



Meeting Minutes

Monday, October 9, 2023

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, Chairman

Todd Bradbury

Scott Devlin, Councilman

George Paschalis, Secretary

Tsun Tam

3. Open Meeting to Public Comment

Mr. Joseph Schiaffo, 95 Forest Street, expressed concerns about the size and proximity of the street tree in the right-of-way and requested the tree be removed. Mr. Schiaffo stated he would be willing to accept a new tree if it were planted to the north of the existing tree.

Chairman Abate noted the tree is in good health, but confirmed its size is overwhelming the front yard. Members will review the tree prior to the next Commission meeting, whereupon a decision will be made.

4. Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Mr. Tsun, seconded by Councilman Devlin, to approve the September 11, 2023 minutes. The motion passed unanimously.

5. Correspondence

Mr. Paschalis highlighted the various communications received by the Commission, including notification of a successful grant award of \$47,939 from the Trees for Schools Program.

6. Old Business

a) Spotted Lanternfly

Chairman Abate recapped the community forum held on September 12 with entomologist Matt Bickerton. A discussion ensued amongst the members regarding the potential removal of Trees of Heaven within the Borough's right-of-way and parks.

b) Enforcement of zones of protection

Councilman Devlin reported on his discussion with the Building Department. He noted that once a code enforcement vacancy is filled there will be additional enforcement.

c) Transitioning to Tree Plotter

Mr. Bradbury urged members to familiarize themselves with the software. The idea of a primer in November was discussed.

d) Moved street tree: 86 Wainwright Avenue

Mr. Paschalis will notify the Building Department for enforcement.

e) Fall Foliage Contest

Mr. Paschalis noted the contest has been posted on the Borough website, at the Public Library and the Borough's social media platforms.

7. New Business

a) Trees for Schools Grant

Mr. Paschalis and Mr. Bradbury will attend the grant workshop scheduled for October 11 in Maplewood. A certified landscape architect has been engaged to finalize the planting plan, which is due on November 22. The goal is to have next year's Arbor Day celebration at a newly planted site next to the 9/11 Memorial.

b) Reviewing draft RFP: Community Forestry Management Plan Update

Mr. Paschalis shared the draft Request for Proposals that was circulated last year, which needs to be finalized. In the interim, and to help inform next year's budget, Chairman Abate will contact a previous vendor to determine a "ballpark" cost for the Plan Update.

c) Riverside Cooperative

Chairman Abate reported on the Borough's participation in the Riverside Cooperative. Downes Tree Service has been selected to do the tree work for all participating municipalities.

Mr. Paschalis expressed concerns that the Downes Tree Service pruning proposal did not reflect the Commission's specifications. Mr. Bradbury noted the Borough could also elect to go out to bid, as opposed to using the Cooperative or requesting quotes. A determination was made that additional information was warranted. Chairman Abate will inquire further.

d) Mayor's Newsletter

Mr. Paschalis will prepare a submission promoting the Trees for Schools grant award and a reminder of the Fall Foliage Photo Contest.

e) Tree Removals

Mr. Bradbury expressed a desire to have been consulted prior to the list being finalized and noted a few items of concern.

f) Certificate of Appreciation

Mr. Bradbury proposed a Resolution of Appreciation at the next meeting thanking the DPW for their support relative to watering. Mr. Paschalis will prepare same.

g) 586 Anderson Avenue—pruning request

Members agreed that daylighting understory canopy could be a consideration in accommodating pruning requests.

h) Commission input to Planning Board—online filing documents

Mr. Tsun requested the Commission review a Planning Board “applicant filing packet” proposed to be posted online. Members will review prior to the next meeting.

8. Reports

a) Shade Tree Budget Report—*not provided by Borough Hall*

b) Shade Tree Trust Fund Report—*not provided by Borough Hall*

c) Governing Body

1. Councilman Devlin noted the spruce tree at Borough Hall needed to be removed and replaced. A new location for the holiday lighting will need to be identified.
2. The Borough will be procuring a bucket truck, which can be used to assist with tree pruning and removals.
3. The Borough Council has deemed the Tree of Heaven a hazardous tree.
4. Mr. Devlin highlighted the proposed updates to the tree ordinance, including identifying the “Approved Tree List” on the Commission’s webpage as the official list of allowable tree species relative to tree mitigation plans.

9. Meeting Adjournment (approximately 9:32 p.m.)