

**Franklin Township Shade Tree Commission**  
**Somerset County, New Jersey**  
**Minutes of November 30, 2023**

Present: Stephen Gillooly, Mary Lauko, Robert Hudak, Arnold Schmidt, Ellen Thompson, Rebecca Wagner

Excused: Bill Berz, Conner Ferretti

1. Meeting was called to order at 7:05 PM.
2. Secretary's Report – A. Schmidt motioned to approve the August Minutes as amended; M. Lauko seconded. Minutes approved as amended.
3. Treasurer's Report – Two changes to the Tree Planting (Fund 12) were reimbursements for \$780.00 by Masood Grocery BBQ Tonight LLC and \$382,500.00 by Duke Realty, 395 Elizabeth Ave.
4. Commission Administration – S. Gillooly reminded Members to update volunteer hours; the October meeting was 2 hours. D. Rodgers resigned, which leaves an opening on the Commission.
5. First Opening of the Meeting to the Public – None present.

**Old Business/Updates**

1. Committees and Commissions
  - a. Franklin Township Council updates (J. Vassanella) – J. Vassanella submitted commendations for Sarah Malone and Christopher Williams for their 10-year service.
  - b. Environmental Commission (EC) (A. Schmidt) – No updates.
  - c. Open Space Advisory Committee (OSAC) (A. Schmidt) – No updates.
  - d. Sustainable Jersey (M. Lauko) - Open Space Consultant, Tara Kenyon's presentation on the Local Health Impact Assessment will be delayed until the next Township Council meeting.
  - e. Department of Public Works (DPW) Updates
    - 39 of 40 trees donated by PSE&G were planted on JFK Boulevard.
    - The recently planted trees in Consovoy Park have been staked but not watered.
    - Trees have been planted along Ridings Parkway.
2. Planning
  - a. Franklin Township Urban and Community Forestry Management (U&CFM) Plan - Status of Requests / State Report – At the most recent OS meeting, it was noted that the State extended the deadline to complete U&CFM Plans for another year, likely due to a lack of available arborists to participate in the writing of plans. S. Gillooly submitted the Tree City application for the Arbor Day Observance portion and still needs the financial report from DPW.
  - b. Hazardous Tree Maps (i-Tree Maps) / Inventory – No updates.
  - c. Tree Maintenance Plans / Township Update
    - i. S. Gillooly will communicate the Commission's appreciation to Township Manager, Robert Vornlocker, for the recent tree plantings (see 1.e. above). He will

express the urgent need for the trees to be watered, inquire as to whether there is a plan to do so, and if not, how the Commission might help to accomplish that. A. Schmidt observed that Treegator® bags will not go on until the spring. Discussion followed as to whether neighbors adjacent to plantings might be resources for assistance in this regard. R. Wagner offered to speak to East Franklin fire house members about watering recently planted trees in Consovoy Park and S. Gillooly subsequently indicated he would ask them to do so. He will also talk with C. Ferretti regarding watering plans. It was noted that there is likely a 2-3 week window of opportunity to get water on the trees before the ground freezes to the point where it cannot absorb water.

ii. The CME arborist left the company/Township engineering firm. CME will hire an arborist to write the tree maintenance plan. A. Schmidt asked if the Commission will get to review the plan and R. Vornlocker's perspective of the Commission having input.

### 3. Tree Maintenance and Projects

- a. Hamilton Street Tree Planting – S. Gillooly will ask R. Vornlocker if the Hamilton Street bids have gone out.
- b. Tree Planting Updates
  - Ridings Parkway and PSE&G Tree Donation - See 1.e. above.
  - Question was raised as to whether it would be possible to work with Somerset County to plant trees on Franklin Boulevard.
- c. The status of the trees which had been cut down by Quailbrook Homeowners Association on land between Picadilly Place and Martino Drive was discussed, as well as whether they will be replaced. It is not clear whether the trees were on HOA property or on Quailbrook Golf Course, which is Township property. It is likely that C. Ferretti will have better knowledge of this. S. Gillooly had raised the subject with R. Vornlocker and will revisit the subject.

### 4. Public Information / Education / Events / Community Outreach Projects

- a. Franklin Times Article (Winter) – S. Gillooly and M. Lauko wrote an article on winter tree maintenance.
- b. Big and Heritage Trees in Franklin Township – No updates.
- c. Annual Tree Sale 2024 – Jeff Baumley expects to receive trees - Halka™ Honeylocust, Yellowwood and Swamp White Oak - in March and will give the Commission an invoice at that time. Once the Commission receives a confirmed delivery date, details can be finalized. Non-refundable checks must be received in advance of the tree sale. If trees are not retrieved by close of sale hours, it can be sold on a first-come first-served basis.
- d. R. Wagner proposed to spearhead a tree identification project for Hamilton Street and other areas in the Township. Potential media include tree tags, postcards, and window stickers, e.g., and would convey the message of tree maintenance/adoption for residents and/or business owners in their roles as “tree stewards” or “tree keepers”.

## New Business

1. M. Lauko made a motion to accept meeting dates for 2024; E. Thompson seconded. Motion passed. Dates approved:

January 25	April 25	July 25	October 24
February 22	May 23	August 22	November 21
March 28	June 27	September 26	December none

2. S. Gillooly expressed the intention for subcommittees in 2024 to spread out the workload for various projects like Big & Heritage Trees, Adopt-a-Tree, Tree Sale, etc.
3. 199 Pierce Street near the intersection with Elizabeth Avenue – A. Schmidt brought to the attention of the Commission that a large stand of several acres of trees was recently cut down. Discussion followed, including:
  - Mark Healey needs to be asked if a permit was taken out.
  - Money should be forthcoming to the Shade Tree Fund.
  - Was a correct count done on the number of trees removed?
  - **Ch 222 Trees and Vegetation / Article I Tree Removal / §222.2 Definitions and word usage. TREE: TREES** definition states “Any and all single- and multi-trunked plants having diameters of four inches or more at heights of three feet above the base of the trunk or of one or multiple trunks...” This needs to be changed to define trees as having diameters of 2.5 inches or more.
  - **Ch 222 Trees and Vegetation / Article I Tree Removal / §222.5 Application for tree removal permit where subdivision and/or site plan approval or building permit is required.** “allows the applicant to prepare the sample plot(s) used to determine the average wooded acre for the site.” This means the applicant can select a plot with the fewest number of trees, to their advantage, in terms of numbers of trees to be replaced or monies paid into the Tree Fund. This also needs to be changed.

Once T. Kenyon is done with Sustainable Jersey Local Health Assessment, M. Lauko recommended inviting her to a meeting of the joint EC/FTSTC subcommittee for her input on **Ch 222**.

**Second Opening of the Meeting to the Public** – None present

**Dendrology and General Discussion** – No updates.

**Adjournment** – A. Schmidt made a motion to adjourn; R. Hudak seconded. Meeting was adjourned at 10:15 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Ellen Thompson, Secretary