

Franklin Township Shade Tree Commission
Somerset County, New Jersey
Minutes of September 28, 2023

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

Excused: Deborah Rodgers

1. Meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM.
2. Secretary's Report – S. Malone motioned to approve the August Minutes as amended; M. Lauko seconded. Minutes approved as amended.
3. Treasurer's Report – S. Malone presented the financial report. There were no changes to Shade Tree Other Expenses (Fund 01). Tree Planting (Fund 12) changes included one reimbursement for \$9,900.00 and \$3,102.92 in the Planting & Maintenance column for an ending balance of \$400,258.66.
4. First Opening of the Meeting to the Public – Rebecca Wagner, 1 Franklin Boulevard has submitted paperwork to become a Commission Member.

Old Business/Updates

1. Committees and Commissions
 - a. Franklin Township Council updates (J. Vassanella) – No updates.
 - b. Environmental Commission (EC) (A. Schmidt) – No updates.
 - c. Open Space Advisory Committee (OSAC) (M. Lauko) - M. Lauko updated OSAC on what the Commission has been doing including the list of trees for Memorial Forest.
 - d. Sustainable Jersey (M. Lauko/S. Malone) – No updates.
 - e. Department of Public Works (DPW) Updates (C. Ferretti)
 - i. C. Ferretti had a meeting with Township Manager, R. Vornlocker, as part of improving communication between the Commission and the Township. R. Vornlocker expressed that C. Ferretti will be taking on more responsibilities and will start working with the Acting Foreman. Current Foreman, G. Pinheiro, will be retiring at the end of the year.
 - ii. C. Ferretti will be getting an iPad which will enable him to take notes of major tree work using the Notes app. He will send these reports monthly to the Commission. J. Vassanella had questions about the nature of the information to be captured using this method and asked if the notes would feed into the blue tag system.
 - iii. There is a plan to do some planting [of trees].
 - f. Landscape Guidelines for Development Applications/Recommended Evergreen Trees List (M. Lauko) – No updates.
 - g. Hazardous Tree Maps / Inventory – DPW Updates – No updates.

2. Planning / Tree Maintenance and Projects

S. Gillooly initiated discussions with Township officials including R. Vornlocker and Executive Director Hamilton Street Advisory Board and Director of Economic Development, Vincent Dominach, concerning lack of engagement with Hamilton Street Advisory Board, DPW and the Township Arborist. Topics addressed included requests for updates on:

- Franklin Township Urban and Community Forestry Management (U&CFM) Plan – There are only three Certified Tree Experts (CTE) in the state qualified to write a plan. R. Vornlocker is interested in the CTE for Peapack-Gladstone and C. Ferretti will contact him.
- Franklin Township Tree Maintenance Plan
- Hazardous tree inventory
- Hamilton Street tree planting
- Memorial Forest
- Ridings Parkway
- JFK Boulevard tree planting
- New Tree Planting

Information provided to Township officials included:

- Updates on Shade Tree Commission Member changes
- Tree replacement ordinance updates
- Trees at Township schools

Township Attorney, Lou Rainone, confirmed that Shade Tree Planting (Fund 12) monies can be used for line items 13 and 14 in the cost estimate for Hamilton Street regarding concrete removal and replacement. This clears the way for the bid package to go out. The Commission will review the bid when it is made public and will confirm whether the 2-year maintenance guarantee is included. If it is not, the Commission will request a correction or reissuance of the bid.

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

- a. Franklin Times Article (Fall) – M. Lauko submitted two articles and both were published.
- b. Big and Heritage Trees in Franklin Township – Bill Berz and Deborah Rodgers will review the 2018 list to determine which trees are still alive and work on outreach to the public.
- c. Annual Tree Sale 2024 – Twenty trees have been ordered.
- d. Franklin Day 2023 (D. Rodgers) – No updates.

New Business – S. Malone submitted her resignation to R. Vornlocker. Commission Members joined in thanking her for her many years of service to and leadership of the Commission.

There appears to be no negative impact to the Heineken maple tree on Route 27 in Kingston as a result of accommodations made to recent water line work.

Second Opening of the Meeting to the Public – S. Malone made a motion to open the meeting to the public; R. Hudak seconded and the meeting was opened to the public. R. Wagner expressed interest in obtaining a map showing where trees in Township Rights of Way are located.

Dendrology and General Discussion – None.

Adjournment – S. Malone made a motion to adjourn; S. Gillooly seconded. Meeting was adjourned at 9:16 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Ellen Thompson, Secretary