

**Morristown Shade Tree Commission (STC12) Meeting Minutes**  
**Monthly Meeting**

October 24, 2013

7:00 pm meeting, Room 201

Morristown Town Hall

**Members present:**

Tina Wahlstrom, Chair

Chantal Diedrich, Secretary

Kristin Ace

Michael Rockland

Joe Torres

Karl Roettger

Anne Bertucci

**Members absent:**

Louise Witt

- I. Roll call**
- II. Statement of Compliance with NJ Open Public Meetings Act (Sunshine Law) made by Tina.**
- III. Approval of meeting minutes:** Vote was taken to approve last 2 meeting minutes-August 29 and September 10. Minutes unanimously approved.
- IV. 5 Farragut Pl:** A tree had a big limb fall a month ago, and then last week, the tree was suddenly taken down. Michael Rockland is a neighbor, and people on the street were upset that the tree was taken down with no warning. STC aren't sure whether it was a hazard and why we weren't informed Rich Wolowitz (town arborist) hasn't assessed the tree because it wasn't on his spreadsheet. It is important that the process regarding tree assessments/removal be followed by DPW; only trees constituting an immediate threat to people or property should be removed without prior assessment from the arborist. This tree was removed a month after the limb came down which does not support that it was considered a significant hazard.  
**ACTION:** Tina will talk to Rich about the tree.
- V. Town Website:** STC: We are frustrated that several members still cannot access the email account on the Town's website despite months of working with the Town IT expert and the administration. It is important that we have

one designated process for residents to make requests/complaints regarding Town trees. We may need an alternate plan at this point. One idea is to utilize the account that Rich W has set up, this is a gmail account called Morristown Trees. Some members feel we need to be connected to the Town website. But the first step should be to find out if we can post this address to the Town's Website. Then we can discuss further whether or not it is the best alternative

In addition we could have request forms etc. on the website, residents could fill them out then send them directly to the gmail account.

Further discussion lead by Anne and Kristin regarding the development of a separate website for the STC. Pros and cons were discussed as well as site development costs.

**ACTION:** Tina will ask Michael Rogers if we can have our own gmail account on the Town website. . Joe will talk to Kristen & Shannae to find out if it is possible to post forms to the STC webpage or the Town website and whether or not we can adapt the old forms. Kristin and Ann will investigate the costs and implementation details of developing a separate website for the STC.

**VI. Issues/Ordinances:** There was a general discussion on the topic of additional ordinances specifying what can/cannot be done to and around public trees (i.e. hanging lights, construction guidelines, sidewalk repairs, residents pruning, etc). Joe noted that some Towns have guidelines, or policies, others use ordinances. It was decided that the best approach is to set up subgroups to investigate the various topics; to find out what other Towns have done, then bring the information back to drive additional discussions.

**VII. Update on Meeting with Michael Rogers:** Tina and Kristin met with Michael (MR) on Oct 17. Topics: 1) There appears to be some tension between the STC and the DPW Tree Crew. We think this may be due to a lack of interaction and understanding of roles and responsibilities. Kristin recommended that the STC and Tree Crew meet. MR agreed and dates have been proposed since the meeting. Rich Wolowitz, Rich Fernicolla, Troy and George are available on Friday, November 15<sup>th</sup>, anytime after 10:30am. Kristin, Ann, Joe, possibly Michael Rochland and Karl can attend that day. **ACTION:** Tina will follow up with MR to inform him that November 15<sup>th</sup> after 10:30am would be a good day to meet.

2)94 Washington Ave construction. Tina asked MR to explain the decision made by the Town regarding the protection of the Town trees at this site. Since the Town did not support the recommendation of the STC we feel it is

important to understand what happened. MR debriefed Tina and Kristin about 94 Washington Ave project; the Keller's had threatened to sue the Town regarding the driveway on Olmstead that was going over the Town tree's root system (pin oak). The Town had to make their own decision quickly and it was decided to let the Keller's place the driveway over the critical protection zone of the Town tree. MR said that section 17-7 of the Town Tree ordinance was invoked during the discussions. TW pointed out that this ordinance only defines what cannot be done within 3 feet of a Town tree, not what can be done outside of that area. Making such apparently arbitrary decisions on a one off basis could be a problem for the town in the future. MR agreed that the tree ordinance 17:7 is problematic and should be changed. TW stated that the STC should be involved in the update of the ordinance. MR also mentioned that there must be direct notice of the STC meeting to owners when site plans are discussed. TW replied that this had been done, specifically the developer had been notified of the meeting and the Kellers had attended. MR also noted that if an owner/developer disagrees with the STC position, the STC can instruct them to bring their own expert to refute the position. 3) Update on tree planting plans: we plan on a spring planting to include the major areas extending off the Green where there are open wells. We think it is important to do a soil sampling first to try and better understand why so many trees have not survived in that area. In addition we want the arborist to review the tree planting and maintenance specs before new trees are planted. 4) Technical difficulties with access to STC Town email account. MR said that this may be an infrastructure issue and will look into it further, they are having additional work done. 5) TW: has the Town used contractors for tree removal in the past? MR: not routinely, only right after Sandy.

**VIII. Tracey Park:** Karl will look into why shrubs are being planted without consulting the STC. He has reached out to Jeff Hartke and there has been no response.

**ACTION:** Karl and Tina will go visit and get a real sense of what is happening there.

**IX. Town Planting Specs:** Karl has gotten Town of Morristown planting specs from Jeff Hartke. He wants to go and dig a hole in some of the empty wells where trees died to see if the specs were followed. He feels that the maybe the specs were not followed, because the bid for planting a tree was \$238 a tree, and no one could put a tree in the ground properly for that amount in

his opinion. Karl thought the specs were appropriate, but wants to make sure they are followed.

**ACTION:** Tina will email Jeff and ask when the next planting occurs (on Speedwell?) so that we can have Rich there, or one of our commissioners to make sure that the specs are followed.

**X. Meeting adjourned:** 9:00pm. Next meeting November 12<sup>th</sup> at 7:00pm.