

CHATHAM BOROUGH SHADE TREE COMMISSION
February 24, 2022

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	X	
Kristy Chmura	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	

A legal quorum was not present.

Chrmn. Truppo read aloud the Mission Statement.

Motion to Adopt Meeting Minutes

The meeting minutes of the January 27, 2022 could not be voted on because a quorum of Commissioners was not present. They will be voted on at the next meeting.

Discussion Items

Chrmn. Truppo noted that at the last meeting Beverly Klepper had brought up the matter of the penalty for taking down a Borough tree. The Borough ordinance lists the penalty as \$2500. Mrs. Klepper had asked if consideration could be given to increasing that fine to a more impressive amount to really prevent people from taking down a Borough tree. Chrmn. Truppo asked Council Member Koronkiewicz's opinion of whether the Shade Tree Commission could increase that penalty fee. The current penalty fee may not mean that much to a builder, looking to take down a tree, when developing a property.

Council Member Koronkiewicz asked if this has been an issue.

Chrmn. Truppo answered not often. Once in a this situation comes up.

Council Member Koronkiewicz asked how much a deterrence would be needed.

Judging from what these local properties are selling for, and what is being built on them, Chrmn. Truppo suggested a penalty of \$5,000. She did not feel \$1500 would have much of an impact on a builder these days. Chrmn. Truppo welcomed comments from the other Commissioners.

Vice Chrmn. Chmura agreed with the \$5,000 penalty fee. She pointed out many of the homes being sold in the Borough are bought by developers, not private individuals/families.

Council Member Koronkiewicz stated that the Shade Tree Commission could make such a recommendation. If all the Commissioners are in agreement with this new fee, she could speak with Mr. Williams about creating an ordinance for the Borough Council to discuss and vote on.

Chrmn. Truppo asked Mr. Sweetin and Mr. Tortorella their opinion on this penalty fee change.

Mr. Sweetin agreed with the \$5,000 penalty fee; however, another sensitive area would be the Home Improvement License that every builder must have. For a repeat offender, Mr. Sweetin recommended \$15,000 to emphasize the seriousness of illegal tree removal to a developer.

Mr. Tortorella agreed with Mr. Sweetin's suggestion for repeat offenders. The Borough Council could put a "ding" into the Home Improvement Licenses of repeat offenders, as suggested by Mr. Sweetin.

Council Member Koronkiewicz agreed that the Commission could keep a record of such repeat offenders. However, she did not feel that it would happen too often.

Council Member Koronkiewicz stated that she could talk with Mr. Williams, the Borough Administrator, about this tree removal fine. She would be curious to know if there are fines for other types of permits.

Chrmn. Truppo said she will send an email to Mr. Williams and Council Member Koronkiewicz about the proposed new penalty fees and the best way to approach the Borough Council about these recommended fees.

On another matter, Chrmn. Truppo discussed an upcoming Girl Scout project this spring. The Girl Scouts National Day of Service is related to tree planting this year. The local Girl Scouts have reached out to the STC with a proposal to plant 100 trees. Ideally 50 trees will be planted in the Borough, and 50 trees in the Township. Chrmn. Truppo reported that she and Mr. Sweetin have met with Jessica Romeo, who is with the Girl Scouts, about this project. Chrmn. Truppo and Mr. Sweetin had looked at potential sites for these plantings. Chrmn. Truppo clarified that these plantings will be actually be seedlings, not baby trees. She and Mr. Sweetin would prefer that the Scouts plant 20 of these seedlings in select locations and hope they take hold.

Chrmn. Truppo noted that the Girl Scouts have a limitation of two species types that they can purchase. They will be obtaining their seedlings from the Arbor Day Foundation. Mr. Sweetin and Chrmn. Truppo looked at the list that the Scouts had. Mr. Sweetin recommended some Blue Spruce plantings and Northern Red Oak, the state tree. After looking at a number of possible planting locations, Chrmn. Truppo and Mr. Sweetin recommended Garden Park, the grassy island/triangle on Coleman Avenue, and at the No. Hillside entrance of Memorial Park. Chrmn. Truppo noted that Mr. Sweetin has some ideas on an attractive design for planting these trees.

