

Palmer Township, Northampton County

July 11, 2023, 5:30PM, Municipal Training Room, 3 Weller Pl

Shade Tree Commission Ordinance Meeting Minutes

1. Roll Call

- a. Present: Shannon Wisnewski, Paul Strasko, Ellen Murgolo, Patrick Romano, and Secretary Paige Strasko.
- b. Absent: Michael Brett.
- c. The meeting was called to order at 5:54PM

2. Draft Ordinance Discussion

- a. Wisnewski displayed the draft ordinance on the television screen for all members to follow along with the comments and discussion. Members discussed the definition of shade tree versus street tree, why there was a need for a distinction between the two, and if the right-of-way or park trees needed to be specified in the new ordinance. Members discussed having a list of approved evergreen species in the tree list suitable for planting and edited the ordinance to include all types of trees, not just deciduous.
- b. Murgolo and Wisnewski discussed adding a provision for trees of significance, which could be a certain species or old age tree that is protected because of its historical significance or value to the community.
- c. STC members discussed if the ordinance would be retroactive for tree planting, whether that was legally possible, and how that would be enforceable without a record of previous tree planting. Ms. Strasko stated that ordinances could not be retroactive, and the Township Solicitor would have the final revision of the draft to ensure that all provisions are legally enforceable.
- d. STC members added a provision in the ordinance that would give them the power to remove existing tree stumps.
- e. Wisnewski pointed out terms that were used in the ordinance but not defined, such as flush cuts, lien, and discussed terminology for existing tree, permit, planting strip, tree maintenance, and how to title the list of tree species acceptable for planting for reference within the ordinance. STC members and Ms. Strasko discussed size requirements for tree replanting, and how to add a provision that would give precedence to the species list in the Tree Ordinance over the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance (SALDO). Ms. Strasko stated that the Township Solicitor would be the most appropriate person to add a provision giving one ordinance precedence over the other.
- f. Wisnewski discussed the formatting of the ordinance and how the format should be adjusted for clarity and residential understanding. Wisnewski and other members also discussed changing section titles for clarity. Members discussed a highlighted section regarding plan reviews and the SALDO, and Ms. Strasko explained that the section was highlighted for review with the Planning Director

and Township Solicitor for alignment with the current SALDO and other Township ordinances.

- g.** STC members also discussed the permitting process, and who would oversee inspections, removal permits, and the current Township process for building permit reviews and inspections. Ms. Strasko stated that she had a rough outline and understanding of the process, but she would need to speak with the Permit Clerk to better explain the process to committee members.
- h.** STC members also discussed if the ordinance could be separated into different sections so that regulations for homeowners were not in the same section as regulations for developers. Ms. Strasko again stated that the Solicitor would be able to answer that question.
- i.** Commission members also discussed what information should be included on the permit application, such as having instructions for residents to perform a PA One Call prior to any tree planting or earth disturbance activities and requiring inspections during the removal and replanting process.
- j.** STC members asked Ms. Strasko to inquire if the permit language should or would include language to require replanting.
- k.** Commission members also discussed the permit tracking process, how the permitting review schedule would work with the schedule of monthly meetings, the importance of appointing a designee for completion of permit tasks, and the need for someone who is a certified arborist or tree care specialist to assist Commission members and Township staff in ordinance enforcement and determinations.
- l.** Members finally discussed a two-step authentication process for tree evaluation and removal of diseased trees, and having a list of certified arborists or tree specialists for residents contact when they need street tree work completed.
- m.** Wisniewski and Romano also commented on Ms. Strasko's question from a previous meeting regarding the Township paying for street tree removal, and stated that they felt the Township would stop paying for removal as soon as the draft tree ordinance is adopted.

3. Next meeting: July 31, 2023.

4. Adjournment

- a.** The meeting was adjourned at 9:32PM.