

Princeton Shade Tree Commission
Monthly Meeting Minutes
October 24, 2023
Virtual Meeting/Zoom Conference

Members (voting)

Sharon Ainsworth, Chair

Lily Krauss, Vice Chair

Victoria Airgood

Sandra Chen

Raymond Devoe

Patricia Frawley

Janet Stern

Non-Voting

Radhika Pola-1st Alternate

Council Liaison, Mayor Mark Freda

Arborist: Taylor Sapudar

Guests: D. Stockton

OPENING STATEMENT: read by Ainsworth.

The regular meeting of the STC was called to order at 5:02 by Ainsworth.

ROLL CALL: Krauss, Ainsworth, Airgood, Chen, Devoe, Frawley, Freda, Sapudar, Stern

PUBLIC COMMENT: none

MINUTES: The minutes of the STC September meeting were approved with corrections by a motion made by Devoe and seconded.

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

Motion carried.

REPORTS

Arborist's Report -Taylor Sapudar

- The infographic for October was about the importance of working with an LTE / ISA Arborist
 - November will be about tree cabling and support systems.
 - The December topic is open.
- Tree of the Month September was Sassafras.
 - November will be American Hornbeam, *Carpinus caroliniana*.
 - December is open.
- Fall Street tree planting had 6 bids. TreeCo Solutions out of Millstone was the low bidder. This is their first time in Princeton. They will be tentatively starting the first week in November.

- Block plantings are scheduled for Stanley, Elm Walking Path Corridor, Petronella Lake, and upper Smoyer Park.
- The open space tree removal contract had 5 bids. Justins’s Tree Service out of Lawrence was the low bidder.
 - Mountain Lakes, Drakes Corner, and Prettybrook is high volume.
- NJ Shade Tree Conference is 10/26 and 10/27
 - Will get more information on the CFMP.
- Guyot Walk neighborhood planting was a tremendous success.
 - Neighbors performed a cleanup and planting.
 - Plants purchased by Municipality from Pinelands nursery.
 - More to be planted in Spring 2024
 - Remaining ash. trees to be removed on the Removal Contract
- 38 out of the 48 Witherspoon Street trees in Phase 2 have been planted.
 - Mixture of utility-friendly and shade trees
 - The remaining 10 trees will be planted in spring when they can be sourced.

Phase 3 construction had a bid opening.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Tree and Stormwater Management/Princeton Hydro Study - (Chen)

Chen commented that she had noticed an article in Town Topics that reported that Princeton Hydro addressed the Princeton Council at its October 9 meeting. Specifically, Princeton Hydro presented a report of its Phase I Findings with respect to the feasibility of Princeton establishing a Stormwater Utility. The Town Topics article indicated that the municipality is exploring this because “more frequent and more severe rainstorms have increased the problem of stormwater runoff in Princeton.” Chen noted that trees can play a critical role in helping to control stormwater runoff. She raised three questions:

- Are tree management policies within the purview of the Princeton Hydro study?
- Would it be possible to see the Phase 1 report?
- Would it be appropriate for STC members to participate in the focus groups?

The mayor responded to these questions by offering to share the Phase I report with all STC members. He indicated that the feasibility study was focused on fiscal capacity and other higher-level issues and had not addressed specific details such as tree policies. He also explained that the focus group had already been formed with a broad cross-section of participants, but that if STC members wanted to forward recommendations to the focus group members, they could do.

2. Canopy I-Tree Proposal - (Stern) report held until November meeting.

3. Resolution to Contribute to Riverside Fourth Grade Tree Planting/Riverside Playground Project – (Devoe)

Devoe outlined the process that resulted in the letter to the STC from Riverside School Fourth Graders. The letter was written after students met with the principal. Devoe applied for a \$500 grant and asked for a contribution from the STC trust fund to plant a tree at the school. Questions were raised regarding the location of plantings and curriculum relativity. Airgood indicated that any article should address the STC's contribution to the project. The time of planting was discussed with fall preferred. Devoe will draft the STC's response to the student's letter.

Motion by Devoe and seconded to provide five hundred dollars through the Princeton Shade Tree Trust Reserve for the tree to be planted at the Riverside School.

Ayes: Airgood, Chen, Devoe, Frawley, Stern Ainsworth, Krauss
Motion carried.

OLD BUSINESS:

1. NJDEP Draft Model Tree Ordinance - (Stockton)

Stockton announced the tree ordinance will continue in its present form and anticipates that it will be early next year when recommended changes are given to the town council for their consideration. The ordinance amendments will include those issues currently under review as well as the notification requirements and violation language developed last year. The state DEP model ordinance is still in draft form but when finalized may also require ordinance changes.

2. TRW Project - (Airgood)

Airgood indicated that the commission had written a letter asking if the commission could participate in the redevelopment plan for this site. The response was negative. Stern asked when the plan was coming up to the planning board. Freda indicated that he would provide a copy of the current plans to the members of the STC.

3. Proposed Ordinance Changes: Section 22-14 and Related Updates -(Stern)

In preparation for a package of ordinance changes and updates that will be sent to Council in early 2024, the STC reviewed the document Stern presented entitled "Recommendation of Additional Updates to the Trees and Shrubs Ordinance Necessitated by or Concurrent with the Revision of Sec. 22-14(a)."

