

CHATHAM BOROUGH SHADE TREE COMMISSION

February 25, 2021

7:30 p.m.

Chairman Colleen Truppo called this Regular meeting of the Chatham Borough Shade Tree Commission to order at 7:30 p.m. This was a virtual meeting. All Commissioners and the Recording Secretary were present by way of Zoom.

Names	Present	Absent
Colleen Truppo, Chrmn.	X	
Kristy Chmura, Vice Chrmn.	X	
Fran Drew	X	
George Sweetin	X	
Dean Wilson	X	
John Tortorella	X	
Patrick Florentino	X	
Beverly Klepper	X	
Council Member Karen Koronkiewicz	X	
Liz Holler, Recording Secretary	X	

Also present:

Tony Torello, Shade Tree Enforcement Officer, Public Works Director

Chrmn. Truppo read aloud the Mission Statement of the Chatham Borough Shade Tree Commission.

Public Comment

There was none.

Motion to Adopt Meeting Minutes

Vice Chrmn. Chmura made a motion to approve the minutes of the January 28, 2021 Shade Tree Commission meeting as submitted. Mr. Tortorella seconded the motion. A voice vote was taken. The minutes of January 28, 2021 were approved.

Discussion Items

Chrmn. Truppo welcomed Tony Torello, Director of Chatham Borough Public Works. He also serves as the Borough Shade Tree Enforcement Officer. Chrmn. Truppo noted that Mr. Torello will be participating in Shade Tree Commission meetings once every quarter.

Chrmn. Truppo, on behalf of the Shade Tree Commission, thanked Mr. Torello and the Public Works Department for their help in planting the new trees that had been requested by Borough residents in 2020. Chrmn. Truppo pointed out that the Shade Tree Commission was able to purchase additional trees this past fall, with the DPW helping with the actual planting. Mr. Torello stated that the DPW workers enjoyed helping out.

Chrmn. Truppo asked Mr. Torello if he had any updates on any Borough activities, such as JCP & L work. She noted questions had been raised about how many tree permits had been approved this past year.

Mr. Torello reported that JCP & L hasn't really been working in the Borough recently. He noted that last year 177 private tree removal permits taken out. Year to date only 9 permits have been taken out. Mr. Torello thinks this low number is because of the snow on the ground. Not many tree service contractors work during these winter conditions. Mr. Torello discussed the trees, measuring 10 to 12 feet, that DPW had planted last fall. Fortunately, not many trees were lost from the latest windstorm. DPW and the Shade Tree Commission will continue planting trees.

At Vice Chrmn. Chmura's request, Mr. Torello reviewed the process that happens when someone fills out a private tree removal permit. He also explained how the tree escrow process works for the Borough.

Mrs. Drew recalled, not too long ago, two beautiful trees that had been removed on the corner of Inwood Road and Lafayette Avenue because of a construction job. Mrs. Drew remembered that Mr. DeNave and Mr. Torello had met with her on the site at the time. There was an understanding that those two trees would be replaced. Mrs. Drew stated those replacement trees were never planted. The house has been sold and there are people living in the house.

Mr. Torello answered that he will double check with Mr. DeNave on this situation.

Mrs. Drew reviewed research she had done on the private tree removal permits that had been taken out at Borough Hall. In 2013, 150 private tree permits were issued to people. The result was 323 trees were taken down. In 2014, 123 tree removal permits were issued. One hundred thirty-eight trees were taken down. She reviewed the numbers for 2015 and 2016. The number of tree removals increased each year.

Mrs. Drew recommended that a new tree ordinance be considered. She had emailed this suggestion to each Commissioner. Mrs. Drew asked Commissioners to consider the tree ordinances that she had attached to her email. These ordinances came from Jackson Township, Millburn Township, City of Summit. In these particular situations, the Shade Tree Commissions of these communities deal with both public and private trees. On Inwood Road, Mrs. Drew stated she has observed so many private trees being taken down for no real reason.

Mrs. Drew asked her fellow Commissioners to please look at the tree removal ordinances that she had sent them. She felt Chatham Borough should get tougher with regard to private tree removal. Also, she would like to get rid of JCP & L who, she felt, are butchering Chatham trees. Mrs. Drew noted that she has sent Commissioners photos of local trees that JCP & L have recently butchered.

On other matters, Chrmn. Truppo recalled that a subcommittee with Borough Administrator Steve Williams, Mr. Torello, Council Member Koronkiewicz, and Borough Engineer Vince DeNave, to talk about last fall's tree planting project. Ways to improve this yearly planting project need to be discussed. Unfortunately, some residents expressed unhappiness over having

the DPW planting new trees in the Borough right-of-way. Chrmn. Truppo said an effort should be made to let the public know that the Shade Tree Commission had the right to plant trees in those areas. Also, the tree nursery should be the entity to select the best species of tree to be planted in the public right-of-way.

