Palmer Township

Shade Tree Commission Meeting Minutes

June 27, 2022, 6:30PM at Palmer Township Municipal Building

1. Roll Call

- **a.** The meeting was called to order at 6:32PM.
- **b.** Present: Chairperson Jamie Collins, Lee Hilbert, Scott Kistler, Paige Strasko, Joseph Armato joined a few minutes late and resident Yvonne Schaeffer.
- c. Absent: Patrick Romano

2. Approval of Meeting Minutes from May 31, 2022

a. Since Romano was not present there was not a quorum to vote on approving the minutes. These will be postponed until another committee member can be present to approve the minutes.

3. Old Business

- a. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Second Class Township Code
 - **i.** Collins wanted to include these items to discuss with Romano but since he was not in attendance the commission continued to item 3C.
- **b.** Township of Palmer Code of Ordinances
 - i. Collins mentioned updating the Township Ordinance.
- **c.** Palmer Township Policy and Procedures for Trees and Sidewalks within Township Right-of-Way
 - i. Collins stated there was little in this policy and that Shade Tree Commission (STC) should discuss changing the Township policy. Collins also stated she wanted to review all the ordinances and policies with the commission and then the Commission can work with the township on specific aspects of the ordinances/policies. Kistler agreed and stated that the policy needs to be better defined. Collins went into specifics of the ordinance with Kistler, and he suggested that STC produce a reasonable plan for sidewalk replacement. Collins and Kistler discussed planning of sidewalk trees being replaced and who will be responsible for sidewalk repairs in the future. Kistler explained the widespread problem of tree roots lifting sidewalks and that STC may need to assess the issue to better understand the problem and to find a solution that everyone will be able to live with. Collins stated they may need a special meeting to further discuss. Collins mentioned the new policy will need to include replacement of street trees and tree removal permits.
- **d.** Review of proposed acceptable and prohibited tree lists for the Zoning Ordinance and SALDO
 - i. Collins reviewed the list of trees and she thought there were species that could be removed from the acceptable list and some species that could be added back on the list. Collins mentioned that native plants on the list are important but there are some non-native plants that help build the diversity

- of plant life. Kistler then clarified that once Collins was able to review the list in depth that Collins should make a recommendation on what species to add or remove directly to Cynthia Kramer.
- ii. Yvonne Schaeffer jumped in to ask a question since it related to the current topic. Schaeffer stated she lives in Old Orchard and one side of the street are all maple trees and the other side are pear trees, she wanted to know why pear trees are being planted in her neighborhood. Collins mentioned the Bradford Pear Trees just made the invasive species list in PA this year and that it could be another species of pear tree. Collins and Schaeffer discussed the pros and cons of tree species and Collins assured Schaeffer that no new pear trees will be planted. Collins also explained that the STC will be able to review developers plans before they start building and planning new developments and she can discuss with Township employees and planning commission to find a new tree review policy if they feel it is needed. Kistler jumped in and added the first step in correcting the problem is updating the SALDO list since that is the list developers use to plant trees.
- **iii.** Kistler asked Schaeffer if she had seen any damage from the pear trees and they discussed a few trees that were already removed for disease near the site she was describing.
- **iv.** Schaeffer also mentioned that she has been learning more about native trees and their importance and wanted to make sure that most of the trees for the future are native. Collins also described that there needs to be a balance between native and non-native but that the township is moving in the right direction in planting more native trees.
- **e.** Does the current tree removal policy/procedure need to be updated to include Shade Tree Commission guidance and/or approval for all removal requests?
 - i. Collins stated this was discussed thoroughly at the last meeting. Kistler stated the STC needs to make sure they get a tree replacement policy in place as soon as possible since the township is moving forward with removing 150+ dead trees across the township. Kistler wants to replace trees shortly after being removed so there is not a long amount of time between.
 - ii. Collins asked about bids for tree removal contractors and Kistler explained the process the township must follow, and they are about 6 weeks out from having a tree removal contractor. Collins confirmed that would be the middle of August and Collins and Kistler discussed logistics and timing of tree removal and planting. Collins and Kistler also discussed budgeting for tree removal. Armato joined during this discussion and stated that they will find the funds somewhere. Armato was then caught up on what he missed with contractor bids. Armato suggested splitting tree removal between this year and next year to lessen the cost.

