

**Palmer Township, Northampton County**

**Shade Tree Commission Meeting Minutes**

**February 20, 2024, 5:00PM, 3 Weller Pl, Upper-Level Training Room**

**1. Roll Call**

- a. Present: Shannon Wisniewski, Paul Strasko, Patrick Romano, William Oetinger, and Paige Strasko.
- b. The meeting was called to order at 5:12PM.

**2. Approval of Meeting Minutes from January 4, 2024**

- a. Wisniewski asked that Ms. Strasko clarify point 3.C.ii in the draft minutes from January 4, 2024, to state that the STC needs Supervisor approval for the Champion Tree program, and Ms. Strasko confirmed that she would make those changes.
- b. Wisniewski made a motion to approve the minutes with the discussed change, and Mr. Strasko seconded the motion. The minutes were passed unanimously by voice vote.

**3. Old Business**

**a. Reorganization**

- i. Ms. Strasko asked the group to confirm that they would like to keep the same positions since they had just voted for Vice Chair in December. All members agreed and unanimously decided to keep Mr. Strasko as the Chairman, and Wisniewski as the Vice Chairman.

**b. Tree Ordinance Updates**

- i. Oetinger, the Township solicitor, was present to discuss ordinance revisions and answer STC member questions about the ordinance. Wisniewski stated that she commented and responded to comments on the ordinance in the word document tracked changes.
- ii. STC members discussed multiple ordinance points with Oetinger including Code department comments related to permitted activities for tree removal, vines on trees, clarification of using an arborist on a case-by-case basis, using permit fees collected to pay for an arborist when needed, removing sections that reference the Zoning Ordinance, the internal permit process, reformatting the permit application form to reflect changes to the ordinance, who else would need to review the permit application, and the extent of stump grinding that tree companies usually complete.
- iii. Romano asked Oetinger and other STC members about a hypothetical scenario involving a resident declining the Township's notice to remove or maintenance request paying for their own arborist. STC members also discussed waiving permit fees for residents that are notified to remove dead or diseased trees, and processes for homeowner removal notifications. Oetinger discussed revisions for the maintenance section of

the ordinance. STC members agreed if someone is appealing a tree removal, the appellant would pay for an arborist to review.

- iv. STC members discussed the tree species list in the current Subdivision and Land Development ordinance for the Township, and the differences between the species list referenced in the current draft ordinance as Appendix A. Wisniewski discussed the Township arborist's review of the species list, origins of the draft list for Appendix A, and revisions that would need to be made, adding any species that were missed, choosing the right tree for the right place and conditions, and the opportunity to comment on species for development landscaping plans that are submitted until the ordinance is adopted, finalized or codified.
- v. Wisniewski and Oetinger discussed sections in the current Shade Tree Commission ordinances that need to be revised including sections 32-5, 32-8, 32-9, and 32-10, as well as clarification on the current Weeds ordinance in Chapter 186.
- vi. STC members asked Ms. Strasko why the code has not been updated yet and how the e-code website worked. Ms. Strasko stated that she would discuss with Brenda DeGerolamo as to the timing of code updates on the Township website.
- vii. STC members discussed with Oetinger the timing and legality of advertising the ordinance and the process that is required for adoption. Mr. Strasko asked if all members of the STC were happy with the ordinance revisions and asked for a motion to accept. Wisniewski made a motion to send the ordinance with revisions to the Board of Supervisors (BoS), and Romano seconded. The motion was passed unanimously by voice vote.
- viii. Wisniewski asked about presenting and discussing the ordinance with the Supervisors and Ms. Strasko discussed a tree benefit presentation she was asked to do and that the STC members could discuss the bulk of the ordinance or review main points. Oetinger further clarified advertising requirements and BoS review of the ordinance. Ms. Strasko clarified the timing to finish her presentation as well, and asked STC members to share sources to include more information related to tree benefits. STC members closed the item by deciding that all items the group wanted to present to the BoS should be on the same night, and they would plan on attending the March 4, 2024, BoS meeting. Oetinger left to attend the Supervisor's meeting.

