

Palmer Township, Northampton County

Shade Tree Commission Meeting Minutes

January 9th, 2025, 6:30PM, Lower-Level Municipal Meeting Room, 3 Weller Place

1. Roll Call

- a. Present: Shannon Wisniewski, Patrick Romano, Sandi Bush, David Demopoulos, Lee Hilbert, Valerie Liggett, and Zach Trexler
- b. Absent: Andrew Melhem.
- c. The meeting was called to order at 6:31PM.

2. Reorganization

- a. Wisniewski asked for nominations for Chair of the Committee. Bush nominated Shannon Wisniewski. Romano seconded the nomination. After ensuring there were no other nominations, Wisniewski closed the nominations. Shannon Wisniewski was elected as Chair of the Committee by unanimous voice vote.
- b. Wisniewski asked for nominations for Vice Chair of the Committee. Wisniewski nominated Pat Romano. Bush seconded the nomination. After ensuring there were no other nominations, Wisniewski closed the nominations. Pat Romano was elected as Vice Chair of the Committee by unanimous voice vote.

3. Approval of Meeting Minutes from December 5th, 2024

- a. Wisniewski made a motion to approve the minutes, and Bush seconded. The motion passed by voice vote.

4. Old Business

a. Newsletters/Community Outreach

- i. Wisniewski confirmed an article was submitted for the most recent newsletter. She said we are now looking for ideas for the upcoming May edition. Wisniewski stated we previously discussed open planting, but a backup should also be considered. Bush said we have not yet talked about grants, like the Bare Root Tree Grants and what we have done and where we have put them along with maintenance. Wisniewski asked Liggett if she had any recommendations, and Liggett suggested proper planting of a tree is always useful information to share. Wisniewski liked the idea because planting season is coming up, and we already have a graphic made that we could include. Demopoulos agreed that this topic would be good to include, and Bush agreed to create a draft article for this topic.

b. Grants

- i. Tree Pennsylvania Bare Root Spring 2025
 - 1. Wisniewski stated that she recently spoke with Scott Kistler and Lee Hilbert of the Township Public Works Department regarding ideas of where to plant more Bare Root trees, as well as the Recreation Advisory Committee.

2. Wisniewski asked if Mill Race Park is a good option to consider. Hilbert said we would rather stay away from Mill Race so the trees can remain dedicated to the Funeral Home, plus there is a water line that runs along the bike path in the park which would create obstacles for planting. Hilbert suggested planting the trees at Keystone Park, where there is an island between two parking lots that could fit five trees. He also stated four or five more could be planted near the volleyball court, and a row or more next to the pavilion. He said if we need more room, there is a spot near the soccer field we could utilize that could fit all 20 trees. Hilbert asked who handles the maintenance of the trees after they are planted. Wisniewski said we as the Township are supposed to keep the trees watered over the next two years. Wisniewski stated that grant application opens tomorrow, and that she will take care of it. She said we are also required to walk the site with the Forester by February 3rd, which she will also take care of, and she invited anyone to attend that wants to. All committee members asked Wisniewski to inform them when the site walk occurs at Keystone Park. Hilbert asked if the trees need to be staked within the park, and Wisniewski said yes. She said we will receive a list of what trees are available from the growers, and then we will decide which trees to select based on availability of size and space in the park. Wisniewski stated the pickup for the trees will be in early April.
3. Romano stated that he likes the idea of adding trees at Mill Race Park, specifically on the path from the restrooms to the woods where it is currently barren. Wisniewski said that we are going to leave tree planting to the Funeral Home for their memorial trees.

ii. Community Roots (PPL) – Old Orchard Park

1. Wisniewski stated that this was a concept plan that the committee asked Liggett to put together that involved some native plants, no mow areas, and some beds to be put into the park that would be low maintenance and funded through a grant program. She said if approved by the Supervisors and after speaking with all involved stakeholders, we would have some sort of community activity that would help with the labor of the project.
2. Val Liggett, Gilmore & Associates, introduced herself to the Committee. She put together 3 different concept plans for the Old Orchard Park project which all include no mow areas, planting areas, replacement buffering along the rear of the property where

the white pines came out. She said adding more trees outside of the replacements seemed like cramming and would create much more maintenance. She also supplied a detailed report of the PPL Community Roots Program, as well as research into some other potential grant opportunities such as the Lehigh Valley Greenways Mini Grant which stood out due to the aligned goals. She said this would be an option for next year due to the timing of the application period. Liggett stated that volunteer labor can be used as the match for this grant, which is something the Committee is already working towards. The goals for this grant include the expansion of pollinator habitats and the reduction of mow areas. Liggett also included the preliminary cost opinion, which could change based on how much volunteer labor is received and where the plants are sourced from, as well as what Public Works is able to contribute.

