

Palmer Township, Northampton County

Shade Tree Commission Meeting Minutes

May 2, 2024, 6:30PM, 3 Weller Pl, Lower-Level Municipal Meeting Room

1. Roll Call

- a. Present: Paul Strasko, Shannon Wisniewski, Patrick Romano, Lee Hilbert, and Paige Strasko.
- b. Absent: Sandi Bush
- c. The meeting was called to order at 6:31PM.

2. Approval of Meeting Minutes from April 4, 2024

- a. Romano made a motion to approve the minutes from April 4, 2024, and Mr. Strasko seconded. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

3. Old Business

a. Tree Ordinance

i. Permit fees and operations

- 1. Wisniewski provided STC members with her comments on agenda items prior to the meeting. Wisniewski asked if there were any questions, concerns or elaborations from the group on her comments. Romano and Wisniewski briefly discussed permit fees, violation fees, and the need for STC members to be present when the Board of Supervisors (BoS) have a tree item on their agenda to stay updated on any changes that are made and brought up the change in fines for the street tree ordinance from \$10,000 to \$1,000.
- 2. Romano briefly discussed a conversation he had with Danny Nicolo at the Arbor Day Celebration and Nicolo's past experiences with the Code Department in court cases.
- 3. STC members also discussed Solicitor Oetinger's suggestions of adding a restitution clause for repayment of street trees being removed illegally without a permit and its' location within the ordinance being section nine. Wisniewski suggested adding "replacement of the value of the tree" to the ordinance to make cost relative to size/age of the tree removed without a permit and that Oetinger should determine final wording. Wisniewski also asked if this would take place the same night as Appendix A update on May 20, 2024, and Ms. Strasko stated that she would follow up with Oetinger to find out.

ii. Notice to Tree Service Providers

- 1. Romano asked if notification was sent out to service providers and Ms. Strasko confirmed.

2. Mr. Strasko asked if they could include an insert with the utility bills for homeowner notification and Ms. Strasko explained that they could, but they already missed the timing to include a letter with utility bills, and she explained that roughly 35-40% of residents use express BillPay and do not receive a paper copy of their bill in the mail. STC members and Ms. Strasko discussed utility bill timing, printing and delivering letters to the utility mailing service, doing a separate mailing service for residents, and types of communications including social media, the Township website, and future utility mailing services.
3. STC members and Ms. Strasko discussed mailings in detail including the cost of a separate mailing service, issues with the post office and mail delivery, as well as timing to send out a mailing notification to residents prior to the August newsletter and Palmer Days.

iii. Updated Tree List

1. Wisniewski asked if anyone had any comments. Seeing that there were none, the group continued to the next item.

iv. May 20 BOS presentation

1. STC members discussed presenting the restitution clause to the BoS, the updated tree species list and what changes were made, updating the permit fee, and recommending sending a notification letter to all residents in Palmer about the changes with the new street tree ordinance.

b. Arbor Day Recap

- i. Wisniewski discussed three separate conversations she had with residents on Arbor Day regarding grower and planter information for residential trees and she stated that she cannot advise but could share the information from the event program that had a list of PA nurseries and planters who would be able to help point them in the right direction.
- ii. Wisniewski also discussed the benefits of the library recruiting families and the importance of their contacts because the STC did not have much recruitment outside of the library staff's efforts. Wisniewski also discussed other ways to catch residents' attention about the event and having it planned for a Saturday in 2025. Strasko mentioned yard signs that the ESC did for Earth Day that helped recruit more participants for their event. STC members also discussed having food trucks again, how to grow advertisement of the event, involving elementary schools, and other children's groups, and sharing materials through the school district.

c. Membership/Newsletters/Publicity

- i. STC members discussed the newsletter draft for August and suggested adding the Penn State Extension link to the website and all agreed to submit the drafts for inclusion in the August newsletter.

d. Champion Trees- meeting with Aaron Greenberg

- i. Wisniewski discussed creating a poster for the Champion Trees program display at Palmer Days. Ms. Strasko stated that she would share information with Wisniewski about how she made a poster display for stormwater information at Palmer Days last year.

e. Bamboo Disposal Week

- i. STC members briefly discussed the bamboo disposal event coming up in June, what was needed and if the STC members needed to do anything else. Ms. Strasko stated that she was working with the Trash and Recycling coordinator for a dumpster rental and the Fire Commissioner was already aware of the event and on board for disposal.
- ii. STC members and Hilbert discussed the differences between Japanese knotweed and bamboo.

f. Palmer Days Participation

- i. Wisniewski and Ms. Strasko briefly discussed posters, as well as supplies left over from Arbor Day. Ms. Strasko stated that they would need to order more stickers from Arbor Day to have for Palmer Days. Wisniewski asked for 300 stickers, or 75 packages of four.
- ii. STC members also briefly discussed a display for the table space they can use.

