

Franklin Township Shade Tree Commission
Somerset County, New Jersey
Minutes of August 25, 2022

Present: Conner Ferretti, Stephen Gillooly, Robert Hudak, Mary Lauko, Sara Malone, Arnold Schmidt, Ellen Thompson, James Vassanella

Excused: Chris Williams

1. Meeting was called to order at 7:07 PM.
2. Secretary's Report – A. Schmidt motioned to accept the draft July Minutes as written; R. Hudak seconded. S. Malone corrected a typo on p. 2. A. Schmidt motioned to accept the draft July Minutes as amended; R. Hudak seconded. Motion passed. Minutes were approved as amended.
3. Treasurer's Report – Two reimbursements - \$35,820.00 and \$550.00 - came into the Tree Planting Fund since the prior month for an ending balance of \$305,861.58. There were no changes to Shade Tree Other Expenses. No action required.

First Opening of Meeting to the Public – S. Gillooly motioned to open the meeting to the public; M. Lauko seconded. Motion passed and meeting was opened to the public. Bill Bowman of the Franklin Reporter & Advocate was in attendance and had no questions or comments for the Shade Tree Commission (STC). S. Gillooly motioned to close the meeting to the public; M. Lauko seconded. Motion passed and meeting was closed to the public.

Old Business

1. Commission Requirements –
 - a. The previous meeting's length of 2.75 hours shall be included on Members' 2022 Volunteer Hours Summary Sheets.
 - b. U&CFM Plan – Nothing to report
 - c. Grants – S. Gillooly and M. Lauko volunteered to attend a virtual meeting on August 30 for the Sustainable Jersey Local Health Assessment.
2. Tree Plantings / Projects / Maintenance –
 - a. Hamilton Street Redevelopment planting (progressing/sidewalk installation) – STC Members discussed the merits of supporting the contribution of monies from the Tree Planting Fund towards items on the Engineer's Cost Estimate File No. PFR00509.02, dated 8/4/2022. S. Gillooly made a motion to email Township Manager, R. Vornlocker and Executive Director, Hamilton Street Advisory Board, Vincent Dominach, that STC supports purchasing and/or maintaining new trees, only, as represented by Items. 2 through 12 & 15. A. Schmidt seconded. Discussion followed and it was agreed that support is for line items only and not for specific dollar amounts; that no money should go toward the replacement of existing dead trees that are other entities' responsibilities; and not for hardscaping. S. Gillooly

revised the motion to include those criteria; A. Schmidt seconded. S. Malone asked S. Gillooly to prepare a draft correspondence that STC Members will have a chance to edit. Motion passed with one abstention.

- b. Mulching - An outside vendor was not awarded the contract for mulching so Department of Public Works (DPW) Road Department did the mulching on JFK Boulevard, as well as in Naaman Williams Park and Middlebush Park. C. Ferretti personally supervised the mulch application in Middlebush Park, so trees were top-dressed as needed, only, with mulch not touching the trunks.

R. Hudak observed empty gator bags on JFK Boulevard and mulch applied in a doughnut shape, but still touching the trunk. C. Ferretti indicated that a gator bag holds 5 gallons of water, which lasts 3-4 days and that the 50-60 trees that were planted last year all have gator bags. S. Malone will send an email to C. Hauck about the aforementioned mulching issues; watering guidance for established trees from the Arbor Day Foundation – 10 gallons of water for each inch of the tree’s diameter; and monitoring the gator bags on recently planted trees.

3. Public Information / Education / Events / Community Outreach Projects

- a. Website updates – S. Malone submitted changes to remove the current lists of recommended trees, to add the “Do Not Plant” list, and to add some other resources mentioned in recent STC Franklin Times articles. She will keep working with the I/T Department on further website revisions.
- b. Franklin Times – S. Malone submitted recommended Do Not Plant list and notification of 2023 Tree Sale for publication in the Fall issue.
- c. NIXLE e-blasts – Two more are ready to go out. S. Malone will send the piece titled, “Is My Tree Dead”, to I/T within the month.
- d. Franklin Days (Sept. 24) – S. Gillooly will spearhead STC’s tabling at the event.
- e. Annual Tree Sale 2023 – R. Hudak reached out to two previous bare root providers as well as a new one named McKay Nursery and he will provide the information to S. Gillooly. He requested \$2,500.00 - \$40.00/tree x 62.5 trees - in order to “pre-purchase” trees prior to next month’s meeting. The exact list of trees will be voted on at the September 22 STC meeting. S. Gillooly motioned to approve spending up to \$2,500.00 for the 2023 tree sale, if needed, before the Sept. 22 meeting. E. Thompson seconded. Motion passed. Part of the discussion included working out an arrangement with DPW to utilize any left-over trees. C. Ferretti suggested they can be planted in catch basins.

4. Initiatives / Projects

- a. Landscape Guidelines for Development Applications
 - i. Recommended Trees List – M. Lauko will take over.

New Business

R. Hudak indicated that STC was never consulted on trees planted around the new apartments near the recycling center. J. Vassanella will bring this to the attention of the Redevelopment Commission.

Second Opening of Meeting to the Public – None present.

Dendrology – None.

Adjournment – A. Schmidt motioned to adjourn the meeting. S. Malone seconded. Motion passed. Meeting adjourned at 8:55 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Ellen Thompson, Secretary

DRAFT