

**Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Avon Tree Commission
Held in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Building
On Wednesday, June 10, 2026
At 7:30 p.m.**

The Chairman Mr. Varga, called the meeting to order at 8:13 p.m.

PRESENT:

Commission Members: Mary Berges; Alex Boccabella; Mary Johnson; Collin O'Donnell (non-voting Student Member); Olivia Pajak (non-voting Student Member); Matt Smith; John Traxler; Liesa Wetzig; Chair, Richard Varga (non-voting Member).

Others in Attendance: Anne Kish, Assistant Clerk of Council

Absent - Megan Engelmann; John Gasior, Law Director

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE AVON TREE COMMISSION HELD
WEDNESDAY, MAY 13, 2026**

A motion was made by Mr. Smith and seconded by Ms. Wetzig to dispense with the reading of the minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Avon Tree Commission held Wednesday, May 13, 2026, and to approve said minutes as published, and the vote was: Ms. Berges, "yes"; Mr. Boccabella, "yes"; Ms. Johnson, "abstain"; Mr. Smith, "yes"; Mr. Traxler, "yes"; Ms. Wetzig, "yes".

The vote was 5 for, 0 against and 1 abstention and the Chair declared the motion passed.

DISCUSSION ABOUT FACEBOOK

Ms. Berges

Ms. Berges introduced a discussion about establishing a Facebook page for the Avon Tree Commission. She framed the proposal around the Commission's longstanding interest in its educational and outreach mission, noting the limitations of the City's existing communication channels. "We have our City web page, which is great if somebody goes to the trouble of going to the City website to look at our page," she said, "and we have the Tree Commission Newsletter, which is great, and comes out once a year." She expressed a desire for a more timely and expedient means of reaching residents directly.

Ms. Berges envisioned the page as a platform for seasonal, practical tree care tips—such as proper mulching technique (cautioning against the common problem of "volcano mulching" against tree trunks), pruning guidance, and pest alerts related to species like Arborvitae. She proposed that the page be maintained by the Mayor's Assistant, with Commission Members communicating the content they would like posted. She further suggested the page might function as an information-only outlet, though she acknowledged that enabling comments was an option worth considering.

Mr. Varga raised the question of whether High School Student Members, such as Ms. Pajak and Mr. O'Donnell, could be involved in managing or contributing to the Facebook page, and wondered how it might be used to connect with younger audiences.

Ms. Pajak offered candid and valuable insight, noting that Facebook is not widely used by her age group—"I don't really know anybody my age who's on Facebook; that's mostly used by older people"—but affirmed that Facebook remains a strong platform for reaching families, particularly parents. She suggested that posting a link to the page called "Avon in the Know" community group would ensure broad family reach, and that information shared with parents would likely reach children as well. She also

noted that while Instagram might appeal to a wider age range, it would be less effective as an information-sharing vehicle than Facebook.

Mr. Varga acknowledged that he had not been aware of Facebook's demographic profile in this way, calling it "great information." The discussion also touched on using the page to promote the student application process for the Commission.

Mr. O'Donnell later echoed support for the Facebook page, specifically citing its value in promoting Arbor Day independently, without relying on the City Newsletter—noting that Arbor Day had been omitted from the City Newsletter's "Save the Date" section.

A motion was made by Mr. Smith and seconded by Ms. Johnson to establish a Facebook page for the Avon Tree Commission and the vote was: Mr. Boccabella, "yes"; Ms. Johnson, "yes"; Mr. Smith, "yes"; Mr. Traxler, "yes"; Ms. Wetzig, "yes"; Ms. Berges, "yes".

The vote was 6 for and 0 against and the Chair declared the motion passed.

UPDATE ON ARBOR DAY 2026

Mr. Varga

Mr. Varga provided an update on the planning for Arbor Day 2026, which is scheduled for Saturday October 3, 2026. He reported that pizza has been confirmed as the food option, characterizing it as "the best thing." He noted that he had spoken with Mr. O'Donnell earlier that day and that Mr. O'Donnell and Mr. Traxler are actively reviewing the scavenger hunt component of the event. Mr. Varga also indicated he needs to obtain a purchase order from Mr. Presley in order to buy books through the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA), adding that he did not want to be disruptive given that City Hall has been in the process of moving. He expressed that he had identified the specific titles previously discussed and that the purchase would be proceeding.

Ms. Berges then raised the idea of incorporating a tree planting activity at the High School, noting that the courtyard project had been deferred for budget reasons. She suggested coordinating something the day before Arbor Day, though she flagged a potential conflict with Homecoming weekend activities.

Mr. Varga confirmed that the Mayor had also expressed interest in planting trees at the High School as part of the shade tree initiative, should the larger courtyard project not move forward this year.

