

Palmer Township, Northampton County

Shade Tree Commission Meeting Minutes

March 7, 2024, 6:30PM, Municipal Building Lower-Level Meeting Room

1. Roll Call

- a. Present: Paul Strasko, Shannon Wisniewski, Patrick Romano, Sandi Bush, Paige Strasko, Lee Hilbert, and William Oetinger over the phone.
- b. The meeting was called to order at 6:37PM.

2. Approval of Minutes from February 20, 2024

- a. Wisniewski made a motion to approve the minutes from February 20, 2024, and Romano seconded. The minutes were passed unanimously by voice vote.

3. Old Business

a. Tree Ordinance Updates

- i. Oetinger attended the meeting by phone to answer questions and discuss revisions with STC members. Wisniewski asked clarifying questions about section three, points ii and iii and how they are separate or related to point three in the ordinance, discussing possible scenarios where tree roots may affect underground utilities. After discussion about the ordinance revisions to allow for permitted tree removal if roots are interfering with underground utilities, STC members agreed to accept the changes.
- ii. Wisniewski had other legal questions for Oetinger related to penalties and violations of the ordinance, if service providers receive penalties, and notifying contractors by mail of the ordinance advertisement and adoption in the future. Oetinger stated that the penalties would be determined by whose name is listed on the permit and that it would ultimately come back to the property owner.
- iii. STC members asked clarifying questions about pending ordinance legislation. Oetinger explained that different ordinances have different requirements, and that the tree ordinance without any zoning provisions will only need to be advertised once. Oetinger also stated that the ordinance would be able to be adopted on April 1 and become effective April 6 if the Supervisors did not have any other revisions.

b. Arbor Day

- i. Wisniewski asked clarifying legal questions of Oetinger related to compensation for goods that are made for Arbor Day, and if the STC logo prize could be monetary. Oetinger stated that the logo contest prize could be monetary, and that compensation of goods for a Township employee could be a gift card rather than cash.
- ii. STC members also discussed handouts for the event including crochet acorns, stickers, magnets, and educational pamphlets. Mr. Strasko discussed who would be donating trees to plant since Palmer Nursery will only donate container trees. Hilbert mentioned purchasing trees from

Northern Nursey that have been used in the past. Mr. Strasko and Hilbert also discussed loosely digging holes for the planting demonstration before Arbor Day, and using shovels for the demonstration so homeowners can understand what they will need to do to plant a tree at home.

- iii. Wisniewski and Mr. Strasko discussed food trucks, and meeting with a truck Mr. Strasko found to ask some clarifying questions such as availability, if there is a minimum fee or deposit, if they have any vegan options that is not a salad, and what route to take if the food truck is not available. Mr. Strasko and Wisniewski decided to coordinate a time to meet with a possible food truck to determine the answers to the discussed questions.
- iv. STC members also discussed program changes including the library program starting at 10:30am for young children, having a Township staff member do an Arbor Day introduction, inviting the Supervisors for their support, asking Kistler to speak through the tree planting demonstration again. Hilbert was to confirm the holes to dig and that the species of trees to plant were acceptable to the Public Works and Parks Departments.
- v. Wisniewski discussed a meeting with library staff that she had the previous week, three different adult program ideas that library staff and she had discussed including working with PAZA to do a program where you talk to trees and the trees talk back, having a vendor fair for tree service providers, or having an adult craft centered around trees. STC members discussed the benefits and drawbacks of each option and agreed that with the timeline for the event, and the current unknowns of the other two options, the best choice was the adult craft for event participants.
- vi. STC members discussed supplies needed for the craft, such as table space, supplies to craft with, coordination with the Community Center staff for supplies such as a tent, an AV system, podium, table(s) for display materials prior to the planting demonstration. Ms. Strasko stated that she would coordinate with Community Center Staff.

c. Membership/Newsletters/Publicity

- i. Wisniewski discussed the state tree article she wrote and formatted for the quarterly newsletter that is a full page. Wisniewski also discussed her ideas of a full page for advertising that would include the vacancy on the STC, as well as an update for the bamboo collection week. All STC members agreed that once Wisniewski was finished formatting the advertisements, both would be acceptable to include in the newsletter.

d. Champion Trees

- i. Wisniewski briefly discussed the need to schedule a time with program coordinator Aaron Greenberg, arranging a time, obtaining a range-finder, training that may be needed to use the range-finder, and discussed asking Greenberg to propose available dates he would have for training STC members.