3. Liggett discussed concept plan A, which is the lowest budgeted project that was created. This plan includes buffer replacement trees and planting bed areas. She said she was very careful about where she placed pollinator plants, and stated she did not propose any being planted near the pavilion.
4. Liggett discussed concept plan B, which has a larger no mow area and more shrubs, as well as the bugger trees.
5. Liggett discussed concept plan C, which includes a mix of designs from the first 2 as well as some larger planting bed areas between the pavilion and basketball courts. This plan included more of a planted buffer area along Baldwin Drive as opposed to just a seeded area.
6. Liggett asked for comments on all the plans as well as suggestions on how to proceed. Wisniewski thanked Liggett for putting these together. She stated that at the top of plan, beneath the walking path is a large area used by children for sledding. She said she likes the idea of the drain area being a planted area which will help with the ditch. To the right of the drain, Wisniewski preferred that it remains open due to the children sledding. Wisniewski asked what the recommendation is for the pavilion and asked if the idea was for it to remain completely open for access purposes. Liggett agreed it is designed to remain open for accessibility purposes so that people are not walking through the planting beds. Wisniewski stated she likes the planting bed along Baldwin included with concept plan C because it includes the most plantings to aid in

views from the road and from within the park. She said this could help provide shade if there is a baseball game occurring on a very hot day. Demopoulos suggested a walking path through the proposed meadow areas, and Wisniewski stated that she doesn't believe the pavement would be extended any further, but that the paths on the plan indicated a mown path. Wisniewski asked about the area near the water tower possibly being more of a planted buffer area, and Liggett said yes, but she thought that was the sledding area which she now understands is not the case. Wisniewski said the sledding usually occurs more inward toward the park. Wisniewski said she likes the heavier replanting buffer noted in concept plan C. Wisniewski asked if any of the other existing trees in the park would need to come down, and Liggett said that it is likely that additional trees will be coming down. Demopoulos asked about grass walking paths and Wisniewski stated it is a good idea. Bush stated that we could still plant on the sledding area, but instead of planting bushes we could plant a perennial garden that just gets mowed every Fall while moving the bushes to another area. Wisniewski said the ultimate goal of the project is to reduce the mowing area all throughout the park. Bush said that this work could be phased, and Wisniewski said the timing of the project is certainly not going to be in 2025, but hopefully sometime in 2026.

7. Wisniewski stated that there are houses on the corner of Baldwin Drive that have some flooding issues, and that there is a potential for a system to be installed to help with those issues and that this plan could include some buffer to help hide whatever system is put into place.
8. Liggett asked the Committee to think about how the work will be done as far as Public Works involvement as well as volunteers. Wisniewski said we will think about it, but that she also knows they have commitments from the hospital and the Home Depot to help with the labor.

c. Open street site identification

- i. Wisniewski stated that we will circle back on this topic more towards the end of March, but asked Demopoulos if he had any questions in the meantime or needed any support. Demopoulos said he will be working on this more in the next few weeks, but that it would be helpful to overlay the existing map with a map of Township roads. He asked if it matters how much of the identification is done by satellite versus how much is done in

person, and Wisniewski said since it is preliminary, doing it by satellite is fine.

d. Arbor Day 2025

- i. Wisniewski stated that we got John Nissen, Northampton County Forester, to commit to coming to the event, and that he will be doing the morning portion with the library, but that he will also be staying for the whole day to discuss what it means to be a forester.
- ii. Wisniewski suggested splitting up the actions that were distributed previously to Melhem. Wisniewski said she will take on the tree donation and the trucks. She asked if the Committee could help brainstorm ideas for the raffles. She asked if it should be an attendance or an activity raffle, and Bush suggested an attendance raffle so that everyone is involved. Bush suggested a children's planting kit, and Wisniewski asked if Bush could come up with a few other ideas to include in the raffle prizes.
- iii. Wisniewski said the planting will take place on the island in front of the Police Station, and that we will try and plant two trees. She also said we will have two food trucks to help alleviate the lines we saw last year.
- iv. Bush asked if there was a theme designated for the library's program, and Wisniewski said a theme has not been developed yet, but we are targeting 10:30am for the kids to start and 11am for the proclamation to be read and the rest of the event beginning. Wisniewski stated that much of this year's event will mirror the event from last year.
- v. Wisniewski asked if the committee would want to do a container planting demonstration on Arbor Day or during a separate educational event. Discussions of the current trees that need to be removed ensued between the Committee and Hilbert. Wisniewski suggested removing the three dead trees and replacing them with one larger tree, while also planting a smaller tree against the building. For the smaller tree, she suggested a tree that is 15-25 feet, and 25-40 for the larger tree. She suggested doing the container planting for the tree against the building. Hilbert pointed out another spot near the building that could have a small tree planted in it, like a Magnolia. Wisniewski stated that we have received feedback in the past about the difficulty for residents to plant larger trees, and demonstrating a container tree is a great response to that feedback.

e. Emergency Removal Replanting

- i. Wisniewski stated that she spoke with Scott Kistler about this program, and he stated that whatever had been documented has already been replaced, and items that were not documented have not been replaced. She informed Demopoulos that this is where the open site identification will become very helpful.

