

**Palmer Township, Northampton County**

**Shade Tree Commission Meeting Minutes**

**October 30, 2023, 6:30PM, 3 Weller Pl, Lower-Level Municipal Meeting Room**

**1. Roll Call**

- a. Present: Shannon Wisniewski, Ellen Murgolo, and Patrick Romano. Also present: Lee Hilbert and Paige Strasko.
- b. Absent: Paul Strasko and Michael Brett.
- c. The meeting was called to order at 6:30PM.

**2. Approval of Meeting Minutes from September 25, 2023**

- a. Murgolo made a motion to approve the minutes and Romano seconded. The motion was approved by unanimous voice vote.

**3. Old Business**

**a. Trees of Significance/Heritage Trees**

- i. Wisniewski discussed previous research that she completed on Trees of Significance including programs that are currently in place in Doylestown Township and another small community near Pittsburg, communications with Palmer Township Historical Society, and shifting the idea to “Champion Trees” as a program to engage and educate residents. Wisniewski discussed piloting a program that creates healthy competition among residents that will bring more awareness to trees in the community.
- ii. Commission members discussed stipulations for the program, when and how to institute a program, a certificate for participants and/or social media recognition, resident nomination processes, what the scope of the Shade Tree Commission (STC) is in the community, timing of starting the program, how to gauge interest in the program possibly at Palmer Days, the STC’s visibility at Palmer Days, renaming the agenda item, working out further details to propose the idea to the Board of Supervisors, and moving the item to new business for further discussion. Wisniewski stated that she would follow up with Ms. Strasko on the topic.

**4. Old Business**

**a. Reorganization**

- i. Commission members discussed the need to choose a Vice Chairman and decided to hold the agenda item until the next meeting when all members are present to vote.
- ii. Murgolo asked clarifying questions about deciding on a Vice Chairman with an open seat and Ms. Strasko stated that the STC will reorganize every new year.

**b. Membership**

- i. Ms. Strasko and Commission members discussed past advertising efforts for the open seat on the STC, methods of advertising, requirements for membership, canvassing for more members, what STC members can do on

their own, putting a notice in Township buildings for the open seat, and participating in Board of Supervisors (BoS) meetings to get the word out to the public either with an agenda item, or during public comment. Ms. Strasko stated that she had recently posted on the STC Facebook page for the open seat on the Commission and suggested that members talk with neighbors to find another member.

**c. Newsletters/Publicity**

- i.** Romano discussed the need to have information in every newsletter from the STC for community awareness and education about what the STC does. Commission members further discussed what the scope of the STC is, making a positive impact and sharing those actions, having a seasonal article in every newsletter, directing residents to the Facebook page, utilizing all the current graphics and resources, and having a list of topics for newsletters to create a pattern of preparedness for when newsletter deadlines come up.
- ii.** Romano asked to have a workshop meeting to discuss an education framework moving forward. Commission members and Ms. Strasko discussed the need to advertise meetings that have a quorum, and all members working on topics individually for future meetings.
- iii.** Murgolo stated that she would work on a list of topics to share with the group. Wisniewski clarified that the next newsletter would be in February and asked to include an article that introduces the STC and its members. Murgolo discussed incorporating Valentine's Day in the next newsletter article about trees and STC members discussed having a draft article for the November meeting.

**d. Education**

- i.** Murgolo discussed having education for STC members regarding seasonal changes around trees from a local arborist, tree trimming, suitable trees for certain spaces, and using legitimate websites for information such as Arbor Day Foundation and Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR).
- ii.** Ms. Strasko stated that if STC members found classes or seminars related to trees that they wanted to attend, then the Township would reimburse the cost for members to attend. Hilbert and Strasko discussed instances where other Township employees and committee members were reimbursed for training or attending conferences.
- iii.** STC members discussed the advisory capacity of the Commission, working with professionals to educate STC members and residents, and review of education materials by other Township or professional entities. Wisniewski stated that her vision for the STC is to sponsor educational events for the Township in the next few years.

**e. Arbor Day**

- i.** Commission members clarified that Arbor Day 2024 falls on Friday, April 26. STC members discussed the quickly approaching date, possible celebrations for Arbor Day, and other Township events planned around the same time. Wisniewski stated that her goal for the next few meetings is to draft a program to execute for an Arbor Day celebration.
- ii.** Some ideas discussed included activities with the new Palmer Elementary School children and teachers that could include a variety of topics such as giving out saplings, information about tree life cycles, or fingerprint art for Kindergarteners. STC members also discussed planting locations at the elementary school, what members would be capable of, and creating a list of ideas to work from. Wisniewski stated that she can communicate with the Palmer Elementary School principal to get more parameters for a celebration involving school students.
- iii.** STC members also discussed planting trees near the Palmer library in the municipal complex to gain interest from library attendees, and other aspects of event planning like incorporating a food truck, site permissions or contacts for tree planting at the library, planting locations near the library and municipal building, making the Arbor Day celebration part of the STC targeted education program, posting the celebration online, and possible utilities that may be in open space behind the library and municipal building. STC members, Strasko, and Hilbert discussed site permissions for the Palmer Library. Strasko stated that she would discuss with DeGerolamo to find out who to discuss tree planting with on site.

**f. Plan Review- 2620 Kingston Rd Car Wash**

- i.** Commission members discussed tree planting locations, where to include more trees, how stormwater may affect planting locations, adjacent properties and their uses, screening for the car wash, tree species to plant, and surrounding infrastructure.
- ii.** STC members summarized their comments by stating that the planting locations on the plan are acceptable, on the landscaping plan they ask that the detail specifies removing all burlap on root balls, and there were no comments regarding impact to existing trees. STC members agreed that other comments included planting six-foot-tall Thuja arborvitae along the property line with the nearby learning center for screening.

**5. Reports**

**a. Board of Supervisors**

- i.** Ms. Strasko stated that she had not heard an update from the BoS and that she would email the solicitor for an update on the draft tree ordinance. STC members discussed the draft tree ordinance and communication updates that were received from the solicitor, and utilizing appendix documents that were created in other ways than they were originally intended.

**b. Tree City USA/Grant trees available**

- i. Wisniewski discussed her research and application to the organization Ten Million Trees and other related information she found. Wisniewski also discussed other grant research and asked if the Township had a grant manager and Ms. Strasko stated that Kent Baird is the Township Grant Coordinator and the Planning Director. Wisniewski stated that she would contact Baird for more information and direction regarding grants.

**c. Street tree replanting**

- i. Romano asked about the replanting progress with the awarded bidder and Ms. Strasko updated the group that she was going to call the contractor for an update and last she heard, the PA one-call was completed. Strasko also stated that per the bid contract, the work needed to be completed by a certain date.
- ii. Romano also stated that he has a mental list of possible planting locations around the Township, and he would work on compiling the information to share with other members.

**6. Public Comment**

- a. There was no public comment.

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

- a. Romano discussed a conversation he had with Daniel Lichtenwalner regarding the STC members' involvement in the permitting process and that he and other members would support the Code Department how they can.

**8. Next meeting: November 27, 2023**

**9. Adjournment**

- a. Murgolo made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Romano seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote and the meeting was adjourned at 8:26PM.