e. Bamboo Disposal Week

- i.** Ms. Strasko, STC members, and Hilbert discussed communications received so far, the possibility of two dumpsters of bamboo being dropped off, discussing protocol with Fire Commissioner Gallagher, if the Palmer Fire Department would only burn the roots, or if the whole bamboo plant would be burned.
- ii.** STC members also discussed confirming the dates of the collection week, what to include in the newsletter publication, coordinating a dumpster for root collections with the Trash and Recycling Coordinator Zach Trexler, and the drop off restrictions at the Hartley Avenue center.

4. New Business

a. Logo Contest Discussion

- i.** In addition to the brief discussion with Oetinger, STC members also discussed incorporating language on the release form for logo use on social media.
- ii.** STC members discussed the timeline for submission, what members wanted to ask of the winner that will be chosen including what their inspiration was and inviting them to Arbor Day. STC members decided to add the contest winner to the Arbor Day program and want to announce the winner after reading the Arbor Day Proclamation.
- iii.** STC members also discussed what would be considered an appropriate prize and decided to purchase a \$25 Visa gift card, as well as giving the winner a tree book from the Arbor Day Foundation that Wisniewski had previously purchased for personal use. Ms. Strasko stated that she would purchase the tree book and the gift card for the STC members.

b. STC Budget/event funds

- i.** Ms. Strasko and STC members discussed the current budget Wisniewski had drafted for Arbor Day and Palmer Days, planning for budget items, and what money is available now.
- ii.** Ms. Strasko explained that the STC and ESC are sharing a line item for community events and there are more definitive budget discussions and planning annually in October. Ms. Strasko stated that the Township will support the committee for the event and will continue to have budget planning discussions for Palmer Days in the future.

c. Palmer Days Participation

- i.** STC members discussed the recent Supervisors meeting where an ESC member proposed merging the two committees together. STC members discussed working more with the ESC in the future but did not think that merging the two committees would be beneficial. Wisniewski discussed the major differences in the two committees and although there are similar goals, the main mission of each committee is too different to consider merging.

- ii. Ms. Strasko discussed the staff’s proposed idea of rotating committee members on different nights at Palmer Days to save space in the tent and assured the group that she would still advocate for any materials or initiatives they wanted to keep at the Township’s informational table.
- iii. STC members discussed having a poster board display with key points of the STC and the Champion tree program including benefits of a tree, having residents participate in a thumb-print canvas painting. Wisniewski discussed her meeting with a local artist to paint the trunk of the thumb-print tree, and other budget items including easels for displays, printing costs, and how to save on artist costs by partnering with a high school or middle school student to paint the trunk of the thumb-print canvas.

5. Reports

a. Board of Supervisors

- i. Ms. Strasko summarized with STC members that the ordinance would be in front of the board with the agreed revisions on Monday, March 18 for authorization to advertise.
- ii. STC members also discussed how to organize street tree information, where to plant more street trees, assessing sites based on utilities present, and ways to manage the information available.

b. Tree City USA/Grant trees available

- i. MS. Strasko stated that she had not heard back on the Tree City designation for 2023 yet.
- ii. Wisniewski discussed grant updates and shared that there was nothing yet but planning for grant funding in 2025 or 2026 may be the best route. Wisniewski also mentioned that the organization Ten Million Trees has not responded yet, and the STC is not eligible for the other programs she was researching. The only option left for the group to pursue currently are grants from USDA.

c. STC member Updates

- i. Ms. Strasko shared that Sandi Bush in the audience had recently been interviewed by the Supervisors and will be officially appointed at the next Supervisors meeting.
- ii. STC members asked Bush questions about herself, background, and interests. Bush explained that she has always liked trees and discussed the benefits of trees to combating climate change.

6. Public Comment

- a. There were no other comments from the public.

7. For the Good of the Order

- a. Romano asked how enforcement of the new ordinance would work moving forward and Ms. Strasko stated that that would be an internal staff discussion of responsibilities.
- b. Wisniewski also stated that it was her one-year anniversary of being a member of the STC.

8. Next meeting: April 4, 2024

9. Adjournment

- a. Mr. Strasko made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Romano seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned by unanimous voice vote at 9:11PM.