



Meeting Minutes

Monday, September 12, 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

Scott Devlin, Council Liaison

Miriam Lockhart, Env. Commission
Liaison

George Paschalis, Secretary

Daniel Serata

Tsun Tam

Commission members reflected on the many contributions of the late Tony Lupardi, Sr., who served on the Commission for over 40 years.

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.

a) Mr. Paschalis will confirm a “do not prune” letter was sent to the homeowner of 346 High Street.

b) Mr. Paschalis will confirm the status of Commission/Borough accreditation with Ms. Weatherly.

6. Old Business

a) 2021 Tree Replacements

Mr. Paschalis noted that the Commission had informed homeowners the trees slated for replacement would be removed in June and, to date, still have not been removed. Mr. Paschalis will ask Ms. Weatherly to follow up with the vendor.

b) Status of Shade Tree Fund

Mr. Paschalis noted he requested the Borough provide the Commission a monthly accounting of the Shade Tree Trust Fund. Following an Open Public Records Act (OPRA) request, the Borough submitted a partial Trust Fund accounting. The Borough has agreed to provide a monthly accounting of the Commission's budget, which will be shared with Commission members moving forward. Mr. Paschalis noted the importance of proper tracking of monies designated for the Fund and will continue to request a monthly accounting on behalf of the Commission. Mr. Devlin noted he had requested the Finance Department provide a balance of spendable money in the Fund. Mr. Paschalis reminded members the Building Department has begun negotiating and settling the backlog of outstanding tree fines, but a substantial number of fines remain. Mr. Bradbury noted per the OPRA documents that—as of June 30, 2022—the Trust Fund appeared to hold \$38,150.43. He further indicated it would be helpful to have a monthly report capturing all incoming, outgoing and reserved monies in the Fund.

c) NJUCF Tree Inventory-findings

Mr. Abate reported that PlanIT Geo has concluded the Borough-wide street tree inventory, and it is available for viewing online. Commission members reviewed the summary report provided by PlanIT Geo. Out of the approximately 5,852 trees inventoried, 85 were identified as dead. Mr. Bradbury and Mr. Paschalis will clarify how many of these trees are within the ROW and how many are the responsibility of the homeowner. Mr. Abate is looking into having PlanIT Geo create mapping for each of the voting districts to help filter data.

d) RFPs

Mr. Abate noted that both RFPs are underway for the fall planting and District 2 pruning.

e) 186 Harrington Avenue-unauthorized tree removals

Mr. Paschalis noted the Building Department has sent a second notification to the homeowner, advising the removed trees must be installed this fall.

f) STC webpage updates-additional revisions recommended by Borough Administrator

The Commission reviewed the proposed revisions recommended by the Borough Administrator and considered additional changes. Following discussion, the Commission agreed to the following language:

The Shade Tree Commission is composed of a maximum of nine appointed residents who serve as the custodians of all street trees and shrubbery located within the Borough's public right-of-way (the easement next to the street). Commissioners work with municipal stakeholders to care for and protect these living assets, through planting, pruning and, when necessary, removal.

The above text will be shared with the Borough Administrator and posted on the Commission homepage.

g) Watering of recently planted trees

Mr. Bradbury and Mr. Devlin recapped the Commission's ability to water trees in the ROW next year. Heretofore, Mr. Bradbury donated his time and equipment four times this year to water trees planted in 2020.

h) Homans Avenue pruning

The Police Department requested assistance from the Commission to clear the sidewalk of overgrown vegetation near Hillside School. Mr. Bradbury petitioned the Borough to add several trees in the vicinity to the removal list and include this area to the soon-to-be awarded pruning contract.

Mr. Bradbury also recommended additional pruning at Harrington Avenue as well as at High Street (between Durie Avenue and Legion Place) and called for trees along county roads to be managed as part of the community. Mr. Paschalis agreed that a clear policy for trees along county roads needs to be developed and implemented.

i) Tree removals completed

Chair Abate updated the Commission on the latest tree removal contract awarded to and completed by A&H Tree Service. Mr. Paschalis noted the removed trees should be reflected on the new tree inventory. Chair Abate volunteered to take on this responsibility.

7. New Business

a) NJDOT Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside Grant

Mr. Paschalis advised the Commission of a grant opportunity for downtown revitalization which could include monies to realize, among other things, the Commission's goal of replacing the downtown trees.

b) Space at Borough Hall for Commission materials

Mr. Paschalis noted the Commission needed space to store its growing materials (e.g. banner, posters). Ms. Lockhart indicated the Environmental Commission did have some informal space at Borough Hall. Mr. Paschalis will reach out to Borough Hall.

c) 2022 Fall Foliage Photo Contest

Mr. Paschalis reviewed content for the upcoming flyer and newsletter.

d) Certification Training for Commissioners

Mr. Bradbury outlined training opportunities for Commission members.

e) Future School Plantings

The Commission discussed alternative approaches to engaging the schools or other community groups in Arbor Day celebrations.

f) Alternate Tree Inspector

Mr. Bradbury noted the need for redundancy should he be unable to perform tree inspections. Mr. Paschalis noted the Borough's Community Forestry Management Plan identifies the Borough Tree Code Enforcement Official as "responsible for inspecting and evaluating public trees on behalf of the Shade Tree Commission and making recommendations for their treatment." Mr. Devlin will investigate.

g) Tree Deer Guards for Road Projects

Mr. Bradbury will arrange for deer guards for two recent road improvements (Harrington Ave at Knickerbocker Road and Blanche Avenue at West Street).

8. Liaison Reports

- a) Governing Body—Mr. Devlin reiterated items covered above.
- b) Environmental Commission—Ms. Lockhart noted the Environmental Commission will partner with Scout Pack 20 on a planting project. The mayor will appoint the “Green Team” members at the next Mayor/Council meeting, as part of Sustainable Jersey certification.

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