

**Princeton Shade Tree Commission
Minutes of May 24, 2022
Virtual Meeting/Zoom Conference**

Members

Voting:

Sharon Ainsworth
Victoria Airgood
Raymond Devoe
Patricia Frawley
Lily Krauss
Alexandra Radbil
Janet Stern

Non-Voting:

Sandra Chen: 1st Alternate
Radhicka Pola 2nd Alternate

Council Liaison:

Mayor Mark Freda

Town Arborist:

Taylor Sapudar

Guests: Two representatives from Sustainable Princeton.

The regular meeting of the PSTC was called to order on 5/24/22 at 5:00 pm by Ainsworth.

OPENING STATEMENT Read by Ainsworth.

ROLL CALL Stern, Devoe, Frawley, Chen, Airgood, Radbil, Ainsworth, Freda, Sapudar

RUBLIC COMMENT: None.

MINUTES The minutes of the April 26, 2022 meeting were approved with pending correction by a motion made by Chen and seconded.

Ayes: Radbil, Stern, Airgood, Devoe, Frawley, Ainsworth.

Motion carried.

REPORTS

1. Arborist

- Additional trees were planted at the municipal rain garden in front of the fueling station. The mass plantings of iris at that location are in full bloom at this time and look great.
- The Tree of the Month for June is the Hawthorne. August's tree will be the pawpaw.
- Sapudat completed a tree risk assessment course (TRAQ) in May and will be taking a EHAP Electrical Awareness course in June.
- Spring planting for this year is complete.
- The inventory grant is posted and is in the application process.
- Damage from last year's cicada infestation is being observed with plans to have tree crews address deadwood particularly on newly planted trees.
- The tree inventory will be on the next council agenda.
- The Enforcement Officer has begun work. STC members were urged to contact the Municipal Arborist for any shade tree ordinance violations or any landscaping ordinance concerns.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Mercer and Nassau Street Tree Loss and Proposed Replacement-(Ainsworth)

Sapudat noted that several trees needed to be removed for safety reasons. The area needs new trees as does the corridor that is maintained by a local garden club. Radbil asked how many trees are planted every year and how many do we lose overall. Sapudat stated that most of the trees lost are ash and pin oaks. Pin oaks have bacterial leaf scorch. Radbil asked about storm damage which Sapudat noted was mostly related to trees on private land. Airgood asked if the Nassau Street tree replanting was under consideration.

Sapudat has no update in regard to replanting.

2. DEP's Natural Climate Solution(Green and Blue Carbon) Grants-(Chen)

Chen commented that she thought that NJDEP's "Natural Climate Solutions" grants offered an opportunity too valuable to dismiss without careful consideration. NJDEP has announced "\$15 Million Towards Blue Carbon & Forestry Projects":

https://www.nj.gov/dep/climatechange/mitigation/ncsgrant.html?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery. The grant amount is unprecedentedly large and no match is required!

Guidelines for application may be found here:

<https://www.nj.gov/dep/climatechange/docs/natural-climate-solutions-grant-program.pdf>.

The monies have come to New Jersey as a by-product of its participation in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI). RGGI is a multi-state program for addressing climatechange (https://www.rggi.org/sites/default/files/Uploads/Fact%20Sheets/RGGI_101_Factsheet.pdf). The 11 participating states (CT, DE, ME, MD, MA, NH, NJ, NY, RI, VT, VA) set a cap that limits CO2 emissions from the electric power generators. The cap is a fixed number of tons of allowed CO2 emissions. The cap is divided into allowances, each with a value of 1 ton of CO2 emissions. The allowances are offered for sale via auction four times a year to power generators. A power generator can only emit as much CO2 as it holds allowances to cover.

Under RGGI, States use the monies brought in from the CO2 allowance auctions to fund projects that will reduce future greenhouse gas emissions. The CO2 reduction strategies are usually technology-based, such as solar panel installations or electric buses. However, NJ's law specifies that 10% of its monies are to be used to fund "natural" carbon sequestration through programs that (1) promote the beneficial role of New Jersey's tidal marshes in the carbon cycle; and/or (2) enhance the stewardship and restoration of State's forests.

