

Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Morris Plains Shade Tree Commission held on March 5, 2014 at 2:00 p.m. in the Borough Chambers. Present at roll call were:

Present: Mr. Donald Salerno, Vice Chairman
Mr. Lawrence Travaglia
Mr. C. David Visscher
Mr. Lloyd Williams, Chairman
Councilwoman Laurie Fu

Mr. John Linson, Special Forester

Absent: Mrs. Margaret Law
Mr. Robert/Dave Dubee, Forester

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Williams. Mr. Williams stated that adequate notice of this meeting has been published and posted in accordance with Chapter 231 of the Public Law of 1975, "Open Public Meetings Act."

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Travaglia moved that the minutes of the Commission's January 22, 2014 Re-Organization Meeting be approved as circulated, seconded by Mr. Visscher. Voice vote. All in favor.

Motion carried.

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

Mr. Williams opened the meeting to the public to speak on matters other than those on the agenda. Hearing none, he closed this portion of the meeting to the public.

2014 BUDGET

Mr. Williams stated the budget is not yet approved.

Councilwoman Fu advised that the first budget meeting will be held this Friday, March 7, 2014, and there will be another at the end of March. The Commission may incur expenses up to 25% from the beginning of the year. The \$17,400 has been received for the first planting. She reported the process has been working smoothly so far. This money goes to the Borough, not to the Commission.

COMMUNICATIONS

None.

The Commission Secretary explained the usual flow of the meeting when Mr. Dubee is present at the meeting and presented the forester's report.

Forester's Report

21 Valley Stream Circle – Secretary stated the (1) weeping willow tree is dead.

The recommendation is that this tree be taken down with no stump. The Borough did not plant this tree, but it is located on Borough property.

5 Cutler Road was discussed – there is a large limb and may need pruning.

The Commission Secretary believes this will have to wait for the Forester. She also mentioned that virtually everything else is spring.

The tree at 21 Valley Stream Circle was purchase ordered.

The Commission Secretary reminded that in April the Commission will start meeting at 7:00 p.m.

PRESENTATION BY SPECIAL FORESTER JOHN LINSON

Mr. Linson explained how he will review the material relating to his presentation.

He mentioned changes that he made in his report, including changing a reference to “group home” on Central Avenue.

Councilwoman Fu asked about an indication of Special Attention on **Old Wood Road** and the private shrubs.

Mr. Linson responded that these are private and that most of the situations are not Borough trees/shrubs. He also remarked on the narrowness of this roadway and that these shrubs are encroaching into an already narrow road. The Borough should be advising the property owner that they need to be cut back.

Mr. Salerno advised that the Borough has ordinances covering these types of situations.

Councilwoman Fu asked how the Commission can best identify which tree is being referred to in his report.

Mr. Linson provided information on how the Commission can use his report to identify various trees when driving down a street. The first tree is “Position 1”. She also asked about One Park Road at the bottom of first page of tree removals. She is uncertain if there actually is a One Park Road; she suspects it is the house at the corner.

Mr. Salerno asked what the difference is between the classes mentioning Class 2 pruning.

Mr. Linson replied that Class 2 pruning is removing dead wood up to 2” in diameter and also doing some structural pruning and lifting up branches. It is the general standard for pruning street trees. Class 3 pruning is just removing hazardous dead branches, some of which ultimately are candidates for tree removal. Class 4 pruning is branch

elevation, and he believes most of these can be done by the DPW staff as long as there are no wires involved.

Continuing, Mr. Linson stated it is good that the Commission was able to increase its budget, but since there is the No Net Tree Loss grant, there is no need to budget funds for planting. He is hoping that the Commission can re-allocate any planting funds in the budget to tree removal or pruning. He advised that Community Park needs significant work, including the removal of hanging dead branches that are over play areas and trees that need to be removed. Some of this work can probably be done by DPW staff, but DPW staff will most likely not be able to handle all that needs to be done.

Mr. Linson explained what he sees as needing to be done, including that Dave at Greenwood will know how to proceed and that it might take a full week of work to complete.

Now that the Commission members have their copies, Mr. Linson reviewed each page with them. The plan will run from January 2014, but the actual date of submission will be sometime in April. In preparing this report, he advised they use boilerplate from other municipalities' reports. He advised to cross out any reference to Engineer. He commented on the survey. He next referred to page 5 where he had added a sentence. He also commented on the Liability Statement advising "that they are all pretty much the same." On Page 9 he asked if the Borough had four DPW staff who work on trees.

Councilwoman Fu and Commissioner Salerno confirmed there are four DPW staff who have been trained to work on trees.

Mr. Linson commented on the life of various tree work equipment. The plan is a target with goals to be aimed for. He listed some training courses on page 10 that would be helpful. Some very unusual things were discovered during the course of surveying the Borough. He remarked that Morris Plains has been a Tree City USA municipality for 36 years, one of the first in New Jersey. He referred to page 12 commenting on the budget funding and the big boost for this year's allocation.