4. New Business

a. Arborist Recommendations: Old Orchard Park Tree Management

i. Recreation Board Partnership

1. Ms. Strasko discussed budgeting for the planting plan and removal, as well as a pause on stump removal for the seven trees that were already removed and explained that the Township's tree contractor could not safely remove the stumps due to the slope of the hill.
2. STC members, Ms. Strasko and Hilbert discussed ADA planning in all the Township parks, stepwise planning for all park aspects, and attending a Recreation Board meeting to introduce themselves and to discuss operations and costs of a planting or landscaping plan.
3. STC members also discussed what was included with the grant that was received for an ADA assessment, what the Recreation Board's scope is as a volunteer board, if the ADA updates would include landscaping, and finding out more about the general grant requirements for the ADA plans.

ii. Park Master Plan

1. Ms. Strasko stated that she was striking this from the agenda because she misspoke about a master plan for the parks and confused it with the ADA assessment.

b. 1114 Whitehall Avenue Tree

- i. Ms. Strasko discussed recent communication she had with a resident regarding a tree that was scheduled for removal prior to adoption of the new street tree ordinance. Ms. Strasko explained that the homeowner claims she had a survey done and the tree in question is not on her property, but it is growing in the power lines. Met-Ed refuses to come out and STC members agreed to remove the tree if it is within the Township's right-of-way.
- ii. STC members, Ms. Strasko, and Hilbert briefly investigated on google maps to find the tree in question. STC members also discussed right-of-way distances and other trees in the area. Ms. Strasko stated that she would work with Public Works and Parks to determine whether the tree was within the right-of-way or not.

5. Reports

a. Board of Supervisors

- i. There was nothing to report from the BoS.

b. Tree City USA/Grant trees available

i. USDA package requirements and next steps

1. Wisniewski stated that the USDA grant was not available.

ii. DCNR package requirements and next steps

1. Wisniewski discussed that she met with a PA urban forester and that they have reserved money for community forestry, that they are willing to help, and Wisniewski will check back in July.

iii. Event grants and next steps

1. Ms. Strasko briefly discussed the Delaware and Lehigh National Heritage Corridor event grant she obtained for the ESC's Earth Day event and that the same grant could be obtained for Arbor Day if the event is held close enough to a bike trail. STC members briefly discussed possible locations for the Arbor Day event.

iv. Tree Pennsylvania

1. Wisniewski discussed the possibility of applying for a Community Conservation Partnership Program (C2P2) grant but that it would be time intensive, a third-party contract would be needed, and it could be a win-win for everyone to have help from a third-party expert.

c. Stumps, Proposed Removals, Maintenance

- i.** Wisniewski and Romano discussed how they were formatting the stump spreadsheet to share with the Code Department and that they would like to meet again to discuss the list and provide any clarifications on their vision of the procedure moving forward.
- ii.** Wisniewski and Romano also discussed using Google Sheets to share with everyone, the communication procedure moving forward, and discussing the process with Codes.
- iii.** Wisniewski stated that she will finish the draft and discuss with Ms. Strasko to find another meeting time.

6. Public Comment

- a.** There was no one present from the public to comment.

7. For the Good of the Order

- a.** Romano discussed the parcel of land on Greenwood Ave that is now Township property and that he will be working with the Code Department to enforce the stump removal of trees near Hartley Ave and Greenwood Ave. Romano also discussed the school district's property along Greenwood Ave closer to the bridge over Route 22.
- b.** STC members also discussed the homes being built off Greenwood Ave at length.

8. Next meeting: June 6, 2024

9. Adjournment

- a.** Wisniewski made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Romano seconded. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote and the meeting was adjourned at 8:25PM.