Two grant categories are "forest and wood land restoration" and "urban forest canopy and water quality enhancement." Princeton could readily use monies for these purposes. However, one problem we would be that each grant, while it cannot exceed \$5 million, must be for at least \$250,000. The management of a project on that scale might be a challenge on the municipal level. Another problem for Princeton's prospects in winning a grant is that proposals are rated higher and are more likely to be selected for funding if they show benefit to environmental justice communities. The State has criteria for such communities and has mapped them <https://www.nj.gov/dep/ej/communities-location.html>. In Mercer County, most of the areas that qualify as "overburdened" are in Trenton and parts of Ewing and Hamilton.

Chen said she was wondering if, instead of a municipal grant application, there could be a county-wide project that Princeton could participate in. Every municipality in Mercer County, including Princeton, would benefit from having an inventory of its municipally owned or managed forestlands. She asked if we could approach the County and see if it would put in for a grant that would benefit wooded municipal parklands of every municipality in the county willing to participate, as well as county woodlands. Or there could be some other potential regional project, where we could be a cooperator in a regional grant. She asked the other STC members what they thought. . .

Stern asked if Sustainable Princeton would be interested in this grant. Sustainable Princeton representatives responded that would be happy to assist is there any project that can be included in this grant. Ainsworth asked if more than one municipality would it be advantageous because of the dollar amount, and larger communities with be of benefit.

Chen provided some rationale for working with larger communities. The grant is due in August and is complex in demands. Freda offered to contact County officials to determine if anyone is interested in pursuing this grant. Sapudar said he will talk to the Open Space manager to discuss possibilities. Radbil offered to reach out to Sourlands Conservancy. Stern mentioned some connections that could be pursued including the Watershed institute. Ainsworth asked Chen to produce a two-paragraph summary of the grant which could be disseminated to various potential partners.

OLD BUSINESS

1. Discussion of STC Input with respect to Areas in Need of Redevelopment(Airgood/Krauss/Stern)

Chen commented that she had looked at the "Local Redevelopment and Housing Law" (N.J.A.C. 40A:12A-1 et seq.) to try to understand how it waived the applicability of local ordinances to projects in areas declared as needing redevelopment. She said she was unable to find any exemption from local ordinances in the text she looked at. She wondered if she had overlooked some provision in the law, or if waiving ordinances is something that a municipality agrees to do in order to encourage developers to undertake low-income housing projects. Comments related to this topic will be forthcoming at the next meeting.

Airgood noted that when this was put on the agenda she did not understand the entirety of input.

Ainsworth indicate that she felt the Planning Board was very receptive to STC comments.

Ainsworth noted that a Landscape subcommittee was set up by the Planning Board with Sapudar as part of the committee. Sapudar stated that the planting area was not increased although the number of trees was increased. Stern suggested that a letter should be written that seeks inclusion of the STC in early planning rather than waiting until final planning stages.

Chen commented on the absence of reference in state law. Airgood indicated that we need to have a clear understanding of areas in need of redevelopment including differences. Suggests a letter to council to define the differences prior to writing any referenced letter. Is each ANR different asked Stern . Ainsworth asked if Chen or Airgood could summarize concerns about the differences.

2. Task Force on Stewardship of Public Forest Land-(Ainsworth/Chen//Krauss/Sapudar)

Chen provided an update on Senator Smith’s Task Force on Stewardship of Public Forest Lands. She pointed out that New Jersey has a forest stewardship program for private lands that was authorized under a State law enacted in 2010 and implemented through NJDEP rules promulgated in 2017. The goal of the current Task Force is to identify recommendations, that are accepted by a consensus, which could be the basis of a forest stewardship program for public lands.

An initial Task Force meeting was held on-line on April 28. About 230 people signed in. The co-chairs indicated that all participants would be able to sign up for one or both of two workgroups. They said intensive work would begin in May. To date Chen heard nothing further about workgroup sign-up. In response to a query she sent, one Co-chair explained: “There was an overwhelming response to the workgroup participation, and we are working on optimal ways to ensure that all voices are heard and documented. You can expect to hear from us within the next week.”

In the meantime, the STC sub-committee met to seek to identify proposals Princeton could offer to the Task Force, once it got underway. The sub-committee considered several measures that could benefit management of forest lands by Princeton and other municipalities. These include:

- Seeking some kind of annual funding to support municipal forest management (perhaps comparable to the tax reductions that private landowners can qualify for under Farmland Assessment).
- Possibility of establishing some entity at Rutgers that would support research, training, and outreach on ecological forest management.

