

**Princeton Shade Tree Commission
Minutes of November 17, 2020
Virtual Meeting--Zoom Conference**

Members

Voting:

Sharon Ainsworth
Victoria Airgood
Welmoet Bok van Kammen
Patricia Frawley
Lily Krauss
Alexandra Radbil
Janet Stern

Non-Voting:

Sandra Chen: 2nd Alternate
Ray Devoe: 1st Alternate

Council Liaison:

Michelle Lambros

Town Arborist:

Taylor Sapudar

Guests: None

The regular meeting of the PSTC was called to order on 11/17/2020 at 5:01pm by Ainsworth.

OPENING STATEMENT: Read by Ainsworth.

ROLL CALL: Bok van Kammen, Radbil, Stern, Frawley, Chen, Ainsworth, Sapudar.

PUBLIC COMMENT: None.

MINUTES: The minutes of the 10/27/20 meeting were approved with correction by a motion made by Radbil and seconded.

Ayes: Bok van Kammen, Radbil, Stern, Frawley, Ainsworth.

Motion carried.

REPORTS

1. Arborist Report

--Sapudar has returned to his office following a brief leave for the recent birth of his son, Henry. He announced that Engineering is preparing for the Nassau Street streetscape planting. They are ready to push it out to bid. The pits will be enlarged, and removable grates will also be part of the planting to allow for tree growth. Sapudar is exploring options for structural soils in the pits. More is going into this as we progress. About eight types of trees that will do well in urban environments are being discussed for selection, with a focus on native trees. He will follow up on this shortly.

--Bartlett Tree Service is donating deep root feeding of the three trees on the island where the new Rescue Squad building is located.

(Devoe, Airgood, and Lambros arrived.)

--Radbil noted that the Shade Tree Federation wants STC members to be involved in tree planting selection; we are fortunate that Sapудар is part of tree selection for so many locations.

--Radbil commented on prior plantings and noted that she was approached by a vendor at the Shade Tree Federation Conference who is marketing tree diapers. The Sourlands is receiving an experimental donation of these items. Sapудар will have more information at the next meeting.

--Bok van Kammen asked whether there is any thought of protecting the trees from bicycles--perhaps by providing more bicycle racks--and other intrusions. Sapудар noted that tree guards were under consideration. The trees may also be recessed further from the street an additional 12 inches, which would help protect the trees.

2. Council Liaison Report

--The holiday evergreen tree idea has really taken off. *Town Topics* wants to run a contest for the best decorated tree. Ten organizations have already volunteered to decorate these trees. The local newspaper will have links for the public to use to vote for their selection, with the winner receiving a quarter-page ad in the *Town Topics*. Bok van Kammen suggested that, for the STC tree decorations, we use pictures and descriptions of native trees.

Stern asked if the trees had been purchased already. She proposed that deciduous trees be considered for another year. Since the trees will be planted after the holiday, and Princeton needs to augment its shade tree canopy, deciduous trees are desirable and can be creatively decorated. Nevertheless, there have been multiple requests to have the fir trees, 5 to 6 footers, planted throughout the town. Suggested locations include part of Rt. 206 and the Smoyer Park buffer area with Herrontown Road. The trees will be planted by the DPW and will be clustered for ease of care. The trees address species diversity and are deer-resistant. Devoe asked if we wanted any kind of tagging to identify when and where the trees are located.

Radbil requested that we put this item on the agenda in January so that we can review the project and consider whether we want to repeat it again next year. Future discussion could also address the issue of using deciduous trees.

--Progress is being made on the plaque design. James Steward [chair of the Public Art Selection Committee] has taken ownership of it and will send Lambros a mockup, which she will forward to the STC.

NEW BUSINESS

1. 2021 TD Green Space Grant (Sapудар)

Sapудар will share information with anyone who would like to see material for the grant. The grant specifics focus on resiliency and economic justice. We could consider doing a survey of areas where we don't have much tree coverage. Radbil noted that we should look at who needs trees, who would like trees. Sapудар says this will be part of the inventory. Bok van Kammen said i-tree had identified some of these areas, and Sapудар will make a note of them. Economic justice is tied to this grant, said Radbil, and can be an area of focus. Bok van Kammen again noted that these areas have been identified.

2. Downtown Holiday Village and Plaque Mockup (Lambros)

Already discussed above.

OLD BUSINESS

1. Shade Tree Trust Reserve Fund for Proposed Holiday Use (Ainsworth)

Discussed in prior notation.