Chrmn. Truppo reported that the Girl Scouts must sign a contract when they plant these trees, agreeing to take care of these trees for a year. The National Day of Service is April 23rd. A gathering will also be held that day, in the morning, on the nature trail located on the former Averett estate. At this event, Mr. Sweetin will be giving instructions to the Girl Scouts on the care and feeding of the young seedlings.

Also, in the meeting with Ms. Romeo, Chrmn. Truppo had also noted that the STC would like the Girl Scouts to participate in the Arbor Day Tree Video project. Their participation in this video project would fit nicely into their Day of Service.

Related to this, Chrmn. Truppo reported that it looks like some stone work has been done at Garden Park. Most of the construction looks like it's been done. The STC should set a date and a time for a memorial planting for Commissioner Ken

Chmura. Chrmn. Truppo asked Ms. Chmura to check with her family members to see what date would be best.

Chrmn. Truppo thanked Mr. Sweetin for obtaining more CEUs for the Commission.

Chrmn. Truppo brought up the idea of the STC having a table at this Spring's Fishawack Festival. She was thinking of reusable tote bags that could be given away, promoting the importance of shade trees. Also, perhaps a raffle could be held for a young tree planting(s).

Mr. Tortorella returned to the topic about the penalty for taking down a Borough tree. He informed Council Member Koronkiewicz there may be a statute that limits the amount of a fine imposed for violating an ordinance of more than \$2,000. Commissioners discussed the possibility of having a local ordinance imposing a fine of \$2,000 for not obtaining the necessary permit and \$2,000 for cutting down the Borough tree.

On other matters, Mr. Sweetin asked that Janice Piccolo and her Spring Clean-up Day volunteers be reminded of the correct way to mulch trees. He discovered some of the trees in Firehouse Plaza had been over-mulched, which is unhealthy for a tree. Chrmn. Truppo said she will reach out to Mrs. Piccolo on this matter by email, and c.c. Mr. Sweetin.

Ms. Chmura suggested the correct mulching procedure could be explained on the Shade Tree Commission's web page. Mr. Sweetin said that he had information on mulching in the Tree Homeowner's Manual. Among the Manual's recommendations, it states that no mulch should be touching the bark of the tree.

Mr. Sweetin asked Council Member Koronkiewicz if any thought had been given to prohibit the planting of bamboo in the Borough. Bamboo is very invasive. Some towns have realized this problem.

Council Member Koronkiewicz suggested that matter could be included in the email to Mr. Williams. She pointed out that residents will start planting in the spring, and now would be a good time to address the bamboo situation. Chatham Township's bamboo ordinance could be reviewed. The local nurseries could be encouraged not to sell bamboo.

Mr. Tortorella brought up Ms. Chmura's earlier suggestion about establishing a resource section on the STC website. He suggested Mr. Sweetin include the USDA Tree Owner's Manual and other resources on trees that would be helpful to people. Mr. Tortorella suggested this situation could be further discussed at next month's meeting when a quorum would be present. Mr. Sweetin felt it would be a great idea for the links, like the one on mulching practices, to be included on the STC website. He will collect useful links for the next meeting.

Chrmn. Truppo suggested sometime in the future the STC could set up a Facebook page. Photos of their tree activities could be posted, such as the plantings by the Girl Scouts. Mr. Tortorella put the USDA mulching instructions up on the Zoom screen. These could easily be put on the STC website. Chrmn. Truppo suggested that a STC representative be present at each of the Girl Scout planting sites.

Chrmn. Truppo and Mr. Sweetin noted that there are currently hazard trees existing on the grassy island on Coleman Ave. where the Scouts will be planting. Chrmn. Truppo will contact Leo Pietrantuono at DPW about removing those failing trees before the Scouts do their plantings at the end of April.

At 8:20 p.m. the gathering dispersed.

The next Chatham Borough Shade Tree Commission meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 24, 2022, 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Liz Holler
Recording Secretary