



## **Operations Committee - Board of Representatives**

Virgil de la Cruz, Chair

Sean Boeger, Vice Chair

# **Committee Report**

**Date:** Monday, October 17, 2022  
**Time:** 6:30pm  
**Place:** This meeting was held remotely

The Operations Committee met as indicated above. In attendance were Chair de la Cruz, Vice Chair Boeger, and Committee Members Reps. Baxter, Coleman, Ley, Sherwood, Tomas, and Watkins. Excused was Rep. Stella. Also present were Reps. Adams, Goldberg, Grunberger, and Matheny; Matt Quinones, Director of Operations; Kevin Murray, Parks & Facilities Operations Manager; Erin McKenna, Planning Board; Burt Rosenberg, Legal Dept.; Ralph Blessing, Land Use Bureau; Nette Compton, CEO Mill River Park Collaborative; David Kooris, President Downtown Special Services District; and three members of the public.

Chair de la Cruz called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm.

<b>Item No.</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Committee Action</b>
12. <a href="#">O31.021</a>	RESOLUTION; Requesting Resources for Tree Maintenance, Replacement and Inventory. 10/04/22 – Submitted by Reps. Sherwood, Saftic and de la Cruz	<b>Approved 7-0-1</b>

Item #2 was taken up out of order.

Rep. Sherwood explained that Rep. Saftic and she are working on creating a new ordinance or editing the current ordinances to incentivize the care and protection of trees in Stamford. They have been working with Erin McKenna, Ron Markey, Melanie Hollis, and Dana Lee. The City lacks resources to care for the trees that taxpayer money is funding to plant.

This resolution is asking the Administration to fund four items for the 2023/2024 Fiscal Year: a GIS tree inventory; the purchase at least one water tank truck; the purchase and planting of new trees downtown; and hiring at least one additional parks maintenance employee.

Ms. McKenna, Mr. Kooris, and Mr. Murray reviewed this item and there was discussion.

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<sup>1</sup> Video Time Stamp: 00:00:25

- This summer the DSSD and the City partnered for a professional GIS tree inventory.
- A citywide GIS tree inventory would allow Stamford to proactively manage trees.
- An arborist would go to every tree in the city right-of-way and parks to geo-locate every tree, record species, size, and condition, its proximity to utilities, and get a visual of the tree.
- This would allow for the management of planting, care, removal, maintenance, and enhance emergency response planning.
- This resolution is approximately a \$250K budget request.
- There are currently many tree beds downtown that are tripping hazards.
- If we can get the urban forest to a point of maturity, the cost of maintenance will eventually be lowered.
- This would make Stamford greener and more sustainable.

Rep. Watkins stated that while he agrees that trees are important, he has concerns about this budget process, considering there are many issues in the City like this that need attention.

A motion to approve Item #2 was made, seconded and approved by a vote of 7-0-1 (Reps. de la Cruz, Boeger, Baxter, Coleman, Ley, Sherwood, and Tomas in favor; Rep. Watkins abstained).

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| <p><sup>21</sup>. <a href="#">O31.020</a></p> | <p>REVIEW: Given the Increasing Frequency and Intensity of Destructive Weather Events Caused by Global Warming, the Damage these Events do to the Electricity Distribution Lines, and the Indispensable Nature of Electricity to Life, Health, Safety, and Commerce, Explore Opportunities to Improve the Reliability, Resiliency, Sustainability, and Economics of the Electrical Distribution Lines by Placing them Underground [previously discussed as O31.019].<br/>09/06/22 – Submitted by Reps. de la Cruz and Stella</p> | <p><b>Report Made and Held 8-0-0</b></p> |
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Chair de la Cruz stated that severe weather events are becoming more frequent and more intense. Planting a pole in the ground and stringing wires from it needs to end. We need to explore new ways of installing utilities. The hurdles may be challenging but the process needs to start.

