

Franklin Township Shade Tree Commission
Somerset County, New Jersey
Minutes of March 27, 2024

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

Excused: Rebecca Wagner

1. Meeting was called to order at 7:07 PM.
2. Secretary's Report – Tabled until next meeting.
3. Treasurer's Report – None.
4. Commission Administration
 - a. Tree City and NJUCF Renewals submitted.
 - b. Volunteer Hours Tracking – S. Gillooly encouraged Members to fill out the updated spreadsheet.
5. First Opening of the Meeting to the Public – A. Schmidt made a motion to open the meeting to the public; M. Lauko seconded. Motion passed and the meeting was opened to the public. Bill Bowman, Franklin Reporter & Advocate, was in attendance. R. Hudak motioned to close the meeting to the public; M. Lauko seconded. Motion passed.

Old Business/Updates

1. Committees and Commissions Updates
 - a. Franklin Township Council (J. Vassanella) - J. Vassanella not present.
 - b. Environmental Commission (EC) (A. Schmidt) – EC recommended sending their proposals to amend Shade Tree Municipal Codes and Ordinances referenced at previous meetings to be relevant, stringent and enforceable – to Township Manager, Robert Vornlocker, Township Councilperson Ed Potosnak, and Mayor Phil Kramer for their review and approval prior to the next Township Council Meeting. As of the March 18th EC Meeting, the information had not been sent out. Robin Suydam and Councilperson Ted Chase reiterated their interest in establishing Miyawaki Forests (miniature, dense forests with native plants) in the Township. R. Vornlocker said that CME Associates engineers are still working on the tree maintenance plan and that DPW is going to water trees planted in the last 1-2 years and two years going forward. Cherry Hill instituted a new tree replacement ordinance that is the strongest in the state. It applies to private and public entities everywhere in the town. EC expressed support of the Township Council's 2016 Proclamation to adopt a tree canopy goal of 3% increase.
 - c. Open Space Advisory Committee (OSAC) (M. Lauko) – This month's meeting was cancelled and M. Lauko missed the previous meeting. At the previous meeting, Open Space Consultant, Tara Kenyon, discussed planting trees to absorb water in Naaman Williams Park (like Bald Cypress and Dawn Redwood). Several dozen will be planted.

The trade off in the park is between establishing wooded trails and visual security. Security cameras will probably be installed. S. Gillooly questioned whether OSAC funds can be used to maintain the trees. A. Schmidt explained that OSAC funds may be used on land that falls under the purview of OSAC, Historic Preservation, Parks, and Schools (with permission, only). It was noted that John Clyde had gotten the JFK Boulevard green space declared a park. Additionally, an open burn was recently conducted on the John Clyde Grasslands.

- d. Sustainable Jersey (M. Lauko/S. Gillooly) – No updates.
 - e. DPW (C. Ferretti) – Now that C. Ferretti has received his iPad, he is more readily able to keep track of DPW work progress. March projects include:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1st ROW maintenance on Cedar Grove Lane 4th ROW maintenance on Cedar Grove Lane 6th pick up brush piles on Cedar Grove Lane 7th remove brush piles on Demott Lane and clean up brush on Cedar Grove Lane 8th remove brush piles on Cedar Grove Lane; cleared line of sight issue on corner of Clyde Lane and Bennetts Lane 11th Right of Way (ROW) Maintenance on Cedar 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grove Lane; emergency tree work 115 4th Street 12th ROW MAINTENANCE on Cedar Grove Lane 13th trail maintenance 14th trail maintenance 15th trail maintenance 18th trail maintenance 19th trail maintenance 20th tree work Grouser Road 22nd land clearing/tree work on Arlington open space lot 26th easement access on Bunker Hill Brown Trail 27th tree work behind 84 Magellan Way
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- DPW discovered the removal of five trees in the Township ROW at 21 Highland Avenue (at the intersection with Jefferson Street). All five trees were between 18 24” in diameter. It is evident that the trees were removed by the property owner, since the remainders were dumped behind the fence at 21 Highland Avenue. DPW will probably file a police report and deal with it legally. Discussion followed including how the subject of trees within Township ROWs and what to know “Before You Cut” would make a good article for the Franklin Times. S. Gillooly will ask Mark Healey and Vincent Dominach in the Planning and Zoning Department who to contact to find out if a permit has been obtained for trees that have been cut down within a ROW.
- f. Planning – No major changes to Urban & Community Forestry Management (U&CFM) plan, maintenance, Memorial Forest and tree inventory. S. Gillooly contacted Mr. Vornlocker for updates.
 - g. Tree Maintenance Projects
 - i. Update on Hamilton Street – Several bids were received. The lowest bid of \$160,000.00 was withdrawn. The next bid was for \$220,000.00; this bidder and

