

FREEHOLD TOWNSHIP SHADE TREE COMMISSION

September 1, 2021 Meeting - 7:30 PM

AGENDA

1. Meeting Called to Order: 7:37 - In attendance: Thom Ritchie, Bill Brash, Greg Hanley, Stacey Ehling
2. Salute to the Flag – Moment of silence observed.
3. Announcement of Open Public Meeting Act – observed.

In accordance with the Open Public Meeting Law, (c231, P.L. 1975) this meeting was announced by posting a notice on the bulletin board in the Municipal Building reserved for that purpose, by mailing such notice to the offices of the official newspapers and the Township and filing such notice with the Township Clerk. Done.

4. Meeting Minutes of June 2, 2021 – Approved - Bill motion to approve, Greg Second.

Guest: Kurt Davis, 210 Randolph Rd. Came to see what it is about want to get involved in community he was a member of the local Fire Co. Has a degree in landscape design from Del Valley College. Has worked on Xmas tree farms, golf courses, landscape on the side, pruning.

He said he has concerns about things in the town that he can help with. Moving in and cutting down all the trees. Durand Park and the Memorial Arboretum has maintenance issues.

Thom explained what being on the Shade Tree Commission involves and next steps if he is interested: Staggered 5 year terms, write a letter to join the committee, put in experience, send email in.

5. Shade Tree Appeal Hearings:

Guest: Brad Hager, Elite Landscaping, South Plainfield, NJ. Behalf of the Wemrock Professional Mall and tree removal requested there.

a. Wemrock Professional Mall Association Inc. (denied TRP) The tree removal work was stopped when Scott saw it and found no permit had been applied for.

Brad: I have a packet of information but don't know if you have everything. What is it you need?

Thom: We need to know about removals stopped without permits. Tree company should be aware of the permit process.

Brad: My company will put everything back in place. I have letter from FWH Engineering Co. I have list of trees with caliper size and conditions. I think we just need to get signature from one person. We used Rich Tree Service out of South Plainfield. There were two trees that are on the property lines targeted for removal (or have already been removed).

Thom: What we want to see is information from licensed tree expert. Condition of trees that were removed without permits. Not allowed to assess condition if you are not licensed tree expert. Pruning work was fine. The issue is that you didn't apply for permits and there was no notice of tree

condition of the larger trees in particular that were removed. No reports from a licensed tree expert were provided to our knowledge.

Greg: Were any of the trees heritage trees? Any too close to buildings? We don't know if trees were too close to building. LTE would need to make educated choice. If taken down and not heritage tree size would that be allowed. If we can get that information would help. These are the lynch pins of what we are asking.

Thom: There was a concern by the management company about the removal process preventing repaving but that didn't stop it. The landscape design proposed looks nice. We just need answers on LTE reports.

Brad: So what do I need to do from here?

Bill and Greg: We are here to help you move this along to give you guidance. We need the current tree conditions and in particular the 6 that were removed that might be heritage trees. If they were heritage trees and removed without permit and were in good condition – that means you are obligated to mitigate the loss of them. We need to know the condition of those trees – LTE has to say this is my best estimate of the trees, were healthy and why. If healthy need to mitigate the loss.

Brad: How do they determine the value, some are large and could be a big ticket item.

Bill: The LTE would have to establish the value of those trees. When you hire the LTE We can meet with you and them to assess the situation. Look at stump size, google earth, pervious photos, see if there are other heritage trees in that line. It is the healthy trees that are the issue. If they weren't health we would have issued a permit to remove them.

Brad: So, if they were healthy – have to mitigate and decide if should take down or now. Largest of the trees were taken down already. I do snow removal there so I may have photos of trees.

Thom: We deal with this constantly – and when we don't enforce the ordinances word gets around. We try to do best we can for community. We have 3 licensed tree experts here on our commission and we care about our town.

Brad: What is turnaround time.

Thom: we only meet once a month – doesn't mean we couldn't have communication. And Bill would want to look at it or Greg and we can meet LTE on the site. We want to work with you and hope tree company that did the work gets talking to – their responsibility. On the same page.

6. Unfinished Business:

- a. Update of inventory – Nothing new.
- b. 2021 tree planting for street tree replacements (residents request list & Stillwell's Corner Road) and DPMA replacements.

We have 57 trees that could have homes and new list of recent new homeowners. Behind Clayton Farms development. Alan dropped notes in mailbox. Homeowners have been contacted to confirm they still want the trees and some have been removed from the list that don't want them. We are looking at other options for those trees.

Purchasing 58 Trees -- Oct. 1st is the targeted date. Wrapped up by November. We are working on designating the species for the additional homes now on the list.

We want success – haven't done it in more than 10 years. But have locations need species for.

c. Structural pruning and remove of all stakes & ties from trees planted over a year ago. Will inspect those trees and help out at some point along Stillwells. Some co-dominance and slight elevation. We will do a Fall/Winter review.

d. Need to hire an LTE for tree removal permits and planting inspections. No change. Met with Pete Valessi several times as of yet, no one has been identified to fill the position. Bill will inquire again on the status of the hiring.

e. Tree Removal permit forms and process overhaul (work in progress). Shared samples. Suggested to add sidewalk to list and add a saying "Stop Before You Chop" to the document. Need to add request. Modify back end of the form to clean up the townships process of sign-offs. LTE would help handle that. Need way to make form online "submit" and load photos/docs at the same time (this will only be possibly once they upgrade the website).

7. New Business:

a. Shade Tree Monthly Report – 4 removals, 0 plantings, 10 broken limbs, Durand park trim apps 25. (removal approved 9 – zero denials, 4 plaques installed. WE reviewed.

b. Correspondence – None.

c. Good and Welfare - - Shade Tree Federation Meeting in Cherry Hill Oct. 21-22, 2021.

9. Open Public Discussion - None

10. Adjourn 8:38 p.m.