Mr. Rosenberg stated the City of Stamford has no authority under State statute to legislate on the subject of electric transmission lines. This is solely in the jurisdiction of the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA). Chair de la Cruz countered that the Statue does grant the municipalities some say with PURA having appellate jurisdiction.

There was a legal decision in Connecticut that asked for input from municipalities. Because of this, Mr. Rosenberg suggested that the BOR draft correspondence to PURA stating the BOR believes PURA should work towards a requirement that public utilities

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<sup>2</sup> Video Time Stamp: 00:56:15

install new lines and replacement lines underground. That is the most the BOR can do at this time.

There was discussion on this item:

- Greenwich has an ordinance that is very limited, which requires planned residential zones to have underground utilities.
- If we can at least start with small districts or areas, little by little eventually in the future everything will be underground.
- If more municipalities get together in addition to Stamford, it could be a stronger voice to PURA.
- Stamford needs to be smart about what areas to start with, perhaps where the underground utilities can reach the most amount of properties.

Mr. Quinones has spoken to people from Eversource about weather events. They shared that while underground utilities are damaged less often, restoring power is a more challenging process. It is a significant cost to place lines underground. The biggest obstacle is around funding and the burden on private property owners. The BOR needs to consider what exactly it is asking from PURA.

Chair de la Cruz will research this issue and draft a resolution for the State and PURA and present at the next Committee meeting.

A motion to hold Item #1 was made, seconded and approved by a vote of 8-0-0 (Reps. de la Cruz, Boeger, Baxter, Coleman, Ley, Sherwood, Tomas, and Watkins in favor).

<sup>3</sup> 3. O31.005	REVIEW; Implementation/Revival of a City-Wide Adopt-a-Spot Program. 02/09/22 – Submitted by Reps. Sandford, de la Cruz, Mays, Pratt, Adams and Roqueta 03/03/22 – Held by Committee 5-0-0 03/14/22 – Moved to Pending	<b>Report Made and Held 8-0-0</b>
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Mr. Quinones explained that this program identifies an area that lacks maintenance staff to keep up with it, and connects with the private sector to be able to secure necessary funding to outsource the beautification and ongoing maintenance.

In his research, no clear records were found as to how the previous program was established and maintained. A small committee has been put together including Rep. Sandford, the Legal Department, the Purchasing Department; and Kevin Murray.

There is a two-fold approach. First, identify a non-profit partner who would oversee the solicitation for the private sector in adopting these locations. Second, contracting of the work to a maintenance company. The Parks Department will identify about 24 to 40 spots, and this will be communicated to the non-profit organization in charge. This would not put the City into any conflicts with the private sector.

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<sup>3</sup> Video Time Stamp: 01:37:30

Separately, the State is offering a grant opportunity for the Youth Service Corps to engage in a work program. The City is pursuing this grant opportunity and this program would include some of the adopted spots.  
Any spots still being maintained under current contractual obligations will be absorbed in the new program.

A motion to hold Item #3 was made, seconded and approved by a vote of 8-0-0 (Reps. de la Cruz, Boeger, Baxter, Coleman, Ley, Sherwood, Tomas, and Watkins in favor).

4. O31.017      REVIEW; Stamford Transfer Station Operations and      **Held 8-0-0**  
Possibility of Increasing Fees for Non-Residential  
and Commercial Businesses using the Transfer  
Station.  
07/06/22 – Submitted by Reps. Stella and Curtis  
07/18/22 – Report Made & Held by Committee 7-0-0  
08/15/22 – Report Made & Held by Committee 7-0-0  
09/12/22 – Moved to Pending

A motion to hold Item #4 was made, seconded and approved by a vote of 8-0-0 (Reps. de la Cruz, Boeger, Baxter, Coleman, Ley, Sherwood, Tomas, and Watkins in favor).

Chair de la Cruz adjourned the meeting at 8:34 pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Virgil de la Cruz, Chair

This meeting is on [video](#).