

Franklin Township Shade Tree Commission
Somerset County, New Jersey
Minutes of February 23, 2023

Present: Stephen Gillooly, Mary Lauko, Robert Hudak, Sara Malone, Ellen Thompson

Excused: Conner Ferretti, Arnold Schmidt, James Vassanella

1. Meeting was called to order at 7:02 PM.
2. Secretary's Report – S. Malone motioned to approve the January Minutes as amended. M. Lauko seconded. Minutes approved as amended.
3. Treasurer's Report – S. Malone presented the financial report, indicating that two reimbursements - \$3,750.00 and \$3,600.00 - came into the Tree Planting (Fund 12) last month for an ending balance of \$374,291.58. The Shade Tree Other Expenses (Fund 01) was reset to \$100.00. No action required.
4. First Opening of the Meeting to the Public – S. Malone motioned to open the meeting to the public; M. Lauko seconded. Motion passed and the meeting was opened to the public. In attendance was Deborah Stuart, 2 Farrington Plz., whose was interested in learning about the workings of the FTSTC. S. Gillooly provided an extensive overview. S. Gillooly motioned to close the meeting to the public; M. Lauko seconded. Motion passed and the meeting was closed to the public.

Old Business

1. Updates from Committees and Commissions
 - a. Applications for Tree City USA and Urban Community Forestry were submitted on time which makes it possible to apply for grant monies.
 - b. Environmental Commission (EC) – The State recently announced the availability of \$19 million in grants to help municipalities with the transition to new municipal stormwater permitting system requirements designed to better protect New Jersey's waterways from pollutants in stormwater. The new municipal stormwater permit system requires Tier A municipalities to adopt and enforce a community-wide ordinance covering tree removal/replacement. Funding under this grant may be used for adoption of stormwater-related ordinances (including tree removal/replacement). Per EC's efforts to revise [Municipal Code 222 Trees](#), to eliminate out-of-date language regarding the number of trees developers can cut down, Open Space Consultant Tara Kenyon will find out if funds can go toward paying for an arborist to rewrite the Townships' related tree ordinance(s). T. Kenyon also proposed redefining trees so that they be considered infrastructure.
 - c. Open Space (OS) Advisory – Public grasslands and fields are being mowed right now.
 - d. Sustainable Jersey - T. Keyon will have a draft for Community Health plan in March incorporating data from 400 surveys.
 - e. FTSTC Report to Council – S. Gillooly is communicating with J. Vassanella on a proposed draft, which includes a brief introduction affirming pride in the Township's

trees and FTSTC's tree accomplishments from 2022. The Report will be presented at the March 11 Township Council Meeting.

2. Franklin Township Urban and Community Forestry Management Plan (U&CFM) – A new 5-year plan must be written which will require the services of a consultant [state forester/Certified Tree Expert (CTE)]. It should incorporate the Township's goals besides tree maintenance and could include the management of wooded lots. M. Lauko will see if grants are available on the State website and if T. Kenyon would assist with writing a grant to for the services of the CTE.
3. Franklin Township Tree Maintenance Plan – Will come out of the new shade tree ordinance. Could go toward Sustainable Jersey points. As part of the Stormwater Maintenance Plan, the Township must have a planting and maintenance plan. This will be led by T. Kenyon, EC and OS with FTSTC participation.
4. i-Tree Canopy Cover Inventory Updates – This was part of Sustainable Jersey reporting and will be revised annually. T. Kenyon and the IT department were also interested in ~~the~~ working with the i-Tree tool to support other Township planning activities. It might be mutually beneficial for the FTSTC to coordinate with them on future annual updates of the Canopy Cover.
5. Commission Administration/Volunteer Hours Tracking - The previous meeting's length of 2.5 hours shall be included on Members' 2023 Volunteer Hours Summary Sheets.
6. Tree Maintenance and Project Updates
 - a. Memorial Forest – OS considered offering memorial trees and/or benches for sale.
 - b. Hamilton Street, Naaman Williams Park, Inman Park, Middlebush Park – No activity.
 - c. JFK Boulevard – R. Hudak will contact Department of Public Works (DPW) Foreman Greg Pinheiro to survey trees in April.
7. Public Information/Education/Events/Community Outreach Projects
 - a. Website Updates - Cancellation of 2023 Tree Sale was posted to the FTSTC website and sent out as a NIXLE e-blast by the Township. A link has been included from the FTSTC home page to the Citizen Portal for the purposes of reporting tree-related issues/concerns to DPW.
 - b. Franklin Times and NIXLE e-blasts – Ideas discussed included an article about the upcoming Arbor Day in April, how to know if your tree is dead, and the Recommended Trees List. S. Malone is working on including previous articles from the Franklin Times to "Resources" and to enable an easy way to find the Do Not Plant List as well as Recommended Trees lists.
 - c. Arbor Day 2023 – What kind of tree to plant and which location – a school or JFK Boulevard - were discussed.
 - d. Annual Tree Sale 2024 – Jeff Baumley indicated that tree selections must be ordered by May of this year. Decisions will be made by April/May.
8. Other Initiatives/Projects –
 - a. Landscape Guidelines for Development Applications, Do Not Plant Trees List, Recommended Trees List – All in progress. S. Malone will wrap up Recommended

Trees List, then provide to Director of Planning Mark Healey and will make available for Franklin Times and NIXLE e-blasts.

- b. CME Hazardous Tree Assessments Maps and Inventory – No action.

New Business

1. Big and Heritage Trees in Franklin Township – This list has not been updated since 2008. The State’s ‘Big Tree Conservation Program (formerly The Champion Tree Program) has been expanded to include trees that have environmental, aesthetic, genetic, and historic value as well as significant age and size. The State is kicking off a Big Tree Hunt on May 6, 2023. S. Malone suggested including the ‘Big Tree Kickoff’ in our Arbor Day event. S. Malone will get more information and present findings at the March meeting.
2. 2023 State Tier-A Stormwater Permits Requiring Tree Removal/Replacement Plans - See Old Business 1.b., above.
3. Letter of Inquiry to Engineering – R. Hudak expressed concern that FTSTC is not being included in the review and approval process of applications for development as per [§ 222-5 Application for tree removal permit where subdivision and/or site plan approval or building permit is required.](#) Also discussed was the lack of communication with DPW as per § 222-5.3 B. Tree replacement; contributions to Tree Fund. It was suggested that the ordinance is being followed in principle, if not specifically in each instance of replanting trees on a removal site.
4. 2023 Projects – R. Hudak discussed the possible contributions by an arborist, e.g., review and evaluation of trees in parks and public spaces, such as locust trees planted in a traffic island in the Municipal Complex. R. Hudak will add those trees to the survey he is working on. That list can be provided to the Township Manager, R. Vornlocker.

Second Opening of the Meeting to the Public – R. Hudak made a motion to open the meeting to the public; S. Gillooly seconded. Motion passed and the meeting was opened to the public. D. Stuart advocated for including planting information on the proposed Recommended Trees List and asked for clarification on the January Meeting Minutes which referenced the proposed revision to the percentage of trees that may be replaced by way of contribution. M. Lauko made a motion to close the meeting to the public; S. Gillooly seconded. Motion passed and the meeting was closed to the public.

Dendrology – None.

Adjournment – S. Gillooly made a motion to adjourn; M. Lauko seconded. Meeting was adjourned at 9:07 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Ellen Thompson, Secretary