

Pennington Boro Shade Tree Committee Meeting Minutes

03/12/24 meeting held via Zoom

Attendees: Kate Fullerton (chair)
Moe Fabian (Public Works Department)
Hoyt Holley
Meredith Moore
Gabe Rosko
Cecile Vidican

- **Minutes:** Once a quorum (4 members) were on the line, Committee Chair Kate Fullerton called the meeting to order. Minutes from the 2/13/24 meeting were approved.
- **Arboretum Committee Representative** - Gabe Rosko is the Shade Tree Committee's nominee to serve on the Arboretum Committee. He has been doing so since its inception and will continue in that role.
- **Tree Planting/Trimming Report** - Moe Fabian presented his report. He has had about six requests to have trees planted this year. These come out of our budget as we have no grant funding this year. He noted that the Sked Street Park revitalization project may involve rubber surfacing. If this is adopted by the Parks & Recreation Committee that will mean an additional five trees (all substantial) will be required to be cut down. He has marked the trees (four maples and one large oak) so we may see what area will be affected. Gabe and Kate will plan to meet with Nadine Stern and John Valenza to discuss and encourage them to use wood chips in that area in order to preserve these valued shade trees. We will take the opportunity to discuss reforestation and how the park fits into the Tree Removal Ordinance and canopy preservation. Moe also drew attention to the presence of massive tree volcanoes on Hale Street near the Senior Center. Tree volcanoes, especially with fresh wood chips, are detrimental to tree health as they leach nutrients away from the trees. This is usually due to uneducated landscape companies. Cecile Vidican will work on a handout and perhaps an email blast (to be included in the Borough's biweekly email blasts) to educate residents about dos and don'ts of tree health, especially relevant during the spring tree mulching season. Important to point out incorrect practices to discourage others from adopting them. Moe is also pursuing a tree planting on Eglantine Avenue.
- **Arbor Day** - The annual Arbor Day education event is taking place April 26 at 10am at Toll Gate Grammar School. 58 students are estimated to attend and parents are welcome. Moe is procuring a European hornbeam, similar to other recent trees planted, to plant along Curlis Avenue. Moe will cut the cookies and Gabby can stamp them. Borough Clerk Betty Sterling will provide the Council Arbor Day proclamation and coloring

books printed from a .pdf. Kate will ask Betty to invite the Mayor to attend. Moe will provide a banner and table, and mulch (in appropriate amounts) for the tree and will present to the attendees. Kate will contact Mike Rheinhardt who had said he would return to take pictures (no childrens faces). Meredith received a stack of bookmarks for newcomer packets from Mike, but Kate will inquire with Mike about the remaining inventory. Gabe will bring the Pennington Shade Tree Committee banner. Cecile working on media outreach (pre- and post-event.) See minutes from February meeting with more detail regarding the event roles and responsibilities.

- **Pennington Day** – Gabe mentioned that we are a volunteer organization and the more we can provide our own resources the better to avoid burdening the Borough. Our tent is nearly 20 years old so it has a few leaks but is serviceable. Kate has put in a request for a new tent but it could take some time.
- **Local Government Week Open House** – The next Shade Tree Commission meeting (April 9) will be featured during Local Government Week as a way for residents to “watch our local government in action.” Agenda could include Arbor Day Update and Pennington Day plans and potentially discussion of the NJ state Tree Removal Ordinance. Gabe was asked to attend the April 10 Open House to represent the Committee and highlight the Community Forestry Management Plan (from 2016 and plans for the one due in 2025). Other Committee members are encouraged to attend. We can provide educational printouts and possibly a QR code to send people to the Committee website with lots of good information. Maybe we can put together one-pager with lists of the educational material available on the website and information on the memorial tree program.
- **New Resident Welcome Bag** – The Friends of the Pennington Library are planning to hand out the first set of gift bags since 2021 as soon as they get the list and count from the Borough. Meredith, who is the new Library Board representative to the Friends Board, will provide bookmarks to them.
- **New Jersey Chapter of the International Society of Arboriculture (NJISA) Conference** – Moe attended this meeting and reported it was an excellent meeting with lots of vendor and attendee participation. The organization is growing and provides lots of professional education. The fall NJ Shade Tree Federation (a state organization) is relocating from Cherry Hill to Harrah’s in Atlantic City in the fall. Gabe indicated that the NJSTF meeting is targeted at education for municipal shade tree committee volunteers, not certified professionals, while the NJISA is the New Jersey Chapter of an international organization targeted at a broader audience of professionals looking to get CEUs to maintain their professional credentials. Gabe reminded us of the requirement that the Shade Tree Committee have at least two committee

members who are NJSTF CORE Curriculum trained. Cecile and Gabe and Meredith are CORE trained.

- **Community Forestry Management Plan** - Kate sent around the new requirements prior to the meeting. Her assessment was that the new plan (due by end of 2025) will be similar to the old plan but requires more mapping. She has reached out the Town Planner, Jim Kyle, who said he would provide some information on the Land Use Land Mapping tool. Gabe concurred with Kate's assessment and suggested using the 2016 plan as a base document and look to update it including seeing where we stand on our goals from 2016 and setting new goals. Kate indicated we may need some assistance from Gabby on the inventory.
- **Tree Removal/Replacement Ordinance** - Moe, Meredith and Gabe attended the (3/5) first of three education sessions hosted by the DEP. The next two sessions, which are recorded and available for replay, will take place March 19 and April 9. All three will be full of important information needed for municipalities to develop quality ordinances. Throughout the training, the presenters emphasized that municipalities do NOT need to meet the May 1 deadline as long as they are in contact with their case manager as to status and process. The stated goal is for each municipality to take advantage of the flexibility built into the process so that they can develop an ordinance that is customized for their municipality. Pennington Borough Council has already presented a draft ordinance on March 4 and approved it for moving forward. The Committee discussed several questions including who is responsible for putting forth an ordinance. More details are going to be provided in the two upcoming sessions. Gabe indicated a willingness and desire to put some time and effort into developing a quality ordinance. He also noted that the draft ordinance has language that has implications that would limit our ability to plant oaks and other large growth trees. He proposed that the Shade Tree Committee put together a recommended draft ordinance and share it with the Borough Council. The Committee supports Gabe's desires as the state has mandated an ordinance and so we should take the time to create an ordinance that incorporates Gabe's professional experience and is customized for our municipality. Kate suggested the first step is to meet with GP and then go from there. Meredith was asked to meet with the new Borough Administrator, GP Caminiti, to discuss and inform him of current status and inquire about next steps. Moe indicated that GP in his early days has already shown to be very proactive so a meeting is advisable. Notes from February meeting indicated that Planning Board member Andy Jackson said that Environmental Committee will be addressing the Ordinance and he was going to see if a joint meeting would be useful.
- **Memorial Trees Inventory** - Moe said he is going to work on an inventory of the memorial trees that have been planted. (Location, type of tree, who is memorialized.) Gabe recalled discussions with Betty in years

past regarding a plaque in Borough Hall that listed each of the trees, their locations and who they were memorializing. Moe offered to follow up to encourage that such a plaque is created.

Next Meeting: April 9 at 7:30pm.

Minutes prepared and submitted by Meredith Moore.