

**Palmer Township
Shade Tree Commission Meeting Minutes
September 26, 2022, 6:30PM at Palmer Township Municipal Building**

1. Roll Call

- a. The meeting called to order at 6:34PM.
- b. Present: Jamie Collins, Patrick Romano, Lee Hilbert, Scott Kistler, Paige Strasko
- c. Absent: Joseph Armato

2. Approval of Meeting Minutes from August 29, 2022

- a. Romano made a motion to approve the minutes which was seconded by Hilbert. The minutes passed by unanimous voice vote.

3. Old Business

- a. **Tree removal permits**
- b. Collins stated that the commission is still working on the permit process and will update on progress soon.
- c. **10 donated trees and 20 grant trees**
- d. Collins stated she would follow up with Cindy Kramer, no further updates. Collins also stated she spoke with Kramer in person but could not recall what they specifically discussed. Collins asked when Kramer will be leaving and Strasko, Kistler and Collins discussed personnel changes.
- e. **Where should residents dispose of bamboo?**
- f. Collins has not been able to do research on proper disposal of bamboo and asked if the township has had more problems with residents and bamboo. Kistler stated the same resident covered bamboo scraps with leaves for leaf collection, but the matter has been turned over to the codes officer, Dan Lichtenwalner, and he should be following up on the violation. Collins and Kistler discussed the resident's location.

4. New Business

- a. **Storm damaged trees**
- b. Strasko stated Jamie Paetzell had emailed stated residents were asking about what the Townships action would be on removing and replanting storm damaged trees. Collins asked if residents were looking to plant trees and Strasko clarified that she was asked what the Township would be doing about the trees and not that any residents were asking to plant trees. Kistler stated Paetzell told residents that it would be discussed with the Shade Tree Commission (STC) and that the STC would decide if storm damaged trees would be budgeted for in the future. Collins stated they could not answer that question without Armato's input.
- c. Collins also asked if the Township had received enough complaints to warrant a social media post telling residents to replant trees if the township cannot replace them quick enough. Kistler stated Collins or Strasko should draft a post if that was the direction the STC wanted to take. Collins, Kistler and Strasko discussed upholding Township policies, what trees had fallen, time taken to replace healthy fallen trees, and what to tell residents on replanting trees themselves.
- d. Romano interjected stating that a good portion of trees in his neighborhood of Old Orchard that were removed are not going to be planted back by the residents, especially if they paid to remove the tree. Kistler stated Public Works has already

removed all the right-of-way trees that were damaged from the storm in the end of August/beginning of September. Romano discussed writing an ordinance that requires residents to replant a tree if they remove one, but Kistler also reminded him that right-of-way trees are owned by the Township and are also on Township property.

- e. Collins discussed other Townships and the need to go through other ordinances but how it would be beneficial to tell residents they can replant a tree from the approved list. Romano agreed and discussed a specific residence that he has observed and how power lines have killed many trees on that specific block. Collins stated that she wants to encourage residents to plant their own trees since it may be up to five years before the Township can get to replacing storm damaged trees.
- f. Collins also mentioned that she was working on a post for social media to alert all residents about current tree removal and a STC introduction draft letter. Collins clarified that Township right-of-way is typically ten feet from the edge of pavement.
- g. **Update standard construction documents**
- h. Strasko stated that Tom Adams gave her a copy of Township standard construction documents for tree planting and wanted to know if the STC wanted to update the documents. Collins stated she would review them and make changes or recommendations. Collins and Romano discussed what the construction documents contained such as drawings and literature
- i. **Protocol for residential questions**
- j. Strasko stated that Township employees needed a protocol for residential questions received for STC members and how they would want to be notified of any questions or concerns received about trees and the most effective way to communicate with STC members. Collins agreed that any admin emails that come in for the STC should have members copied and the person who receives the email should tell the resident thank you for your question or concern, the STC members are copied on this email and will respond to your questions as soon as possible. Once they receive a resident question the members can decide who has the time to go out to the site and inspect and where to move from there.
- k. Collins also explained that she has a different protocol for personal business and some employees give out her personal phone number or her business card and that there are a growing number of people that have access to her personal phone number and call her for tree related problems.
- l. Collins then asked if the STC could have their own email account set up through the Township and Strasko stated she could find out for her, the only barrier would be that a Township employee may need to have access to the email to ensure data security. Collins also stated that Armato should be copied on emails that come through.
- m. Collins also stated if the STC could have business cards made with an email that it would be easier to leave them with residents or leave at their door if she is out in the neighborhood and someone is not home. Collins and Strasko agreed that might make residents feel more at ease having a direct line of contact. Kistler also stated that they may be able to set up an extension with a mailbox that residents

could call and leave messages. Strasko stated she will ask Williams and DeGerolamo about an email and an extension through the municipal phone number.

