



SHADE TREE COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes

Monday, October 10, 2022

8:00 p.m.

[held remotely via Zoom]

1. Call to Order—Pledge of Allegiance

The meeting was called to order at 8:05 pm

2. Roll Call

Commission Members present:

Nils Abate, Chair

Todd Bradbury

Miriam Lockhart, Env. Commission
Liaison

George Paschalis, Secretary

Daniel Serata

Tsun Tam

Not present:

Scott Devlin, Council Liaison

3. Approval of Minutes

The September 12, 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. Mr. Paschalis proposed that correspondence from Councilwoman Amitai and the Closter Improvement Commission be discussed later in the agenda.

6. Old Business

a) Pruning along County Roads

Mr. Paschalis reviewed 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. Both Councilman Devlin and Borough Attorney William Bailey have reached out to the County for additional information.

b) 2021 Tree Replacements

Mr. Paschalis confirmed the vendor has replaced the requisite trees.

c) Shade Tree Fund Monthly Report

Mr. Paschalis noted that, while the Commission is now being provided a monthly budget report—which is shared with all members in advance of the meeting—a requested monthly Trust Fund report—which captures deposits and withdrawals—has not yet been made available. Mr. Paschalis noted that Councilman Devlin has reached out to the Finance department to request the monthly accounting.

d) NJUCF Tree Inventory follow-ups

Chairman Abate noted recent tree removals were updated in the inventory; he continues to research less expensive ways to map the voting districts. Mr. Paschalis noted the task of identifying which of the 85 dead trees inventoried are in the public right-of-way remains outstanding. Ms. Lockhart noted the importance of removing dead trees and mentioned the potential of using an Open Space Trust Fund for this task.

e) Fall Tree Plantings

Mr. Bradbury recapped recent efforts to identify, stake and communicate planting sites. He recapped the potential to plant up to 50 trees based on available budget lines. Mr. Abate reviewed the quotes received and the chosen vendor (SJC Lawncare, Inc.), who is amenable to planting more trees if additional funds were identified.

Ms. Lockhart inquired as to why the monies available in the Shade Tree Trust Fund could not be accessed for this planting. Mr. Bradbury suggested the use of the Trust Fund should be limited to countering tree canopy loss as a result of private development, not as a means of meeting the Borough's annual appropriation for street trees in the right-of-way. Mr. Paschalis pointed out that simply funding 50 trees a year by regularly accessing the Shade Tree Trust Fund will not counter the tremendous tree canopy loss the Borough is experiencing. It was agreed that the Commission as a whole would take a position on this in a future meeting.

f) District 2 Pruning

Chairman Abate recapped the quotes received by the Borough and the chosen vendor (Almstead Tree & Shrub Care Co.). Chairman Abate will be contacted when the work is scheduled to commence; he, in turn, will contact Mr. Bradbury.

g) 186 Harrington Avenue—unauthorized tree removals

Mr. Paschalis noted that the homeowner has yet to respond to official notices. The Commission voted unanimously to include these two trees as part of the fall planting, should the homeowner not respond by October 15. Fines and fees shall apply as per the building department.

h) STC webpage updates

Mr. Abate confirmed the overview text approved by the Commission last month is ready to be published. In addition to this text, Mr. Paschalis will prepare a few other updates including a link to the recently complete Tree Inventory and a revised Approved Tree List.

- i) **2022 Fall Foliage Photo Contest**
Mr. Paschalis noted the contest is underway with a deadline of November 4. Ms. Lockhart volunteered to post flyers in the downtown and to publicize the contest at the upcoming Environmental Commission meeting.
- j) **Space at Borough Hall for Commission materials**
Mr. Paschalis reported that Ms. Weatherly will be consulting Mr. Winters to identify potential space in the Borough Hall basement.
- k) **Certification Training for Commissioners**
Mr. Abate and Mr. Paschalis reviewed the status of credits received by Commission members and staff. Mr. Abate urged members to attend continuing education classes. Mr. Paschalis recommended the Commission invite a professional to a future meeting to not only facilitate CEUs but further expand awareness for staff, elected officials and members of the public.
- l) **Alternate Tree Inspector**
This item was carried to the next meeting on account of Mr. Devlin's absence.

7. New Business

- a) **Shade Tree Trust Fund**
The Commission reviewed a request from Councilwoman Amitai and the Closter Improvement Commission to support the transformation of an alley next to the Empty Vase into a pocket park. After discussion, members determined the initiative would add much needed tree canopy in the Borough and voted unanimously to recommend the use of the Fund to acquire five Regal Columnar Oaks for the pocket park, subject to the consent and approval of the Mayor and Council.

Members further voted unanimously to recommend the use of the Shade Tree Trust Fund to support the planting of additional trees at the Borough's ballfields, the Sophie Heymann Playground and at Veteran's Park as determined collaboratively by the Commission, Borough Administrator and Recreation Director, in an amount not to exceed \$10,000, subject to the consent and approval of the Mayor and Council.
- b) **Mayor's Newsletter**
Commission members discussed various ideas for the monthly newsletter, including the upcoming fall planting and photo contest. Mr. Serata and Mr. Paschalis will partner on a submission.
- c) **Insurance proceeds from shade tree loss at 166 Harrington Ave**
Mr. Paschalis noted the Borough has received remuneration (\$1,885.94) for a vehicular accident that resulted in the loss of a shade tree at 166 Harrington Avenue.

8. Liaison Reports—none

9. Plan Review

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

10. Meeting Adjournment (9:56 p.m.)