

**Palmer Township, Northampton County**

**Shade Tree Commission Meeting Minutes**

**April 4, 2024, 6:30PM, 3 Weller Pl, Lower-Level Municipal Meeting Room**

**1. Roll Call**

- a. Present: Shannon Wisniewski, Paul Strasko, Sandi Bush, Patrick Romano. Also present: Charles Bellis, Lee Hilbert, and Paige Strasko.
- b. The meeting was called to order at 6:36PM.

**2. Approval of Meeting Minutes from March 7, 2024**

- a. Bush asked to amend the minutes to remove her from the roll call list. Strasko and Wisniewski explained that anyone who speaks, even members of the public, are usually included in present members.
- b. Romano made a motion to accept the minutes from March 7, 2024, and Wisniewski seconded. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

**3. Old Business**

**a. Tree Ordinance Species List Update**

- i. STC members discussed a summary of communication to that point on the ordinance and having the Township’s arborist review the species list developed by the commission. Wisniewski also discussed having a newsletter article informing residents about the ordinance and the need for a permit to remove a street tree. Romano agreed to include an article in the newsletter.
- ii. STC members discussed the arborist’s recommendations and decided to accept them minus the fruit trees. Wisniewski stated that she would update the current species list to include the non-fruiting tree species.

**b. Arbor Day**

**i. STC Budget/event funds**

- 1. Mr. Strasko discussed the food truck that he was able to obtain for the event at a much lower cost than the previously discussed food truck, as well as trees for donation. Mr. Strasko also discussed demonstrating one tree planting for attendees like last year’s celebration, coordinating food truck pricing, and meeting with the food truck to ask follow-up questions from the committee.
- 2. Wisniewski asked questions about needing a contract for the food truck, drafting confirmation documents, and having a vegetarian option available.
- 3. STC members reviewed and discussed the menu provided from the food truck and agreed on which items to include on the menu, as well as the vegetarian options. Mr. Strasko made a motion to approve Grateful Dogs as their food truck option, and Wisniewski

seconded the motion. It was passed unanimously by voice vote to hire Grateful Dogs as the food truck for the Arbor Day event.

4. Hilbert briefly discussed tree locations with STC members. STC members agreed to have 2 separate tree species for planting, two-and-a-half-inch caliper trees, and flagged locations for planting.
5. Wisniewski discussed and clarified points for the event program including who would read the Arbor Day Proclamation. Romano stated that he would read the Proclamation, and Mr. Strasko stated that he would speak for the planting presentation. Wisniewski also clarified timing for lunch would be noon, adding logos to the program advertisement in the library's newsletter, and other materials and promotions. Ms. Strasko stated that she planned to print copies of the Good Landscaping Practices, any other planting guides, and the programs from Wisniewski.
6. Bellis offered his thanks to the STC members for their great work in the Township with street trees, evaluating park trees, and welcomed the new member, Sandi Bush.
7. STC members discussed the budget in more detail and discussed timing of the Township's annual budget meetings, grants available, grant services that the Township already subscribes to, using a budget template, and the line-item procedure for specific line items in the Township's general fund. Ms. Strasko informed members that Township budget discussions usually occur in October every year.

**c. Membership/Newsletters/Publicity**

- i. STC members discussed timing for the quarterly newsletter articles and deadlines for finishing information to include in each edition. Wisniewski and Bush discussed Bush taking over newsletter articles, a topic list for the future, and articles to include for the August newsletter.
- ii. STC members agreed to include the logo winner, a brief explanation of the new tree ordinance, and a third topic for the August newsletter.
- iii. Bush discussed her ideas for newsletter articles including tree guides, native versus ornamental tree species, biodiversity, and services that the Penn State Extension provides.

**d. Champion Trees**

- i. Wisniewski discussed having Aaron Greenberg, lead arborist for PA Big Trees website to virtually attend an STC meeting to train the group on how measure and score trees for the website.

- ii. STC members discussed having Greenberg attend the May or June meeting for training, the overall length of the training lasting about 30 minutes, and Ms. Strasko scheduling with Greenberg.
- iii. Ms. Strasko stated that she would email Greenberg to try and schedule him for the May or June STC meeting.

**e. Bamboo Disposal Week**

- i. STC members discussed logistics of the bamboo collection, including a dumpster at Hartley Avenue yard waste location for root collection, that the Berks Street yard waste location accepts bamboo canes, but the roots need to be separated.
- ii. STC members confirmed with Township staff that the collection dates are June 10,12,14,15, and 16<sup>th</sup>. Ms. Strasko stated that she would coordinate the dumpster drop off with Zach Trexler, the Trash and Recycling Coordinator.