2. NJ Community Forestry Program Updates and Report (Chen/Radbil)

Chen highlighted some information in her agenda item related to this topic (see attachment). The State is in the final stages of developing a five-year action plan. The State presents a new plan every five years and awards money periodically for compliance. Comments are needed soon. In the past, the plan has not been so well balanced; this new plan is a step forward, according to Chen. Further comments were related to new ideas that communities must follow in order to be accredited.

The new plan says that the State will consult experts in developing guidelines, but we should suggest in our formal comments that STCs should also be included in any discussion. An additional comment addressed material presented to the Shade Tree Federation focusing on plantings that are economically productive. The consideration that trees should be ecologically productive in order to promote biodiversity should be noted in the STC's comments.

We will submit comments and include ideas related to stakeholders, according to Ainsworth, who asked for a motion to submit comments that have been verbally shared.

Motion by Airgood and seconded to submit comments related to the NJ State Forest Action Plan, as identified by Chen.

Ayes: Airgood, Frawley, Radbil, Bok van Kammen, Ainsworth, Stern.

Motion carried.

Further, Chen announced that the State was developing guidelines that will direct our next CFMP. It is working with three cities, and the results will serve as guidelines as to function, structure, and management, leading the way to what actions municipalities must undertake to meet goals. Communities must prepare a master plan and an open space plan, and plan for utilities and debris management as required by FEMA guidelines.

Ainsworth commented that only 224 municipalities have community forestry management plans--fewer than 50 percent of the municipalities in the state. Chen suggested that a comment along that line should be included in our response. The STC response has to be submitted by 12/2/20.

In regard to the information submitted as an agenda item, Radbil highlighted the following from the Shade Tree Federation conference:

Trees are an integral part of community planning and should be as important as storm drains, sewers, etc.

One member of the STC should attend the Shade Tree Conference each year to keep abreast of developments relevant to planning. Technical assistance is available to STCs.

Educational outreach should also include a tree owner's manual which would benefit members of the community who are planting or considering planting a tree. She also urged the use of social media.

Many exciting, challenging, daunting ideas that can be embraced were presented at the conference.

Stern said we were fortunate to have had Chen and Radbil at the meetings and asked if they knew what is driving all these changes. Radbil said she thinks that we are meant to be stewards and should improve how we care for the trees, emphasizing their health and value. What we do from now on should reflect a growing social consciousness and environmental justice. Chen said trees were valued in the past for their beauty but are important for so much more, including supporting biological diversity and carbon sequestration.

Bok van Kammen asked if there was any talk of aerial photography. Radbil noted that this topic was addressed by acknowledging how useful aerial photography was for accuracy. Chen indicated that the new plan addressed the use of new technology. Bok van Kammen again stressed the need to use aerial photography to properly see what is happening with the canopy. Bok van Kammen indicated that there were other groups in town that we could coordinate with to enhance public education about trees.

Radbil said partnerships were crucial, particularly when seeking grants.

Bok van Kammen said winter would be a good time to identify other groups that could work together to enhance public education. Ainsworth suggested that STC members send Bok van Kammen the names of any organizations that might be partners in an educational endeavor.

Stern asked if at the conference it was discussed who should be responsible in a municipality for the writing of tree-related ordinances. Radbil said it was the responsibility of the town council and mayor to write ordinances, with the STC available to offer advice and recommendations.

In response to Radbil's suggestion that STC members meet with the new mayor to discuss goals, Ainsworth asked if there was any idea about the new mayor's outreach to the various commissions. Lambros said she would bring this up at the next Council meeting.

Devoe asked if we should consider a Facebook page. Radbil reiterated her concern about the use of personal emails for STC business. Lambros agreed to look into both issues.

Sapudar indicated that any content can be forwarded to him, and he will have the webmaster load it onto the town's Facebook page.

3. Website Update and Addition of TPZ to Website (Sapudar)

Sapudar will attend training for the new website next week.

OTHER

Stern said that three trees were taken down in her neighborhood, and she did not recognize the tree service. She looked it up on the New Jersey Board of Tree Experts' constantly updated list of arboricultural companies whose operators have Tree Expert and Tree Care Operator Licenses. [Any person engaging in tree pruning, removal, and/or repair in the municipality can provide "Tree Care Services" in New Jersey only if registered with the New Jersey Board of Tree Experts.] The company was not listed. What should she have done? Sapudar indicated that photos should be taken of the trucks and sent to the New Jersey Board of Tree Experts, which has enforcement officers. We can also email Sapudar, and he can determine how to proceed.

Motion to adjourn made by Radbil and seconded.

Ayes: Radbil, Stern, Airgood, Frawley, Bok van Kammen, Ainsworth

Motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 6:50 pm.