Mr. Salerno commented on the Borough's annual tree planting program which involved about 40 trees. He advised the Commission began to seriously look at the tree situation in the Borough determining that planting 40 trees every year was not necessarily the best idea in all cases. He provided examples to support his point – mostly that not every site had sufficient area/width for good planting. The Borough's current tree planting program is now about 10-15 trees per year. Is this a good approach for the Borough?

Mr. Linson spoke about how horticulture has changed over the past 100 years or so. Much more understanding about the planting of trees is now available such as no planting of large trees under wires; no planting of large trees in narrow spaces due to the problem of the tree eventually raising sidewalks; best species of trees to use; and accepting that "you have to plant the right tree in the right place." He also said that

today one must know what is underground, too, before planting a tree – no planting on top of a water service, gas service or a sewer line. There should be no planting too close to a corner or a driveway. While Sustainable New Jersey is about increasing tree canopies, but in general this means planting trees in parking lots or in a park. If it is appropriate to do so, street trees should be replaced.

Continuing , Mr. Linson advised that at the back of his report he has included some policies that the Commission may want to consider following. He reviewed some of these with the Commission. There is also a guidebook for the kinds of trees to plant and where. He believes it is very worthwhile to have these policies in writing so that future Commission members can also refer to them. Having a consistent tree planting/care policy helps both the municipality and the property owners.

Councilwoman Fu asked if the policies contained in the report could stand just as a policy adopted by the Commission or should they be adopted by the municipality's Governing Body?

Mr. Linson stated the policies are not requirements of the plan, but through his many years of experience of doing this work, he has found written policies to be of immense help. They can be revised for use in the Borough as necessary; they have worked well in other municipalities. Since the Borough Council adopted the plan, it makes it much simpler to include some or all of the recommended written policies in how the Borough deals with tree planting, tree care, and other tree-related situations – “it saves everyone a lot of time and aggravation.” He said there are a number of blanks on page 12, mostly relating to DPW hours.

Councilwoman Fu stated working with the DPW on tree-related issues is more difficult since the DPW has not had a bucket truck in the past which limited the amount of tree work the DPW was able to do.

Mr. Linson said that engaging the DPW to help with the tree work is a “window of opportunity.” They would not be expected to do routine tree work in the middle of a snow storm, but in between snow storms, it may be possible to have them do some tree work. During the summer is another great window of opportunity to arrange for DPW staff to help with tree work. It is good to try and “grab” all the help that may be available from the DPW.

Councilwoman Fu advised she will talk with the DPW superintendent about these ideas. She wondered if it would be good to state that the DPW puts in an average of “X” hours and that with the acquisition of the bucket truck the anticipation is that more work (an estimated number of hours) will be able to be done by the DPW staff.

Cross discussion about sidewalk work that is done on a periodic basis, paid for by capital budget funds, and done by a contractor.

Next , Mr. Linson referred to Section 9 of his report and stated that the State will want to see that the Borough has a tree planting and tree care strategy for the next five years. There is not as much State funding for these things as was available years ago, so municipalities need to attempt to “grab their share.” He has suggested some tree species that he has been using in other municipalities. He has mostly been using compact trees due to the overwhelming presence of overhead wires and also more limited planting space. He stated that the Commission has obviously been doing many things correctly over the years. He has recommended to the State that it might be a good idea to have a 10-year plan versus the 5-year plan. The Borough has a good program now, this plan will make it even better.

Councilwoman Fu asked if there will be an assessment to ensure the Borough has accomplished all of the elements of the plan.

Mr. Linson replied that each year the Borough will need to submit an annual Accomplishment Report. While some of the municipal reports he has reviewed are not very specific, he recommends including as much specific information as to the work that has been done; for example, the number of trees taken down; the number of trees planted; and Arbor Day celebration details. “You want to toot your horn” and receive the accolades that are deserved. “Trees are good for everybody, a positive morale-building thing, a big plus for the community, and allows residents to take pride in their Borough. He stated that the various tree companies servicing the Borough over the years have all been good companies that were giving good advice. He also commented on surveying the trees in the Borough on a regular basis so that problem trees can be spotted as soon as possible. There is also a public safety concern here for some of the trees – “let’s make our parks safe”. He reviewed Section 10. There are 15 separate categories in this section, and if additional funds were requested each of the 15 categories would need to be addressed. On page 21 there is information that while not required he has personally found very helpful. One of the issues addressed is the risks that are being managed. He asked that the Commission members review his report and determine how consistent it is with where the Commission wants to go. He recommended that Councilwoman Fu review the policies with Mr. Signorelli. He advised that if the Commission members can get their comments back in a timely manner, he might be able to have a finished version of the report by the Commission’s April 2, 2014 meeting.

Mr. Williams asked if it might be a good idea to hold a Special Meeting.

Mr. Linson replied that, yes, that would be a good idea. He suggested that every Commission member provide input as to what he is proposing.

