

Palmer Township, Northampton County

Shade Tree Commission Meeting Minutes

September 25, 2023, 6:30PM, 3 Weller Pl, Lower-Level Municipal Building

1. Roll Call

- a. Present: Paul Strasko, Shannon Wisniewski, Patrick Romano, Scott Kistler, and Paige Strasko.
- b. Absent: Ellen Murgolo and Michael Brett.
- c. The meeting was called to order at 6:31PM.

2. Approval of meeting minutes from August 28, 2023

- a. Wisniewski asked to clarify the tree inventory under the item Trees of Significance from the August 28 minutes so that it was understood that the ask was for Kistler to investigate the effort, cost, timing, and output of a tree inventory for the Township while Mr. Strasko was investigating grant funding for a tree inventory.
- b. Wisniewski made a motion to accept the minutes from August 28, 2023, and Romano seconded. The motion was passed by unanimous voice vote.

3. Old Business

a. Bamboo

- i. Ms. Strasko discussed the newsletter deadline and the document from Wisniewski regarding the bamboo ordinance and a collection event for publication in the November newsletter. Wisniewski also discussed the updated bamboo disposal guide.
- ii. Wisniewski clarified for the group that there is not a zero-tolerance bamboo policy, residents are allowed to have bamboo on their private property, but it must be contained and cannot be planted on public property. Romano and Kistler discussed bamboo violations in the Township.
- iii. Committee members, Kistler, and Ms. Strasko discussed collection event logistics such as timing and length of collection, site for collection, timing of newsletter publications, timing of seasons for ease of collection and root removal, if bamboo would be collected indefinitely at yard waste facilities, clarification of collection procedures, burning bamboo roots with the Fire Commissioner, Yard Waste Facility acceptance and inspection processes, and the amount of bamboo that is growing in the Township. Kistler confirmed that bamboo is not a widespread problem in the Township.
- iv. Committee members decided to hold the collection event in June on an annual basis, if successful, at the Hartley Ave Yard Waste Center. The group also decided to advertise the bamboo collection in the upcoming November, February, and May Township newsletters.

- v. Wisniewski made a motion to hold the collection event on June 10, 12, 14, 15 and 16, 2024. Romano seconded the motion, and it was passed unanimously by voice vote.

b. Update Township tree planting standard construction documents

- i. Wisniewski stated that she sent an updated good landscaping document to the group incorporating comments from the previous meeting and briefly reviewed the changes. Wisniewski stated this was a final review to make sure that the group accepted all the changes.
- ii. Wisniewski stated what the intended use for the document is based on her understanding, which was as an appendix for the draft tree ordinance, a handout with the tree removal permits, and as an update to the current Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance (SALDO) to explain good landscaping practices. Ms. Strasko and committee members discussed the good landscaping practices document as the priority to review since there were multiple suggested uses for the document. Ms. Strasko stated that she would update everyone after her meeting with the Township Solicitor with next steps or recommendations.

4. New Business

a. Trees of Significance

- i. Ms. Strasko stated that she has not discussed specific species of significance with the current Township arborist, but that when discussing with the Planning Department, they recommended that the group research work in Bucks County with the County Audubon Society, working with the Nurture Nature Center in Easton and Wildlands Conservancy, and discussed ideas for historic tree celebrations when a tree of significance is identified. Ms. Strasko also mentioned that a historic tree celebration would be impactful as an Arbor Day celebration.
- ii. Wisniewski discussed the conversation she had with Historical Society Chairman, Ed Dean, and that the Historical Society has not focused on anything other buildings and homes for record. Wisniewski also discussed research from the Doylestown Environmental Advisory Council (EAC) that included a heritage tree program that is resident initiated, that trees of significance would most likely be separated from the draft ordinance, and that she was waiting to hear back from the EAC on the heritage tree recognition program and process.
- iii. Mr. Strasko stated that this item can be moved to Old Business, and Wisniewski discussed changes from the solicitor that would impact the committee's involvement with trees of significance, having some sort of protection for trees of significance, and possibilities of residents being responsible for their tree of significance.
- iv. Committee members agreed that they would need more information on the topic to move forward.