**c. Arbor Day**

- i. Mr. Strasko updated the group that he spoke with Palmer Nursery to donate two trees for Arbor Day, and he had been in contact with a food truck. Mr. Strasko also stated that Palmer Nursery did not have the original species the group had agreed on. STC members discussed alternative species including sweet bay magnolia, tulip poplar little volunteer cultivar, and the Corinthian White double flowering peach tree that does not bear

any fruit. STC members agreed that Mr. Strasko would check on species availability from Palmer Nursery and ask for a list of what is available if they could not obtain any of the three alternates.

- ii. Wisniewski discussed planning updates related to event programming with the library, that she had visited one of the library's recent preschooler programs and that they usually get good community turn out, and that the library staff stated they will begin advertising the event on March 1, 2024.
- iii. Wisniewski also discussed the event starting at 10:30AM for preschoolers, having the proclamation reading at 11AM, like 2023's program, having a tree planting demonstration, having food and drink available through a food truck, and library staff having further activities related to trees and Arbor Day for attendees to participate in after lunch.
- iv. Mr. Strasko asked if Public Works planned on planting trees with heavy equipment again and asked if they would be able to plant the two trees with shovels. Ms. Strasko stated that she would confirm with Kistler if planting holes could be pre-dug for the event.
- v. STC members also discussed adult programming from the library for Arbor Day, information on tree care, maintenance, and proper planting, having a podium for the proclamation, a clipboard for residents interested in joining the STC to provide contact information, other educational handouts the group could purchase, budget items such as books to handout and t-shirts, as well as food truck planning and cost. STC members decided not to purchase t-shirts, but rather to purchase stickers, magnets, and other educational or Arbor Day materials.

#### **4. New Business**

##### **a. Annual Report**

- i. Wisniewski and Romano discussed some minor revisions that they wanted to make to the language in the annual report, and then it would be finalized.
- ii. Mr. Strasko asked who was presenting the annual report to the BoS, and Romano stated that he would.

##### **b. Plan Review**

###### **i. 537 Milford St Resubmission**

- 1. STC members briefly reviewed what the plans included previously, and what changes were made for the resubmission. STC members noticed that new notes were added to the revised plans and most of their previous comments were addressed on the landscaping plans related to burlap removal, tree species, and conservation of existing trees.
- 2. STC members agreed to comment that the species changes were acceptable, and that the additional two trees in the parking lot were appreciated.

**ii. First Park 33 Revisions**

1. STC members reviewed the letter and updated plans for First Park 33 on Newlins Mill Road and found that the main changes were numbers of each species and locations. STC members also discussed robust buffer plantings, the intent of Jamie Collins previous comments, and if any changes were necessary.
2. STC members unanimously decided that the changes were acceptable and asked Ms. Strasko to coordinate with Langan Engineering to let them know their changes were acceptable.

**5. Reports**

**a. Board of Supervisors**

- i. There was nothing to add from the Supervisor's for this meeting.

**b. Tree City USA/Grant Trees Available**

- i. Ms. Strasko stated that the application for 2023 was submitted and she is waiting to hear back from the Arbor Day Foundation on the determination.

**c. STC member updates**

- i. Romano shared that he is adding to the stump removal list and briefly discussed his ideas for replanting trees and areas that would benefit from tree planting.
- ii. Wisniewski also discussed street tree grant research she has completed through USDA, Bartlett Tree Service, and PP&L Electric. Wisniewski also discussed that she has not received a reply from Ten Million Trees yet, and that her idea for the next newsletter article was to highlight Pennsylvania's state tree. STC members agreed on the newsletter topic.

**6. Public Comment**

- a. There was no public present to comment.

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

- a. Wisniewski discussed a recent discussion with her neighbor that has seen Tree City USA signs around the Township and was asking her clarifying questions about the program.

**8. Next Meeting: March 7, 2024**

**9. Adjournment**

- a. Mr. Strasko made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Romano seconded. The motion was passed unanimously by voice vote, and the meeting was adjourned at 8:45PM.