all others added 20% extra for maintenance of trees for two years. V.

Dominach will take the lowest qualified bid. The cost of trees has sky rocketed.

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

- i. Big and Heritage Trees (B. Berz) - B. Berz contacted the State Big and Heritage Tree Coordinator, Joseph C. Bennett and will attend this year's Big Tree Education Event workshop in May. The last Township inventory that was done had 20 trees. Of the four he was able to locate, one was on Route 27, adjacent to the Subaru dealership; the tree on the Wells Fargo property is gone. Any tree of substantial size is cover in vines. Most of the trees are on private property or within the Bunker Hill Environmental Center. The State has no specific requirements other than that they care particularly about "Heritage" trees that are really big and really old. Mr. Bennett instructed that FTSTC can go about the inventory however it wants, including trees for example, like the maple in Kingston. There are no trees in Hutcheson Forest that are on the State survey but there should be record of several black oaks. The Colonial Park Arboretum trees can be included. S. Gillooly offered that there is a patch of large trees on Bennett's Lane worth exploring. There might be noteworthy trees on the Tulipwood House property that was owned by the family of Rutgers professor Leigh W. Kimball until it was purchase by the Township in 2003. R. Hudak indicated that Councilperson, Ted Chase has a neighbor with a big tree.
- ii. Annual Tree Sale 2024 (R. Hudak) – Public Works & Water Utility Office Coordinator, Marianna Frederickson, generated a Purchase Order (PO) for the trees. As soon as Jeff Baumley contacts the Commission, the PO is ready to go. The trees have been ordered. Once the Commission receives notification that the trees are being shipped, information can go out to the public.
- iii. Tree Giveaway – An "unspecified imperfection" in the Commission's application caused it to be rejected.
- iv. Arbor Day – This year's Franklin High School Environmental Club's Green Fair will not coincide with Arbor Day. S. Gillooly will get the proclamation updated and get it to Councilperson, James Vassanella as well as Mayor Phil Kramer. S. Gillooly motioned to accept R. Wagner's proposal to plant a tree (red oak) at the corner of Highland Avenue and Franklin Boulevard on the Pine Grove Manor property. Discussion followed and other locations were also considered, including Naaman Williams Park, Consovoy Park, East Franklin Fire House, or another part of the town that doesn't have adequate tree coverage. A. Schmidt seconded. Motion passed.
- v. Franklin High School Environmental Club's Green Fair is May 18 this year from 1:00 – 3:00 pm.

New Business

1. R. Wagner submitted several content samples to promote the Commission, which include hashtags.
2. R. Hudak recommended establishing a working relationship with Somerset County Commissioner, Paul M. Drake, regarding increasing the tree canopy in the Township with special opportunity to replace the loss of trees at Quailbrook Golf Course. Also considered for outreach and advocacy are County Planning Board Member, Christopher Kelly as, well as Doug Vornlocker, Somerset County Manager of Park Rangers and Property Management.

Second Opening of the Meeting to the Public – R. Hudak made a motion to open the meeting to the public; M. Lauko seconded. Motion passed and the meeting was opened to the public. S. Gillooly motioned to close the meeting to the public; M. Lauko seconded. Motion passed.

Dendrology and General Discussion – No updates.

Adjournment – A. Schmidt made a motion to adjourn; M. Lauko seconded. Motion passed. Meeting was adjourned at 9:34 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Ellen Thompson, Secretary