Ms. Johnson agreed with the concept but was emphatic that any event should not compete with Homecoming noting, "I don't think that works to our advantage." She suggested finding a more suitable date either before or after.

Ms. Pajak noted that the High School's own birthday tree-planting tradition involves inviting a small number of students from each class to attend and participate, which was well received as a model to draw from.

Mr. Varga proposed that April—coinciding with the National Arbor Day observance—might be the most appropriate time to plan a High School tree planting, observing that May is not ideal due to end-of-year school activities. The group agreed that April would allow more planning time, greater student participation, and fewer scheduling conflicts. Mr. Varga indicated he would take the lead in coordinating this effort.

REPORTS AND COMMENTS

Ms. Berges reported that the recent presentation to City Council by student members Collin O'Donnell and consultant Mr. Leo Wible was very well received. She noted that after the students left, "there were quite a few favorable comments and how impressed they were with the presentation." She also extended

congratulations to Ms. Pajak and the Avon girls track team on winning another State title, saying simply, "we're just blessed."

Mr. Boccabella reported that he had contacted Paula Pitasky of Encompass Marketing who is the editor-in-chief of the Avon City Newsletter, to request that Arbor Day be added to the Newsletter's "Save the Date" section, having noticed it was absent. He acknowledged uncertainty about whether the next issue would be published prior to the October 3rd Arbor Day event, but indicated that the intent is to include it in future issues at minimum.

Ms. Engelmann was absent.

Ms. Johnson had no comments.

Mr. O'Donnell offered two substantive comments. First, he reinforced his support for the newly approved Facebook page as a direct communication tool, citing the City Newsletter's failure to include Arbor Day as an event and noting: "If we had control of our own Facebook page, we could put out whatever we want. We don't need the City to inform us." Second, he announced that he will be serving as President of the SAVE Club at the High School for the coming year, and asked whether the SAVE Club could be involved in the proposed High School tree planting. Mr. Varga responded enthusiastically, saying "absolutely," and encouraged Mr. O'Donnell to begin informing the club of the initiative given his new leadership role. Mr. Varga also suggested exploring additional tree planting locations on the exterior of the school building, potentially funded through the Shade Tree Fund account.

Ms. Pajak had no comments.

Mr. Smith extended congratulations to Ms. Pajak on her graduation from Avon High School. He inquired about her continued availability to the Commission, given her upcoming transition to Ohio State University. Ms. Pajak confirmed that she would remain engaged with the Commission through the summer, with her college move-in set for the end of August. Mr. Smith appreciated her commitment and noted that her involvement would be invaluable during the Arbor Day planning phase.

Mr. Traxler had no comments.

Ms. Wetzig echoed the sentiments expressed by Ms. Berges and Mr. Boccabella regarding both the Council presentation and congratulations to Ms. Pajak.

Mr. Varga offered several additional updates:

- **Tree Canopy Study:** Mr. Varga noted that he and Mr. O'Donnell are actively exploring tools and methodology for the tree canopy assessment, which the Mayor has directed to proceed.
- **Memorial Tree Replacements:** Mr. Varga reported coordinating with the Parks Department regarding memorial trees that had not survived. He stated that the Shade Tree Fund would be used to replace these trees, and that the Mayor has endorsed this approach.
- **Landscape Architect Meeting:** Mr. Varga confirmed that a landscape architect had contacted him to gather the Commission's previously presented ideas regarding the park site. He noted that a meeting with the architect is being scheduled for the following week to discuss the project further, including discussions about road access from the west to a proposed parking lot area.
- **\$500,000 Bridge Grant:** Mr. Varga shared the news that the City has received a \$500,000 grant for a bridge at the Traxler Arboretum—at the location where "John's bridge used to be," connecting the Stoney Ridge Road side area. He indicated this was received approximately two weeks prior. The announcement was met with enthusiastic reaction from Members.

AUDIENCE:

There were no comments from the audience.

ADJOURN: 8:30 p.m.

A motion was made by Mr. Smith and seconded by Ms. Berges to adjourn the Regular Meeting of the Avon Tree Commission, and the vote was: Ms. Johnson, “yes”; Mr. Smith, “yes”; Mr. Traxler, “yes”; Ms. Wetzig, “yes”; Ms. Berges, “yes”; Mr. Boccabella, “yes”.

The vote was 6 for and 0 against and the Chair declared the motion passed.

The Chairman announced that the next meeting of the Avon Tree Commission is
Wednesday, July 8, 2026, at 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Anne Kish, Assistant Clerk of Council

PASSED: _____

SIGNED BY: _____
Rick Varga, Chair

ATTEST:

Anne Kish, Assistant Clerk of Council