At its most recent meeting, Anna Corichi, Princeton Friends of Open Space’s Director of Natural Resources and Stewardship, offered a new idea:

- Certain plants are known to escape cultivated landscapes and “invade” natural areas. It is counterproductive to allow nurseries and other outlets to sell such plants, and then have to utilize scarce resources to have them removed as invasive species from forested parklands. Delaware has passed a law banning both the import and sale of a list of invasive plants in that state:
<https://legis.delaware.gov/json/BillDetail/GenerateHtmlDocument?legislationId=48260&legislationTypeId=1&docTypeId=2&legislationName=SB22>. Couldn’t New Jersey also pass such a law? Chen added that an article in the “Inside the Pinelands” newsletter had given her another idea that she had not yet had the opportunity to discuss with the sub-committee—but would at their next meeting. The article explained that in Egg Harbor City in Atlantic County the city council approved declaring a 400 acre municipal park to be an area in need of re-development. There was local resistance and the city council revoked their approval. Chen noted that a bill is currently pending in the State legislature (S104/A2436) that would exclude farmland, taxed under the Farmland Assessment Program, from the definitions of “redevelopment area” in the State “Local Redevelopment and Housing Law.” She plans to suggest proposing that forest lands under a Forest Stewardship Plan or a Community Forestry Management Plan also be excluded from being able to be designated as an “area in need of redevelopment.”

During discussion, Freda asked about forest and woodland restoration and if preserving a forest is included in this area. Stern asked about the Sourlands Mountain area as possibly being of interest. . Chen responded that the grants are very broad. While public lands are the focus, private lands can also be considered with reservation

3. Environmental Justice- (Radbil/Sapudar/Stern)

On Saturday, May 21, Radbil and Stern gave a presentation for residents of the Witherspoon Jackson Neighborhood Association (WJNA) at the First Baptist Church. Topics included the benefits of shade trees and letting residents know that they can request municipal trees not only in the upcoming municipal fall tree planting but every spring and fall. Radbil and Stern had on hand a sign-up sheet for residents to request trees (four people signed up) and also handed out sign-up slips that residents could take home, as well as give out to neighbors who were not able to attend the meeting.

Attendees were positive about planting and maintaining trees on and around their streets, and there was a lively and productive discussion. Some, however, complained of the damage to sewage pipes year after year by tree roots that break through weakened or leaking pipes; one wants to have removed the beautiful oak in the municipal right-of-way that is causing the problem. Beleaguering property owners annually, this kind of damage is expensive and time-consuming and more than some residents can afford to keep remediating. This issue prompted a discussion about whether a fund could be established (perhaps from infrastructure monies?) that subsidizes homeowners, enabling them to avail themselves of the new technologies for renewing and restoring old pipes. The STC agreed that this proposal and possible solution should be brought to the attention of the Mayor, so it will be on the agenda of the next STC meeting.

Residents also reported issues with limbs over their roofs and upraised sidewalks. Radbil and Stern asked if they had contacted the municipality directly or through See-Click-Fix to report these issues. They had not realized that they could communicate this information. Radbil and Stern proposed a walk with Sapudar to the specific sites mentioned to determine if and what type of work orders should be created. Stern stated that she and Radbil met with a local group.

Radbil extended some of the issues that Stern addressed.

Devoe asked about the use of copper sulfate used to minimize sewer damage which Sapudar indicated that he was not familiar with this product in terms of remediation. Airgood noted in regard to sewer pipes, information can be obtained from varied sources.

Sapudar and Ainsworth thanked Stern and Radbil for their work.

OTHER

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn made by Stern and seconded

Ayes: Stern, Airgood, Devoe, Frawley, Radbil, Ainsworth.
carried.

Meeting adjourned at 6:23 pm.

^ Addendum: Action Plan

ACTION	TIME	RESPONSIBILITY
STC Review of Plans for Witherspoon St Project	Ongoing	Sapudar and subcommittee
Prepare for CFMP renewal	September 2022	Airgood/Chen
Johnson Park Walking Path	Ongoing	Sapudar/Ainsworth/Airgood/Kraussss
Member at Large proposal	June meeting	Radbil
Sen. Smith sub committee	Ongoing updates	Chen
Articles for newspaper	Ongoing	Stern/Airgood/Krauss
EJ plantings	Ongoing	Sapudar//Stern/Radbil
Nassau St replanting update	Ongoing	Sapudar