Councilwoman Fu state she knows that two people are required to be “core trained”, but what about the CEU’s that are required.

Mr. Linson responded that anyone can get CEU’s – It could be two DPW employees or it could be a volunteer. Ten CEU’s are required for each year. He advised that today

Bartlett Tree Experts had a seminar at Frelinghuysen Arboretum, and the attendance fee was free. Being able to do this is a big savings. He has also conducted seminars for DPW staff. The Borough of Riverdale sponsors a workshop so the drive down to South Jersey is eliminated. The core training course is held only in Cherry Hill.

Councilwoman Fu asked the approximate amount for a tree inventory.

Mr. Linson has done such inventories, using college interns, but there are other ways of doing this, too. He estimates the usual cost would be between \$15,000 to \$20,000. In doing such an inventory he assesses every tree located within the right-of-way.

Councilwoman Fu thanked Mr. Linson. She asked if he had the contract paperwork with him.

Mr. Linson asked that he be advised of the date of the Special Meeting. As to the submission of his report to the State, it can be submitted by him or in this case the Borough. This can be discussed further. He knows he did – it may be in his car – if so he will bring it in.

Mr. Salerno advised he believes this is a huge undertaking and is unsure if the Borough is financially prepared for this five-year program. The proposed scope makes him somewhat concerned.

Councilwoman Fu advised that she believes the cost of conducting a tree inventory is something that should be done with grant funding. This means the Commission/Borough would need to seek a grant in order to be able to do such a tree inventory.

Cross discussion as to Mr. Linson's recommendations, work the Borough can afford to do, and related matters. One surprising finding that Mr. Linson mentioned was the situation at the park, and someone could be hurt in such a location.

The Commission Secretary advised she believes that years ago there were plans to do a tree inventory by district; perhaps Mrs. Law will remember something about this. She believes George Anderson was involved.

Councilwoman Fu said such an inventory would be a huge undertaking, but once in place it would be great information to have, especially the 400 trees that are now being planted. It would provide records on what was done to each tree such as when is the last time this tree was pruned.

Mr. Williams asked about getting together in about a week or two.

Councilwoman Fu asked how the Commission wants to go forward – does the Commission want to meet as the Commission without Mr. Linson and then have several Commission members meet with him in between that meeting and any Special Meeting

that is scheduled. Perhaps this would allow the Commission to be able to adopt the plan at the Commission's April meeting. She also wondered if they could just hold the April meeting with a decision to adopt the plan at the Commission's May meeting. She will call Mr. Linson to determine if there is a big rush in getting the report in.

The Commission Secretary advised she will need to notice the meeting. This meeting could be in the second floor meeting room in the Borough Annex or it could be held at the Community Center.

Cross discussion about various ways the Commission could get together for a meeting outside their regular calendar of meetings, including the issue that if the meeting is not held in the regular room, it will not be able to be recorded.

The Commission and Councilwoman Fu decided on Thursday, March 20, 2014 at 2:00 p.m.

The Commission Secretary will check on the availability of the room. She also advised that she made a copy of the report for Mrs. Law. She asked if Mr. Dave Dubee should be invited to this meeting.

The Commission and Councilwoman Fu did not see a reason to invite Mr. Dubee; and it was determined to have the meeting on Thursday perhaps Mr. Signorelli should be invited.

Mr. Salerno moved that the tree work that was discussed be approved, seconded by Visscher. Voice vote. All in favor.

Motion carried.

Mr. Williams advised he will again go to look at the tree situation at 161 Granniss Avenue. He visited 5 Cutler Road and still does not see what the problem is.

The Commission Secretary believes the work at 5 Cutler Road has already been done by Greenwood. A purchase order must still be done for this tree, she will double check this.

Councilwoman Fu asked the Commission members for information relating to Curbside Planting. Because they will be going out to bid, she needs to know exactly how many trees will be planted, what types of trees they will be, and how many will be residential shade trees.

Cross discussion about prior work done to select tree species, including that Mr. Linson is not recommending Maple trees; that Dave Dubee has also made species recommendations; that October Glory Maple trees can be quite nice; that Mrs. Law has made up cards to provide information to residents; recommendations for take-down trees; that some property owners will refuse to allow a tree to be planted; and that notification must be given to property owners prior to planting.

Councilwoman Fu advised of a Shade Tree Federation Conference for either core training or any of the classes that are offered. She also asked that certain information be passed along to Mr. Signorelli. There was also discussion about the variety of seminars that are offered by a variety of people/groups involved with trees and tree care. She pointed out the Planting Plan in the report and commented on the information provided. She also mentioned other things members could do such as checking for problem trees or locations where a tree might be planted.

OLD BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

None.

There being no further business, Mr. Travaglia moved the meeting be adjourned, seconded by Mr. Visscher. Voice vote. All in favor.

Motion carried.

Maureen Sullivan
Recording Secretary

Karen M. Coffey
Commission Secretary