5. Additional new business

- a.** Romano stated he brought picture for a new dead tree he found on Crescent Dr. and Strasko stated that she will follow up to check that the added tree on Crescent Dr. was added to the removal list and ensure the residence receives a tree removal letter. Romano stated that he started gathering addresses and pictures of stumps that need to be removed around the Township. Collins stated Romano is her eyes and ears and he should also be looking for other problem areas. Collins and Romano discussed updating ordinances further and enforcement of those new ordinances. Collins also discussed being more proactive than reactive in the future. Collins mentioned to report any more diseased or dying trees to Kistler and Hilbert so they can be removed. Other safety measures were discussed such as hanging branches.
- b.** Collins also discussed draft letters she has been working on to introduce the STC and its' members as well as a letter to tell residents about tree removal, spray painting on trees and the homeowner's responsibility for tree care even if it is not technically their tree. Collins also discussed pruning of street trees and explaining to residents the right way to prune trees or ask them to wait until the Township prunes them.
- c.** Kistler asked if there was any word on new members that Collins or Romano knew of and Romano discussed that he has a new neighbor that used to work for Northampton County he has been asking to join the STC. Strasko stated she helped her father write a letter of interest that was sent to Armato over a month ago and her father has still not heard back from them. Collins stated she had not heard anything about new members and asked that it be added to Old Business for the next meeting.
- d.** Collins stated she also wanted to find out if the STC could have subcommittees with non-commission members to help move along other side projects. Collins gave the example of others looking for stumps, hanging tree branches, working on social media posts or letters to residents. Collins, Strasko and Kistler discussed who to ask to find out if the STC could have subcommittees and how that would work. Kistler also stated that the STC has a lot on their plate and many different things that they want to work on and how difficult that is for two people. Collins asked that subcommittees be added to Old Business for the next meeting as well. Kistler also asked about other recruitment tools and Collins stated that her introduction letter includes asking residents to come to meetings or join the STC and the process of joining the commission.
- e.** Strasko explained why her father would be a good fit for the STC and how he would help bridge a gap between developers/excavators and the STC. Collins also stated that it would be great to have other interested people help as well so that members are not joining for personal interests and then leaving when their problem is solved. Romano discussed how he thought of Palmer as a "gem" that needed to be protected.

- f.** Collins brought up that she never received any other questions from the Creek View Ct resident and Strasko checked her email to see if there was any email that was forwarded to Collins, but she was unable to find any documentation. Strasko stated she would ask the receptionist about the resident's questions and recalled that it was a face-to-face interaction. Strasko stated she would follow up with Collins on who spoke with the resident and if he has any remaining questions. Romano added how important communication is with residents and that they need an efficient form of communication and professionalism.
- g.** Collins asked if Strasko could add committee names to the STC letterhead as a footer. Strasko stated they might want to wait until they have a full committee and Romano agreed stating that Collins's name was enough for now. Strasko also stated that the letter is very official with Collins's identification numbers for her certifications. Collins stated she would like to be asked permission before new letters are sent out with her electronic signature to ensure they are up to date and so there is a paper trail of her consent to the letters. Kistler asked for an electronic copy of the STC letters for his records as well. Collins and Strasko stated that the letter asked residents to steward their tree spot.
- h.** Kistler asked about posting the social media letter and Strasko stated she could remove dates from tree removals. Collins stated she was working on a generalized version of the letter for social media to post that wasn't specific to a residence.
- i.** Romano asked about the schedule for the replanting stage but Collins and Kistler stated there was not currently a plan in place. Kistler stated the STC needed to determine a plan for the budget in 2023 and if the STC thinks they could get all 150 trees replanted in 2023 or if it will take longer to replace trees or also complete the replant in phases. Collins asked if Armato should also be involved in that conversation or if she should present him with a number that will be needed for the budget. Kistler explained that tree removals are coming out of his budget and if Collins wanted to keep continuity, she could give him tree budget numbers and the direction she wanted to go.
- j.** Romano, Collins and Kistler discussed planting plans, budgeting, and timing of plantings to ensure that trees are replanted in a timely manner. Kistler stated he would need tree budget numbers in the next two weeks for the budget meetings coming up in October. Romano asked about species of trees that would be planted and Collins discussed choosing species for under utility lines versus not under utility lines. Collins asked for total number of trees removed in the next phase and if there will be another tree removal phase completed this year. Strasko stated Adams' goal was to have a new request for proposal to hire tree removal contractors each month, but it may be more realistic for every other month. Kistler stated a phase every quarter may be more realistic for the workload. Collins stated if that was the case the STC should plan for replanting in spring and fall of 2023. Kistler agreed and stated that with the additions they should plan for about 170 trees replanted once they are all removed.
- k.** Kistler asked Collins if they should have a proposal to hire someone to plant the trees and she stated it would be a good idea to contract someone to plant before the spring of 2023 because of how busy landscapers have been the past year. Collins asked if contractors need to have any special certifications to plant trees in