**4. New Business**

**a. Logo Contest Decision**

- i. STC members reviewed all logos submitted for the contest that was advertised in the newsletter and social media. The members discussed their top choices and all four members had selected the same logo in their top two.
- ii. Once all members agreed on the logo winner, STC members discussed having the signed release form for the use of the winners' art, asking for the raw file to be able to edit the shading of the text in the logo, inviting the winner to Arbor Day to present the logo and a prize, as well as sending letters and ribbons to the other participants who submitted logos. Ms. Strasko stated that she would email the winner and work with STC members to mail letters and certificates or ribbons to the honorable mention participants.

**b. Palmer Days Participation**

- i. STC members discussed with Ms. Strasko and Hilbert about set up for Palmer Days, other committee participants, rotating committee presence in the Township's tent, timing of events, and possibly reserving a day or having a choice in which day of the event that STC can be present for high foot traffic. STC members discussed attending either Friday or Saturday if they can choose.
- ii. STC members also discussed other events, who to coordinate with for materials at Palmer Days such as a poster and hand-out materials, and what may be needed for the PA Big Trees outreach. Ms. Strasko discussed the poster she made for MS4 that was on display at Palmer Days last year

and stated that she would share the information for poster size and design with Wisniewski.

**c. Arborist Recommendations: Old Orchard Park Tree Management**

- i. STC members discussed the background of the park, Ms. Strasko explained resident complaints regarding large pine trees around the edge of the park and STC members reviewed the Arborists' recommendations.
- ii. Wisniewski asked about a planting or landscape plan for the entire park. STC members also discussed that trees should be removed, and the elevation of residences compared to the park.
- iii. Hilbert discussed the long-term plan for the park, planting placement along the bike path that runs through the park, and other insight for tree issues in the area. Ms. Strasko stated that she would ask who and how the STC could obtain a planting or landscape plan for the park.
- iv. Bush also asked about a total park plan. STC members discussed timeframe, expense, and using a multi-step process. STC members confirmed and agreed that the seven trees recommended for removal come out now, and the rest will be removed once there is a replating plan moving forward.
- v. STC members also discussed replacement protocol with Hilbert and Ms. Strasko. Township staff discussed replacing trees one for one and possibly replacing them with more in the future.
- vi. STC members also discussed species documentation for a planting plan, moving planting locations into a buffer area around the park. STC members asked Ms. Strasko to determine the cost of removals for all pine trees in the park buffer.

**5. Reports**

**a. Board of Supervisors**

- i. There was nothing to report.

**b. Tree City USA/Grant trees available**

- i. Ms. Strasko stated that she had not heard anything yet about Tree City USA, and Wisniewski discussed grants to apply for in 2025 if funds are available.
- ii. STC members also discussed more information from the STC, how to inventory street trees, possibly planting locations, how it might work and if a summer volunteer would be able to work on the street tree inventory, and the need for plans moving forward. Mr. Strasko discussed the Arbor Day Foundation bulletin detailing how to complete a tree inventory. STC members discussed possibly working with an eagle scout troop, high schoolers or college students who might be interested in helping, and any

liability that may be associated with having older students assist in an inventory.

**c. STC member updates**

- i. Romano discussed replanting trees on Southwood Drive and possibly interviewing tree contractors to get residents deals on tree maintenance work.
- ii. STC members also discussed how the permit and violation process works in the Township. Ms. Strasko explained to the best of her knowledge that when the code department is notified of a violation or sees it occurring, they send a letter to the homeowner, and they also track the permit process with the permit coordinator. STC clarified that they will be the entity approving or denying a tree permit, and that the Township staff would be responsible for following up and tracking the permit from there.

**6. Public Comment**

- a. A member of the public (Fossa-340 Crescent Drive) asked how stumps are ground with underground utilities. STC members discussed and explained that when stumps are ground and removed, they only grind down a few inches in the soil.

**7. For the Good of the Order**

- a. Ms. Strasko discussed an item that was brought up at the Township staff meeting by the Fire Commissioner asking to be involved in street tree placement to access homes in an emergency.

**8. Next meeting: May 2, 2024**

**9. Adjournment**

- a. Wisniewski made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Bush seconded. The meeting was adjourned by unanimous voice vote at 9:50PM.