

Metuchen Shade Tree Commission

January 2, 2024 Minutes

Reading of OPMA and Sunshine Act

Reorganization and minutes

- Welcoming members all and new: Paul Pospiech, Todd Pagel, Kun-han Lee, Jeremy Campbell, Dorothy Giamboi, Kenneth Sammond
- Choosing the new chair: Jeremy nominated Todd, Ken seconded, and the rest said aye.
- A decision was made that the old chair and new chair will do report to the state annual report.
- Consensus was reached that there would be rolling minute takers over the next month: Ken in January, others in succeeding months.
- Jeremy made a motion to approve the minutes, Ken seconded. Kun-han said aye.

Current Updates on plantings, rules, and funding

- Todd asked about the status of plantings from fall '23 and what we are hoping to do in the spring '24, asking if we are meeting our goals for planting trees?
- Dorothy stated that Brian will give us a list of trees for the spring. Then we will choose where trees should be. But we need a number.
- There was discussion concerning funding limits and bids.

Funding

- Dorothy stated that tree bank money is organized by Becky which pays for the plantings. She stated that there are limitations imposed based on the contracts given for planting. Usually one entity does a planting in the fall and another in the spring.
- Ken argued that there should be minimum in the budget to cover tree plantings so it is not subject to whims of tree bank funding, which can vary.
- Kun-han also stated that we should be asking the town for consistent funding for trees as a base on which the tree bank funding.

Planting under/near utilities and Taking Trees Down

- There was discussion about vision and purpose of the commission in relation to plantings. What is our goal? How many trees have we taken down? How many should we plant (and where)?
- Paul said he can put forward a list of trees that can be planted near or under utilities.
- Todd said he can contact Brian regarding how many trees have been taken down over the past six months and was told that Brian often has a quarterly report
- Dorothy stated that at Edgar Field more are being put up than have been taken down.

Types of Trees and Where to Plant

- Dorothy stated that we should interface a list of acceptable trees with Linda Koskoski for building projects. There should be an approved tree list.

- Paul stated that certain trees have been overplanted, based on our last *report* in 2015.
- There was discussion concerning where we should target some tree plantings. Paul – spreadsheet with trees on it, add and subtract based on our meetings. Jeremy suggested the curve of Hillside by Centenary. Ken suggested Newman Street which is much more empty than other parts of town. We also began discussion of Arbor Day planting.
- Todd stated that the council needs to be better educated on Shade Tree benefits

Inventory

- Jeremy asked if the builder money can be used to do an inventory? There was discussion. Consensus was reached that we should reach out to Melissa and the council to ensure that the budget includes funding for a tree inventory update.

Other Business

- Dorothy stated that there will be commission training coming.
- There was discussion regarding how to promote the work of the commission. Considerations included posting info on Facebook and other social media. One the challenges has to do with updating the information.
- There was discussion about how to sign up and complete CEUs. Jeremy stated that he would forward info to everyone for classes.
- Ken gave a brief discussion on the Tree Ambassadors program, which he is pitching to the Ms. Kato, the AP Environmental Sciences teacher, and Mr. Perowski, the principal, of Metuchen High School. The project will engage six students from Metuchen High School to help them understand the role of trees in our community and to help take concrete steps to improve the environmental health of trees.

Jeremy made motion to adjourn. Paul seconded. All agreed.