



# SHADE TREE COMMISSION

## Meeting Minutes

Monday, November 14, 2022

8:00 p.m.

*[held remotely via Zoom]*

### 1. Call to Order—Pledge of Allegiance

The meeting was called to order at 8:03 pm

### 2. Roll Call

*Commission Members present:*

Nils Abate, Chair

Todd Bradbury

Scott Devlin, Council Liaison

Miriam Lockhart, Env. Comm. Liaison

George Paschalis, Secretary

Tsun Tam

*Not present:*

Daniel Serata

### 3. Approval of Minutes

The November 14, 2022 minutes were unanimously approved.

### 4. Open Meeting to Public Comment

No members of the public were present.

### 5. Correspondence

Commission members reviewed and discussed received/sent correspondence, including a letter from the homeowner at 290 Durie Avenue. Members reviewed and agreed to a proposed response to be sent by Ms. Weatherly.

### 6. Old Business

#### a) Pruning along County Roads

Mr. Paschalis recapped the issue of the Borough's current policy to not prune trees in the County's right-of-way. He reminded members that the Commission's enabling ordinance notes the Commission is responsible for "any public rights-of-way within the Borough of Closter"—not just the Borough Right-of-Way—and reviewed the Commission's repeated efforts to secure guidance from the Borough Attorney. Members voted unanimously to approve and send **Resolution 2022-01** to the governing body.

b) Monthly Reports

Mr. Paschalis noted that while the Borough was unable to provide the requested Shade Tree Trust Fund Report again this month, Councilman Devlin was able to receive some information from the Assistant CFO. The Commission reviewed same and determined additional information was necessary. Ms. Lockhart suggested a report can be created that can be automatically generated every month.

c) NJUCF Tree Inventory follow-ups

Mr. Paschalis clarified that the “dead trees” list that had been recently inventoried by PlanIT Geo include whole dead trees, dead limbs and stumps. An initial review suggested there are only 21 dead whole trees. Mr. Paschalis will confirm how many of these are in the right-of-way.

d) Fall Tree Plantings

Mr. Bradbury reported on the thirty-five plantings to date and the potential to plant up to an additional twenty-two trees with remaining unencumbered funds. The Commission voted unanimously to encumber remaining available funds for this purpose and for the removal of the aforementioned dead trees in the right-of-way.

Mr. Paschalis noted a miscommunication between neighbors related to a 2022 Poster Contest planting at Wendy Lane. Mr. Bradbury and Mr. Paschalis will speak with those involved to seek a remedy.

e) District 2 Pruning

Chairman Abate noted pruning will begin later this week.

f) 186 Harrington Avenue—unauthorized tree removals

Mr. Paschalis advised that the homeowner has planted the replacement trees.

g) STC webpage updates

Mr. Paschalis reviewed efforts to date, including draft introductory language for the Tree Inventory posting. Ms. Lockhart and Mr. Paschalis will review and make additional edits.

h) 2022 Fall Foliage Photo Contest

Mr. Paschalis led a review of the contest entries and members voted on a winner and four honorable mentions. All entries will be featured at the public library again this year.

i) Space at Borough Hall for Commission materials

Mr. Abate noted Borough Hall has set aside storage space for Commission materials.

j) Educational opportunities

Mr. Bradbury recapped the November 9<sup>th</sup> PlanIT Geo webinar on tree ordinances. A follow-up meeting is scheduled to review the Borough’s tree ordinances.

Mr. Bradbury noted past Shade Tree Federation president Liz Stewart may be available to provide in-house continuing education credits for Commission members and the public at large. The Commission voted unanimously to spend up to \$500 for this purpose out of the existing budget.

k) **Alternate Tree Inspector**

Mr. Paschalis noted the Borough Administrator has confirmed Bill Fuchs can be utilized as an Alternate Tree Inspector.

**7. New Business**

a) **2023 Budget Preparation**

Chairman Abate led a discussion on next year's budget, which needs to be submitted to Borough Hall by December 2<sup>nd</sup>. Commission members voted to approve and send **Resolution 2022-02** to the governing body, which calls for 1) an annual appropriation from the municipal budget for a minimum of 50 street trees; and 2) using the proceeds of the Shade Tree Trust Fund to plant trees in the Borough's parks, public spaces, and potentially private property to offset tree loss.

Commission members further voted unanimously to propose a \$113,500 budget for 2023 that includes the following items:

- Updating the Borough's Community Forestry Management Plan (\$7,500)
- Alternate Tree Inspector (\$500)
- Tree Planting (\$30,000)
- County Pruning (\$5,000)

b) **2022 Annual Accomplishment Report (AAR)—due February 15<sup>th</sup>**

Chairman Abate confirmed Ms. Weatherly will share a draft of the report for the Commission's review.

c) **Borough email accounts**

Mr. Paschalis and Mr. Bradbury requested borough email accounts to conduct the Commission's official plan reviews and inspections. Chairman Abate agreed to request same from the Borough Administrator.

d) **2023 Commission meeting dates**

Members agreed to keep Commission meetings on the second Mondays of the month in 2023.

**8. Liaison Reports—none**

**9. Plan Review**

Mr. Paschalis reviewed the status of this month's plan reviews.

**10. Meeting Adjournment (9:48 p.m.)**



# SHADE TREE COMMISSION

## **Resolution 2022-01: Pruning of Street Trees within the County Right-of-way**

*Approved by the Commission on November 14, 2022*

Whereas Borough statute 59-2 charges the Shade Tree Commission with exercising “full and exclusive control over the regulation, planting, and care of shade and ornamental trees and shrubbery...in any public rights-of-way within the Borough of Closter”; and

Whereas, the Commission currently plants on County roadways within the Borough; and

Whereas, Bergen County officials have confirmed they do not prune in the County right-of-way; and

Whereas, pruning is essential to maintain safe conditions for pedestrians and motorists alike;

Now, therefore, be it resolved that the Shade Tree Commission encourages the Borough to reconsider its current policy of not pruning trees along County roads and to provide sufficient funding in next year’s budget to accommodate same.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Commission,

George Paschalis  
Secretary



**Resolution 2022-02: Request for Additional Support for Closter's Tree Canopy**

*Approved by the Commission on November 14, 2022*

Whereas, it is the Borough's stated goal to increase and maintain its tree canopy cover at 55% of its total geographic area; and

Whereas trees have a finite life expectancy and much of the Borough's urban forest is mature, making ongoing tree replacement vitally important; and

Whereas the Borough is currently losing considerably more trees per year than it is replacing; and

Whereas, in 2021, approximately 550 healthy trees were permitted to be removed; and

Whereas, to date in 2022, approximately 472 healthy trees were permitted to be removed;

Now therefore be it resolved that the Shade Tree Commission urges the Borough's elected officials to expand their support of Closter's tree canopy by:

1. Dedicating an annual appropriation from the municipal budget for a *minimum* of 50 street trees; and
2. Using the proceeds of the Shade Tree Trust Fund to plant trees in our parks, public spaces, and potentially private property to offset tree loss.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Commission,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. Paschalis', is written over a horizontal line.

George Paschalis  
Secretary