administrator.

2019 Tree Planting

We finalized the year with our usual autumn planting. We requested that the Village contract for the planting of 20 new trees on Lincoln and Chestnut streets to replace removed trees or fill in open spaces. This was completed as of December 1, 2019. Trees that did not survive last year's winter in the Willow Run Development will be replaced this spring by the installing vendor at no cost to the village.

Some interesting numbers

Total Budget - \$9578

Total used Budget - \$7215 with \$1,300 carried over to 2020 to pay for the young tree training for a total of \$8515

Trees Planted - 21

Cost - \$5500 (one donated)

Trees removed - 22

Cost - \$58,459 (majority due to park removal)

Hours expended by STC - 850

Value of hours as estimated DNR-Ohio Division of Forestry - \$18,115 (cost to Village - \$0)

The Look Ahead

We look for a hopefully quieter year ahead with much of the planning and procedural work completed. However, we are challenged by the loss of two of our members. Both of these were founding members, possessing extensive and costly training, experience and influence along with resources in other organizations that we will no longer be able to benefit from. Their services will be greatly missed both on a local and a state level.

We need to recruit at a minimum 3 additional members to fill these positions and enhance our current ranks to maintain the high level of performance that the citizenry is expecting from any Village entity. These candidates may come from the Village or the surrounding area and would be encouraged to complete the Division of Forestry, Tree Commission Academy.

Respectfully in Service to the Village,

Roger DeGood TCA

CH. Swanton Tree Commission.