Decisions:

1. Further discussion of the first suggested change, to Sec. 22-16, which had already been taken up by the STC earlier this year, was postponed until the November meeting because Ainsworth had voiced some concerns with the provision.
2. Changes and additions to Sec. 22-2 (Definitions) were preliminarily approved by the STC, but Sapudar would like to cross-reference the definitions with those embraced by the International Society of Arboriculture to make sure that they conform. Sapudar will advise the STC when he has completed his review.
3. "or other person" was added to the third line in Sec. 22-11.
4. A specific date was added to Sec. 22-12 (Exceptions, amended by the Ash Tree Ordinance) to clarify when the Ash Tree exception (g) would expire, "that is, as of October 24, 2026."

5. A proposal to add to Sec. 22-13 a provision requiring a signed statement giving the written approval of the adjacent neighbor, if the trunk of a tree proposed for removal is located on the line between the two properties, was not approved, given the difficulty of acquiring the statement if the neighbor is away or otherwise not able to be contacted. Stern agreed that it should be removed as long as this condition is addressed elsewhere. Stern asked Sapudar what happens when he or the Engineering Department determines that an application does indeed propose to remove a tree or trees on the property line. Sapudar replied that, in such cases, the applicant is told that the trees cannot be removed or otherwise destroyed unless the two neighbors come to an agreement between them.
6. Sec. 22-17, which deals with the Annual Report, what it should include, and who is responsible for what information, is currently under review by Ainsworth and Sapudar. Any changes to this section based on their review will be discussed at a future meeting.

II. The second document to be presented by Stern, which proposes to update Sec. 22-14(a), was, for lack of time, postponed to the November meeting.

Motion by Devoe and seconded to approve changes to Sec.22-11 (trees requiring permit before removal) and Exemptions (Sec. 22-12) amended by the Ash Tree Ordinance.

Ayes: Chen, Devoe, Frawley, Krauss, Stern.

Airgood abstaining

Motion Carried.

4. Proposed Ordinance Changes: Model Tree Ordinance - (Chen)

Chen reported on the potential revisions to Princeton's Shade Tree ordinance that she and Stern had identified as needed for the ordinance to conform with NJDEP's Model Tree Ordinance. Given that Assistant Administrator Stockton had spoken with State officials and determined that the municipality would not, after all, be held to the exact model rule provisions, Chen noted that whether or not the STC chose to recommend any of the identified potential revisions would be at its discretion.

The first potential revision was to update "Schedule A – Tree Replacement Schedule" In Sec. 22-13 of the ordinance to match the more stringent DBH ranges in the NJDEP's Model Tree ordinance. After discussion, the STC agreed to recommend on that only the initial DBH range be changed from a range of 8" to 16.99" to a broader range of 6" to 16.99".

The second potential revision was to add an Appendix A to the ordinance which would provide a list of tree species that can or cannot be planted as replacement trees and would also give the plating times/seasons and planting procedures to be following in planting replacement trees. After discussion, the STC found no need to recommend adding an Appendix A. The STC agreed that it is sufficient and more appropriate to provide on the municipal website, as is currently being done, a list of species recommended to be planted and planting guidance. However, they did agree to recommend incorporating in the ordinance the practice, previously approved by Council, to prohibit the planting as a replacement tree any tree of a species listed on the Invasive Species Strike Team's "Do Not Plant" list.

The third potential revision was the incorporation into the ordinance of requirements to 1) monitor each replacement tree for two years; and 2) prohibit planting replacement trees in temporary containers or pots. After discussion, the STC agreed not to support either addition.

The fourth potential revision was the removal of paragraphs (d) and (e) from the list of exceptions in Sec. 22-12. These sections currently exempt projects reviewed by the planning or zoning board or by the historic preservation commission from the ordinance's permitting and tree replacement requirements. In the ensuing discussion it was recognized that these projects are not, in fact, exempted from the permitting and tree replacement requirements, that equivalent requirements are in the zoning code. Assistant Administration Stockton noted that there were unintended discrepancies between the two codes and that it would ensure uniformity to have all the requirements in the Shade Tree ordinance and have that one set of requirements incorporated by reference in the other code. The STC members agreed to support that recommendation.

The final potential revision was the addition of a definition of "tree removal," such as the one in the State's model tree ordinance. After discussion, the STC members agreed not to change the current definition.

5. Zoom vs In-Person Meetings - (Ainsworth)

After a brief discussion, it was agreed to continue Zoom meetings through December when the issue will be revisited.

OTHER:

Devoe would like to add a discussion on public outreach in 2024 to the November agenda and asked members to share their ideas with him in advance.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn was made by Devoe and seconded.

Ayes: Airgood, Chen, Devoe, Frawley Krauss, Stern.

Motion Carried. The meeting adjourned at 7:13

ACTION	TIME	RESPONSIBILITY
STC Review of Plans for Witherspoon St Project	Ongoing	Sapudar and subcommittee
Ordinance Revision	Ongoing	STC
Prepare for CFMP renewal	Ongoing	Chen
Articles for newspaper	Ongoing	Stern/Airgood/Krauss
Nassau St Replanting	Ongoing	Sapudar