- Armato also asked about pricing on other trees and Kistler stated Tom Adams is looking into prices and they are having an issue trying to develop a specific procedure for tree removal contractors to follow. Collins and Kistler discussed some of the issues they are running into. Armato asked Collins if she was able to find prices for trees to plant and Collins had stated tree prices from her nurseries were very similar to what the township already pays but that they are high quality plants. Collins discussed the need for high quality plants and started discussing logistics again in terms of planting species in fall or spring for best growth.
- **f.** Possibly Updating current tree policy to include replanting of street trees that have been removed.
 - i. Collins mentioned using the revised tree list and guidelines for species percentages when planting quantities of trees to ensure diversity.
 - ii. Kistler wanted to make sure that residents know about Palmer replanting trees, and he thought the best way to inform residents would be to send out a general handout that explains the process with a timeframe. Collins also mentioned letting people know the trees will not be replanted in the same exact spot. Collins also asked Kistler what his expectations are for homeowners when the new trees are planted in terms of care. Kistler stated he thought the handout could ask homeowners to water the tree. Collins and Kistler discussed what the handout could say, tree watering schedule, and explain the mission of the STC to residents to encourage them to care for their tree and educate residents about their trees.
 - iii. Kistler then asked what the procedure should be for the few that do not want a tree replanted on their property. Armato stated they need to respect the homeowners wishes since it is their property. Strasko also mentioned if homeowners do not want the tree on their property STC could do what was discussed in the previous meeting and plant the tree in a park or somewhere else in the neighborhood. Collins then asked what the goal is with replacement trees. Collins and Armato discussed how some residents may not want a replacement tree and Collins was adamant about making sure all residents have replacement trees. Collins and Armato discussed other issues residents might have about species of trees etc.
 - iv. Kistler also mentioned he wanted to look at the tree data to determine if dead trees are occurring randomly or if there are multiple dead trees in a row on the same street. Kistler wants to look at this information to better understand why trees are dying and to proactively prevent further tree death.
 - v. Collins mentioned she was working on an announcement to introduce STC to the residents and educate them on what STC does as well as ask for interested residents to join the STC. Collins also mentioned that if Romano is not present, he cannot participate, and he may need to be

replaced on the committee. Collins stated she and Strasko can work on the announcement together and get it in the newsletter.

4. New Business

- **a.** Tree removal permits
 - i. Collins stated that she wants to get this in place sooner rather than later but there is a lot to do. Armato stated he would also like to see this initiated because he has seen a lot of residents in the Northwood development taking down healthy trees for no reason. Collins responded by saying that having other township ordinances, like DeGerolamo mentioned at the last meeting, would be helpful to have a starting point. Collins asked Strasko to find sample ordinance and suggested looking at Mont Claire New Jersey ordinances and Armato suggested looking at Bucks County ordinances.
 - ii. Collins explained what her job entails for private homeowners and how the ordinances she must follow in New Jersey are very detailed down to the caliper and how many trees homeowners must replace depending on the size of the tree that was removed. Armato stated he wanted to have ordinances like that before new housing developments are built. Kistler described the importance of informing local tree contractors that the township is putting a permit system in place for tree removal.
 - iii. Collins asked Armato discussed the new changes coming to Palmer, and Armato described a clear cut in Wolf's Run that upset many residents because many of the trees there did not have to be removed. Armato and Collins also discussed a large quantity of new apartments and that the BoS is looking for more green spaces now. Collins asked for a deadline to have tree removal permits done for BoS. Armato stated sometime in September or October when new ordinances are supposed to come to the BoS. Collins asked about differences between policies and ordinances. Armato stated they need to added tree removal permits to the ordinances. Armato asked that Collins send her ideas to him and to Cynthia Kramer for new ordinances. Collins asked if she should be in attendance at planning commission meetings and Armato stated it would be helpful so they can discuss with planning directly about specifications.
 - **iv.** Collins also stated she would most likely need to ask more questions and would reach out directly to answer them.
- **b.** Tree maintenance issues, construction practices, etc.
 - i. Collins deferred this topic until the next meeting because she just wanted to discuss these topics openly but there was not a specific situation she wanted to discuss.
- c. Police Department Pine Tree
 - i. Kistler brought this new business up in the meeting and described how the police officers are complaining about pine sap and dirt getting on the police vehicles and their personal vehicles. The police asked Kistler to

bring it to the STC for possible removal of the pine tree. Armato asked for Kistler to show him which tree they are having problems with. Collins suggested moving where they park. Collins agreed to take a look at the tree as well.

5. Reports

a. Board of Supervisors

6. For the Good of the Order

- **a.** Kistler brought up the tree assessment form from the last meeting stating that he added what Collins had asked him to about fungus on the tree. Kistler stated he just needed Collins to sign off on the form stating that she was ok with the layout and there was nothing else to add so that the Parks department can start using the evaluation form for trees.
- **b.** Armato asked about the resident from the last meeting who wanted to top the pine trees by his house. Kistler explained that Collins had evaluated the trees and thought they were fine but a branch fell from one so Collins went back and reassessed and determined two of the eight that could be removed. Kistler stated the trees mentioned are included in the 150+ list of trees that need to be removed and will be included in the cost assessment for the tree removal bid.
- c. Schaeffer asked about ash trees near her neighborhood and if the township is aware of them. Kistler explained to Schaeffer about what was discussed at the last meeting and that there was an inventory taken of trees in Palmer that needed to be removed. Kistler also assured Schaeffer that if the trees are dead in the right-of-way they are already on the list.
- **d.** Strasko clarified that all dead trees were in the right of way and explained to Kistler a resident had pointed out a tall dead tree by his property across from the bike path. Strasko wanted to make sure that Kistler and Hilbert were aware of the tree and made sure they knew the location. Collins then asked if they identified dead trees in the parks and Kistler stated they looked in the parks but did not identify many dead trees in the parks.
- 7. NEXT MEETING: July 25, 2022

8. Adjournment

a. The meeting was adjourned at 7:40PM.