

Franklin Township Shade Tree Commission
Somerset County, New Jersey
Minutes of July 27, 2023

Present: Stephen Gillooly, Mary Lauko, Conner Ferretti, Robert Hudak, Sara Malone

Excused: Arnold Schmidt, Ellen Thompson, James Vassanella

1. Meeting was called to order at 7:05 PM.
2. Shade Tree Commission Members Roll Call (as above)
3. Secretary's Report – S. Malone motioned to approve the June minutes as amended; M. Lauko seconded. Minutes approved as amended.
4. Treasurer's Report – S. Malone presented the financial report and stated that the balance of the account for tree planting expenses is unchanged at about \$392,000, and the account for miscellaneous expenses is about \$800.
5. Commission Administration – 2.5 hours can be entered in the volunteer tracking form by commission members who attended the June meeting. S. Malone reported that her CEUs earned in 2023 appear correctly on the state's website. M. Lauko's CEU is not shown. S. Malone instructed that commission members who attend "outside training" (other than NJSTF) have to send documentation to the State of NJ (urban forestry program at Rutgers), which issues the credits. Link: <https://urbanforestry.rutgers.edu/njucfce>
6. First Opening of the Meeting to the Public – S. Gillooly motioned to open the meeting to the public; S. Malone seconded. Motion passed and the meeting was opened to the public. Deborah Rodgers of 390 Inwood Court and William Berz of 3 Zeller Drive attended, both of whom entered applications to become members of the Shade Tree Commission. Steven Gillooly described the role and function of the Shade Tree Commission, as well as the current tasks the commission is working on. S. Malone described a number of responsibilities of the commission members. S. Gillooly motioned to close the meeting to the public; S. Malone seconded. Motion passed and the meeting was closed to the public.

7. Old Business/Updates

a. Committees and Commissions

- i. Franklin Township Council Updates (J. Vassanella) – Councilman Vassanella was not present at the meeting. S. Gillooly reported that he gave a presentation at a recent town council meeting and was favorably received. Following shortly thereafter, the commission was invited to another township meeting where the township's plans for the trees along Ridings Parkway was discussed. See also under 8.b. regarding Ridings Parkway.
- ii. Environmental Commission (EC) (A. Schmidt) – A. Schmidt was not present at the meeting. No updates.
- iii. Open Space Advisory Committee (OSAC) (M. Lauko) – The July meeting of the Open Space Advisory Committee was cancelled, however, T. Kenyon reported by email

- that the Township received the \$20,000.00 Sustainable Jersey Grant it had applied for to fix up the trail and make other enhancements to Naaman Williams Park.
- iv. Sustainable Jersey (M. Lauko/S. Malone) – The report is expected to be distributed to TWP commissions this month.
 - v. Department of Public Works (DPW) (C. Ferretti) – C. Ferretti reported that the tree ordered by the Mayor, an October Glory Maple for the Memorial Forest, has been planted, and in the process a toad hiding among the tree roots was rescued.
- b. Planning
- i. Franklin Township Urban and Community Forestry Management Plan (U&CFMP) Status of Requests / State Report – S. Gillooly sent a note to the Town and spoke to the TWP manager. The TWP Engineer is working on a cost estimate for a tree maintenance plan. Also, NJ Tree Federation grant monies may be used for developing a tree maintenance plan.
 - ii. Landscape Guidelines for Development Applications/Recommended Evergreen Trees List. – The list was approved by the commission at the June meeting. M. Lauko sent the list for outside review to (1) ForesTree Experts (consultants who drafted the prior Community and Forestry Management Plan) which unfortunately experienced a death of one of its founding members and will most likely decline to provide a review, to (2) Baumley Nursery's owner (who normally provides trees for the commission's annual tree sale) who has not responded so far, and to (3) a State Forestry official who responded saying he is very busy but plans to provide a review. S. Gillooly will reach out to the TWP manager and request that the TWP tree expert consultant provide a review.
 - iii. Hazardous Tree Maps / Inventory – S. Gillooly requested information from DPW but received no response.
- c. Tree Maintenance and Projects
- i. Hamilton Street – S. Gillooly reported that prior to the last STC meeting, V. Dominach had asked for help from Brentwood Bay, LLC (850 Hamilton Street) regarding the possibility of substituting Redbud *Cercis Canadensis*, for the unavailable Cumulus Shadblow Serviceberry *Amelanchier laevis* 'Cumulus'. S. Gillooly communicated the alternate choices selected by the commission, as follows (but received no confirmation):
 - Red Barron Crabapple - Malus 'Red Barron'
 - Crusader Hawthorn - Crataegus crusgalli var inermis "Cruzam" (thornless)
 - If the above are not available, then another small crabapple or thornless hawthorn. The crabapple should not have a graft at the base that tends to throw lots of suckers.
- d. Public Information / Education / Events / Community Outreach Projects
- i. Franklin Times and NIXLE e-blasts – M. Lauko presented two articles, one for publication of the Recommended Evergreen and Coniferous Trees list and one about watering trees. The commission approved the articles.
 - ii. Big and Heritage Trees in Franklin Township – S. Malone will have updated information available at the Franklin Day Festival.

- iii. Annual Tree Sale 2024 – S. Gillooly reported that the timeline for ordering the trees was very short, so he ordered three tree species in consultation with M. Lauko and S. Malone: Swamp White Oak, Yellowwood and Honey locust.
- iv. Franklin Day 2023 – will be held on September 23. Information for the table will be updated.

8. New Business

- a. Meet prospective new members – Four potential members were present, and they all indicated that they were interested in joining the commission. In addition to the two residents noted above attending the first opening to the public, Rebecca Wagner of 1 Franklin Blvd and Michael Veronsky of 40 Bering Way attended, both of whom also filled out applications.
- b. Ridings Parkway Project Update – S. Gillooly reported that he attended a special meeting of Township officials that was intended to hear input from residents of the Ridings Parkway neighborhood regarding plantings on a median. Three other STC members also attended the meeting. The median is township property. Residents expressed concerns about perceived neglect, including dead trees. In current development standards, such a median would be managed by a Homeowner’s Association (HOA), however, this development does not have a HOA. TWP officials concluded that they would work in consultation with the FT STC to choose appropriate trees for replacement.

9. Second Opening of the Meeting to the Public – S. Malone made a motion to open the meeting to the public; S. Gillooly seconded. The motion passed and the meeting was opened to the public. Deborah Rodgers of 390 Inwood Court suggested that the township start an “Adopt a Tree” program, similar to the recently launched “Adopt a Drain” program. The commission was receptive to the idea. S. Malone made a motion to close the meeting to the public; S. Gillooly seconded. Motion passed and the meeting was closed to the public.

10. Dendrology & General Discussion Items

- a. Soil compaction and impact on tree survival – table until the next meeting.

Adjournment – S. Gillooly made a motion to adjourn; S. Malone seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 8:40 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Lauko, Vice Chair