f. Memorial Garden Discussion

- i. Wisniewski said she discussed this concept with the Recreation Advisory Committee to gather their feedback. They informed her that there is a lot of space in Schaeffer Park for this idea. Bush asked if anyone or any organization uses space, and Hilbert said no, it is just an open grass spot that the Township mows. Wisniewski said she wants to make sure we develop a thoughtful plan. Wisniewski said in terms of space, this area makes the most sense to me, and the Rec Board agreed. Romano agreed and said he is much more in favor of a public place like this. Romano asked about the areas in need of trees at Mill Race Park, and Wisniewski said we should leave that area for the Funeral Home to do their plantings. Romano suggested letting residents pick between both locations for their memorial tree to be planted. Wisniewski asked how the Funeral Homes' program operates, and Hilbert said they do the buying and we do the planting. Wisniewski stated that we would need to ask the Funeral Home if they would be okay with this idea. Hilbert said the Home plants one tree per year in memoriam to everyone who passed away that year, and Romano is suggesting that each person who passes away could have a memorial tree planted in their memory. Wisniewski said that she is open to that idea as long as the resident is willing to purchase the tree. Hilbert said since we are planting trees in all the parks anyway, why not let the residents pick from any Township Park. Wisniewski said she is not opposed, and Hilbert said maybe we should ask the Rec Board for their opinion. Wisniewski said we would need to make sure that the chosen park is able to accommodate a new tree, or we could just insert a plaque at an already existing tree. Hilbert said we would decide where the tree is planted within the chosen park. Wisniewski suggested drafting a brochure explaining the program and bring it for comment to all stakeholders, and if everyone is okay with it, we could drop them off at the Funeral Homes in the area, and then the residents would come to us with their requests.

5. New Business

a. 3106 William Penn Highway – Bank – Plan Review

- i. Wisniewski said there is only one challenge that I had, because they did change the species and adjust the plant schedule that we had previously suggested. She said we had asked them to add a third species to alternate, but they added a third tree and crammed them all into the corner, but we meant planting them together but in an alternating order to avoid mass casualty. She clarified that these are all street trees along William Penn Highway. Bush said this protects the investment of the property as well as the trees.

b. 2215 Newlins Mill Road – Trucking Terminal Expansion – Plan Review

- i. Wisniewski asked to display the Ingersoll Rand site along Route 22 East in New Jersey as a comparison. She stated that this applicant is proposing 50 Ash trees which are not on the approved species list, and 275 White Pines and Blue Spruces. She said she would propose something more naturalized and freer flowing so that in the future it will all grow in and blend together, so it looks like a real forested area. Wisniewski said she would not recommend any of the Ash trees and request a new street plan to achieve the goals just stated. Bush said White Ash is prohibited, and the goal of planting these trees is to keep them alive, but if they move forward with this plan and get an infestation, all of the trees could be wiped out together and it would end up becoming very costly. Wisniewski stated they need to diversify their tree selection as well as make the buffer area more natural. She also would not recommend planting any White Pine trees, as the Township is currently pulling all of them out of our Parks.

c. 2025 Pennsylvania Tree Survey

- i. Wisniewski said a survey was mailed to the Township, and the question is would we want to participate as a Committee and provide them with a donation. Wisniewski stated that the trees we would receive are very small. Wisniewski and Bush stated that they will participate individually, but they don't see the benefit as participating as a committee.

d. Earth Day

- i. Wisniewski stated that Karen Adams, Chair of the Environmental Steering Committee, suggested that our committee attend the Earth Day Event and offered us a table to display information and engage with residents. Trexler stated the Earth Day Event is being held on April 19th at 10am at Fairview Park. Wisniewski suggested participating in the raffle if they hold one like they did last year. She suggested thinking about what we could do at this event over the next few weeks and making sure it is friendly and engaging for both kids and adults.

6. Reports

a. Board of Supervisors

- i. Trexler stated that the committee is on the Supervisors Agenda for the 21st of the month to present the Annual Report as well as one other item. Wisniewski said that Romano will present the Annual Report, and I will report later in the meeting.

b. Tree City USA

- i. No report at this time.

c. Annual Report

- i. No report at this time.

7. Public Comment

- a. None at this time.

8. For the Good of the Order

- a. Trexler said the email that the committee requested is now active and ready to be used. He said anyone sending an email to that address will be received by him. Demopoulos stated that the email should be added to the website page for the committee.
- b. Wisniewski asked what channels the Township uses for engagements with the public, and Trexler said Facebook is utilized the most. He stated that Strasko provided him with a list of postings to go up on the committee's Facebook page to continue with out outreach. Wisniewski stated that as Arbor Day approaches, we will be doing this more often to advertise our event. She said we can also promote our Facebook page in our newsletter articles.

9. Next meeting: February 6th, 2025

10. Adjournment

- a. Romano made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Bush seconded. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote and the meeting was adjourned at 8:38PM.