

Pennington Borough Shade Tree Committee

Meeting of August 3, 2022 7:30 pm

Via Zoom, Meeting ID:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89405963367?pwd=WkpUQU5lOUhScHBGcVlhcUJpSkhyUT09>

Minutes

Members Present: Suzen Witcher, Cecile Vidican, Mike Rheinhardt, Gabe Rosko (7:55), Nadine Stern, Morris Fabian, Rick Smith, and Kate Fullerton.

Open Public Meeting Statement was read and the meeting was opened.

Approval of Minutes: Ms. Vidican moved to approve the June 7, 2022 minutes and Mr. Rheinhardt seconded. All in favor.

Approval of Outstanding Borough Residents Tree Requests

The Chair requested a discussion of the existing Tree Requests that have not been approved. A member stated that a process would be nice so we can move these requests in a timely fashion. It was noted that the Committee member concern regarding litigation due to comments has been alleviated, as the liability question has been determined by Borough Council.

Mr. Smith stated that we have come full circle in the approach to resident requests for tree action. The process needs to go quicker. In the past the forms were reviewed by Mr. Rosko and Mr. Fabian. Going forward, the actions should be reviewed by the Committee and memorialized in the meeting minutes. It was suggested that at least one separate Committee members – one who has not had as much training as either Mr. Rosko or Mr. Fabian – should review the tree request.

It was determined that when the request comes in to the Borough offices, Committee members should receive the request within 24 hours. The committee decided to review all of the tree request forms. Whichever Committee member can respond the quickest will review the request being made and respond in the section on the back of the form. Mr. Rosko and Mr. Fabian will continue to review the trees in addition to the Committee member. It was felt that the Committee member who will review the request should let the Committee know within 24 hours of receiving the request via email. Once the request has been reviewed, Mr. Rosko and Mr. Fabian will sign their sections, and the Committee member will sign their section. The form should be returned to Borough Hall as quickly as possible.

There was a quick review of Ms. Stern's discussion at the Borough Council Meeting regarding the Committee versus Commission concern. The Borough Attorney has determined, with assistance from the NJ Joint Insurance Fund, that there is no liability by the Shade Tree Committee being a Committee and not a Commission.

It was suggested that more publicity and excitement should be made about the trees we have planted. Members discussed adding information about newly planted trees in the newsletter and as an e-alert from the website. Ms. Vidican offered to write up promotional materials for the newsletter as long as Mr. Smith and Mr. Fabian provide information. It was noted that our annual reports to the State are a public document and they contain information on everything the Committee does annually. It was also recognized that we do not need to make more work for the Department of Public Works. Committee members agreed to publicize tree plantings without adding the workload of Borough employees. As part of this discussion, it was noted that the Committee could provide examples of why healthy-looking trees

might be ill enough to require being removed. It was also noted that, with the current drought, it would be nice if residents could help fill any gators by their house, or let a hose trickle water by a newly planted tree. Ms. Vidican offered to write up an alert for the website.

Mr. Fabian reported that the State Community Forestry office conducted the three-year tree inspection for the 28 trees planted in 2019. The inspection was successful and the Borough has completed the grant.

It was confirmed that Committee members approved the tree requests that the Chair mentioned at the start of the meeting.

Members confirmed that the next meeting will be September 13 and then adjourned the meeting.