Addendum: Action Plan

ACTION	DUE DATE	RESPONSIBILITY
NJ State Forest Action Plan Comments	December STC meeting	Chen/Ainsworth
Vegetation Management Response Act Update	December STC meeting	Ainsworth
Commemorative Tree Planting Plaque Mockup	December STC Meeting	Lambros/RAabil
Meeting with STC and New Mayor	December STC meeting	STC members
Website Update and Addition of TPZ to Website	December STC meeting	Sapudar/Airgood

Addendum:

Report on the “NJ Community Forestry Program Updates: [Management Plan] Guidelines, Grants, Back on Track” Presentation Made by Carrie Sargeant of NJDEP’s Urban and Community Forestry (UCF) Program at the NJ Shade Tree Federation’s 25th Annual Conference, Submitted by Sandra Chen, Alternate Member of the Princeton Shade Tree Commission

State law authorizes the NJDEP Urban and Community Forestry Program to offer to municipalities and counties the opportunity for their local shade program programs to be accredited. It is under this State program that Princeton’s shade tree program has been accredited for many years.

For some years now the NJDEP Urban and Community Forestry (UCF) Program has been led by Carrie Sargeant. Last week the NJ Shade Tree Federation held its 25th Annual Conference. On the final day (October 23) of the conference, Carrie Sargeant gave a presentation entitled: “NJ Community Forestry Program Updates: [Management Plan] Guidelines, Grants, Back on Track.”

Carrie Sargeant announced that a new State Forest Action Plan is being released for comment this week. This is a five-year state-wide plan and sets priorities for the State and provides a basis for the State to get federal forestry funding. *(I haven’t yet found the document, but the Shade Tree Commission may want to offer comments.)*

Primarily, the presentation conveyed the fact that that significant changes are coming in the State’s accreditation program for municipal and county community forestry programs, particularly in the planning aspect. It was evident that these changes may well have consequences for Princeton’s program in future years.

While all of this is still preliminary, some of the points that Carrie Sargeant made include:

- Municipal and county programs must be accredited to be eligible to receive grants; and must maintain their accreditation to have their grants paid out.
- The State UCF program is in the process of revising the Guidelines under which local governments qualify for accreditation. The State program originally intended to present the new guidelines at this year's Shade Tree Federation Conference but, because of the pandemic, their timeline has been set back. They now intend to present the new guidelines at next year's conference (October 2021).
- Updating the guidelines is a process. Under a grant obtained from the US Forest Service, the State UCF Program is right now working in Trenton, Camden, and Gloucester City to update their Community Forestry Plans. Through this "exercise," they will determine the best management practices (BMPs) and other guidance to include in the new guidelines.
- The new guidelines will require that plans be organized in three sections: Structure, Function, and Management. Structure is what we have, i.e., inventory; Function is what is it doing in terms of ecosystem function and other community benefits (stormwater mitigation, carbon storage, demand side energy management); and Management is what we want, what do we have to do to get, and how will we do it.
- A community will need a participatory planning process that makes connections, not just with the municipality's Master Plan and Open Space Plan, but also with the municipality's Office of Emergency Management, Planning Department, Parks and Recreation, DPW, municipal leadership, the County, and utilities. "Make your program relevant to what all these other people are doing."
- For example, a debris management plan (per FEMA protocols, and in coordination with the County's EM Plan) will need to be in your Community Forestry Plan; and you should get your trees and forests as a layer in your municipal GIS mapping.
- Inventories will need to be done by professionals in accordance with consistent methodology. Key metrics will include stocking, species composition, diameter distribution, age structure, relative condition, and prioritized maintenance needs. Volunteers have not been shown to be able to accurately do inventories. The professionals will do the "science"—the inventories and assessments. Professionals vs. citizen science.
- The State program didn't offer stewardship grants in 2020, but plans to offer grants in 2021. Stewardship grants can be for resiliency (\$10K, inventory and assessment); or restoration and planting (\$30K, must be tied to existing inventory). No grants will be offered for updating plans, since new guidelines are coming out.
- All plans approved in 2018 or later are extended for five years; so next plan can be done under new guidelines. Grant amounts for plans under the new guidelines will be higher than the \$3K it has been in the past. Municipalities will need to reach out to find their new plan expiration date.
- The State in past helped communities by offering grants. State is considering contracting with forestry consultants who will provide assistance to communities with their planning. We recommend that you have a consulting forester write the plan (a forester qualified in/knowledgeable about community forest management, not just an LTE skilled in arboriculture practices).