Chrmn. Truppo noted that she has spoken with Administrator Williams, and hopefully this subcommittee meeting will be held next week. Mr. Williams will invite Karen Fornaro, the new Borough CFO to attend this meeting, to discuss budgetary issues.

Council Member Koronkiewicz noted that the Borough Council is working on the Borough Budget right now. Meetings have been held with Department heads. A presentation of the Budget will happen in March.

Chrmn. Truppo reviewed the additional language that will be added to the Borough Council in the future, quoting Statues, clarifying that the Borough Shade Tree Commission has the authority to plant trees in Borough rights-of-way. The Commission should really stress that point to residents.

Chrmn. Truppo stated that she will share with Commissioners what transpired at this meeting with Mr. Williams, Mr. Torello, Mr. DeNave, and Ms. Fornaro. It will probably be held sometime next week.

Chrmn. Truppo noted that Mr. Sweetin had attended the Tree Day event recently held at the County College of Morris. She asked if he had any updates to share.

Mr. Sweetin reported that the RSA will have courses available the entire month of March that may interest Commissioners. If anyone is interested in earning credits for community forestry, there are courses being offered in that field. Mr. Sweetin will sent info on these RSA courses to Chrmn. Truppo.

Chrmn. Truppo reported that Rutgers also has courses that Commissioners could take to earn CEU credits. She noted that there is money available in the STC budget to help pay the registration and tuition.

Mr. Sweetin will scan the information he had on the RSA courses and registration and will send it to Chrmn. Truppo.

Chrmn. Truppo asked Mrs. Drew if she had an update on the Borough's Underground Wiring Advisory Committee.

Mrs. Drew reported that the Undergrounding Committee has been working with an outfit from Georgia, AEG. In two more weeks, the Committee will know the specific cost of doing underground wiring for all of the 26 miles of streets in Chatham. Mrs. Drew noted that the Undergrounding Committee has received three excellent references for AEG. Mrs. Drew also reported that the Undergrounding Committee is currently working on how to educate Chatham residents about the values of putting wires underground. She realized that because of Covid,

group gatherings are not encouraged; however, she learned of other ways to educate people from methods used by the Madison group opposing the Pilgrim Pipeline.

Mrs. Drew stated that once the pandemic is gone, the Undergrounding Committee will be able to hold public meetings to enlighten Chatham residents on the benefits of putting all their wiring underground, the costs involved, and how it could be done.

Arbor Day 2021

Vice Chrmn. Chmura reported that she has been working on some kind of virtual event to celebrate Arbor Day. She and her sister came up with the idea of holding a contest challenging local students to produce videos on the importance of trees. The students will be asked to submit their videos by a certain date. The Commissioners could decide on the best video. The winning video can be shone on the Borough website in celebration of Arbor Day.

Vice Chrmn. Chmura asked Commissioners how they felt about this idea. She pointed out that some sort of event or observance has to be held for Chatham Borough to remain a Tree City USA community.

Chrmn. Truppo suggested that Chatham Community Forum be notified of this competition. Many people visit this forum. Maybe the students could be asked to download a photo of their favorite tree.

Vice Chrmn. Chmura offered to write up a brief set of the rules, bullet point style, for the contest. She will send it to Chrmn. Truppo to review and comment on.

Chrmn. Truppo stated that maybe the PTO leaders would have ideas on how to get the word out regarding this contest. Mrs. Drew suggested notifying the head of the Board of Education about this competition.

Mr. Sweetin brought up the suggestion of holding the tree video contest, however have one contest per school. Commissioners liked that idea. The more pro-tree videos, the better.

Mr. Sweetin remembered, years ago, as a student at Milton Ave. School, a tree-planting ceremony was always held on Arbor Day.

Vice Chrmn. Chmura said she would like a tree-planting ceremony being held again some where in the Borough. She asked Mr. Torello for his advice on such an event.

Mr. Torello said he and the DPW could help with a tree-planting event. There are areas available in the local parks for tree-plantings. Once work is done at Garden Avenue Park, there will be good spaces available for planting trees.

Mr. Tortorella suggested the area on Shunpike Road, next to Cougar Field, be considered for tree plantings. The new plantings could replace the evergreen trees that had recently been removed. After further discussion, Mr. Tortorella suggested planting any future trees at least 15 feet away from the PSE & G territory. Mr. Sweetin agreed, pointing out how important it was to plant the

right tree in the right spot. The rate of a tree's growth has to be taken into consideration before it's planted. Twenty years later, you wouldn't want the tree branches growing into any overhead wires.

At 8:14 p.m. the meeting adjourned.

The next Chatham Borough Shade Tree Commission will be held on Thursday, March 25, 2021, 7:30 p.m. It will be a virtual meeting.

Respectfully submitted:

Liz Holler
Minutes Secretary