b. Freemansburg Ave Apartments Plan Review

- i. Committee members discussed the lack of a landscaping plan, what was planned for a stone retention wall on site, why site plans include an existing house that is not there, existing trees on the property and where they are in reference to the property line, variety of trees, possible planting locations after construction, trees for screening along the back property line, size of existing trees planned for removal, if all of the trees planned for removal were in the path of construction, property drainage patterns, tree requirements based on number of parking spaces, alternative stormwater runoff control methods, placement of the construction dumpster, number of apartment units proposed, location of utilities, and number of trees that should be planted to accommodate for those that are planned for removal.
- ii. Kistler and committee members discussed recommendations versus requirements, working with developers and other Township groups to replant trees, if the developer should be able to donate trees instead of planting on site, and making reasonable requests with the goal to roughly replace for the size of trees proposed for removal.
- iii. Ms. Strasko and Kistler finalized comments with committee members to include asking for a minimum of fifteen (15) trees planted on site to be a mix of the same six (6) species that were chosen for street tree replanting, suggesting planting locations after construction, a fully developed landscaping plan, that the trees proposed for removal must be replaced in some capacity, and the pine tree planned for removal outside of the construction zone should be preserved.

5. Reports

a. Board of Supervisors

- i. Ms. Strasko stated that she had not heard anything new from the Board liaison.

b. Tree City USA/Grant trees available

- i. Ms. Strasko stated that she did not find any grants specifically for tree inventories. Mr. Strasko discussed grant programs he found and organizations that are offering free trees including ten million trees.org, A Pennsylvania organization, grants from the Department of Natural Conservation and Resources (DCNR) that are not available until the third Tuesday in January, the National Wildlife Federation, Bartlett Tree Service, and free trees from PP&L Electric. Committee members discussed how to apply for and obtain trees through the various organizations that Mr. Strasko researched. Committee members also discussed funding sources, logistics of applications, qualifying groups that can apply for grants and free trees and organizing volunteer events to plant trees across the Township.

- ii. Wisniewski stated that the group should do more research into the organization and process of obtaining trees, and Ms. Strasko shared that she saw Ten Million Trees was mainly interested in larger projects that required twenty-five (25) trees or more. Wisniewski and Mr. Strasko discussed grant application processes, criteria to follow, and eligibility.
- iii. Ms. Strasko stated that the Township is still on track to reapply for Tree City USA at the end of the year. Kistler and Ms. Strasko discussed installing Tree City USA signs and a few proposed locations.

c. Street tree replanting

- i. Ms. Strasko updated committee members that the planting bid was awarded to Kiefer Nursery and there were only two residents that have come forward stating they do not want trees planted in the right-of-way in front of their home. Ms. Strasko stated that she was waiting on a start date from the contractor and that she, Kistler, the Township forester, and the awarded contractor are working together to move planting locations to Mill Race Park to ensure survival.
- ii. Romano asked clarifying questions about planting locations other than Township parks that mostly have a good number of trees. Ms. Strasko suggested that Romano make a list of places in the right-of-way that have space for more trees. Committee members, Ms. Strasko, and Kistler discussed some locations around the Township that could benefit from trees, if the STC would need a commercial property owner’s permission to plant in the right-of-way, and the process that the committee could follow to plant more trees in the right-of-way around the Township.
- iii. Kistler discussed Penn Pump Park as a possible area for planting and reforestation over-time through grants or donations. Kistler and committee members also discussed educating residents on the process and other plantings that could take place in the future. Committee members also discussed timing of grants, timing for planting, resident communication, and a list of locations that are lacking trees.

6. Public Comment

- a. There were no members of the public present to comment.

7. For the Good of the Order

- a. Romano asked Ms. Strasko to update the committee members on the solicitor’s comments for the draft tree ordinance.

8. Next meeting October 30, 2023

9. Adjournment

- a. Wisniewski made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Romano seconded. The motion was passed by unanimous voice vote and the meeting was adjourned at 8:36PM.