

Morristown Shade Tree Commission (STC23) Meeting Minutes

Monthly Meeting

May 13, 2014

7:00 pm meeting, Room 201

Morristown Town Hall

Members present:

Tina Wahlstrom, Chair

Chantal Diedrich, Secretary

Karl Roettger

Anne Bertucci

Joe Torres

Kristin Ace

Louise Witt

Members absent:

Michael Rockland

Guests: Richard Wolowicz (town arborist); Randy Brockett, Robert Lee, Henry Medrano, Blaine Hoppes (all from JCP&L and Jaflo); Heidi Schwab & Kathleen Rogers-VanLeeuwen(homeowner & RE/Max agent); Maryanne Connelly and Ed Marks (Vail Mansion)

Roll call

- I. Minutes:** approved minutes from March 25, April 8th meetings. All said aye.
Action: Tina will post minutes.
- II. Statement of Compliance with NJ Open Public Meetings Act (Sunshine Law)**
made by Tina at 7:00.
- III. JCP&L:** Rich Wolowicz invited members from JCP&L and from Jaflo to meet with the STC because they will be trimming trees in Morristown in the next few weeks. Tina wanted to be comfortable with how maintenance is done on our Morristown trees. There is a 4 year cycle for maintenance, according to regulations concerning reliability of electrical lines. Jaflo is the contractor. Tina asked for clarification on notification for trimming trees on the public right-away, and for backyard trimming. Jaflo said that they contact homeowners, by knocking on doors and leaving a door hanger explaining what they will be doing within the next few weeks. If a homeowner has a question, there is a phone number to contact Jaflo. It is usually a 2-week notice. Specs for trimming standards have not changed in the past 4 years. If there is a hazard tree that needs to be removed, they contact homeowner. They are basically looking at sucker growth, deadwood, 4 years of clearance, any hazard branches over wires, structurally weak limbs, and evergreen overhangs(because of snow load). Tina asked for and was given confirmation from JCP& L that no large

branches will be removed unless Rich is contacted first. Given that JCP & L are clearing growth that has occurred since the last 'tree trimming' activity 4 years ago, this should be minimal. Louise had questions about Woodland Avenue trimming that occurred 2 years ago. JCP&L explained that that Woodland Ave. has a major distribution line-feeding 2000 homes, and they were more aggressive on that street. Louise feels that aggressive trimming may weaken the tree, and then make it more likely to fall during a storm. Karl had a question about the use of guy wires, because he has seen some used around our town. JCP&L said that they do not guy any trees anymore. That was an old practice. Rich mentioned that Jaflo is using 7 crews (trucks) in Morristown. Rich explained that there should not be any spikes used in Morristown, or the operation will be shut down. He has seen Jaflo crews using spikes in another nearby town. Henry Medrano from Jaflo assured Rich that it is against policy to use spikes to climb a tree to do trimming, unless it is a heavily wooded area.

- IV. Tree requests/issues: 16 Perry Street:** Heidi Schwabb has a Victorian house in the historic section of town that she is trying to sell. She came before the STC to see if she could cut a town tree down to make room for a driveway. She and her husband bought the house more than 10 years ago. Hers is the only house without a driveway on her street, and she endures many parking issues. Assumption church-goers park on her street and the Doctor's office across the street has many people parking in front of her house. At times she has to go quite far from her home to park. Louise Witt asked her if during that time she has asked the town council to establish more restricted parking requirements to alleviate parking concerns for the residents. Ms. Schwab said she had not. There are two huge lindens, one on each edge of her property, which are the only spots to put a driveway in. She does not care which side her driveway would be on. Karl observed the 2 lindens, and felt one was in better shape than the other. Rich went to observe, and noted that the tree on the left (Maple Avenue side) has a cavity at its base, and may start to decline and be a safety issue in 5-10 years. (Rich noted that the tree may have survive 5 years or another 20 years.)He noted that almost a third of the tree is compromised. The other tree (Macculloch Avenue side) is quite healthy. Two STC members wanted to visit the site before making a decision. Louise wanted more information about zoning issues before casting her vote. When asked about requesting a permit for installing a driveway in the past, Ms. Schwab said she was told by the previous zoning officer, John Fugger, that she would have to fill out several forms. Ms. Schwab said the current zoning officer, James Campbell, told her she did not need a zoning variance. Ms. Schwab held up forms she said were from the zoning office. When Louise asked to see them, Ms. Schwab handed over blank forms and a survey from 1982. Ann Bertucci will abstain from voting because of a possible conflict of interest as she is a realtor. Tina told Heidi that we will vote on the matter at next meeting-in

2 weeks. **ACTION:** Louise volunteered to ask Mr. Campbell about whether a variance was needed. Rich will talk to Jim Campbell to find out if the homeowner needs a variance for a driveway, before we take our vote. All agreed that there are no options for another spot for the driveway. Most of the STC agreed that the only reason they would consider letting homeowner cut the tree down is because the tree is compromised. Louise mentioned that considering 80 to 90 percent of the urban trees have decay, injuries, etc., it is worrisome to say that all trees that are *almost* 30 percent compromised can be cut down. She noted that she does not know how many trees in Morristown are in similar condition and would meet this threshold to be removed. She thought establishing almost 30 percent as a standard would have far-reaching consequences. Vote is contingent on the town approving the driveway.

- V. **110 South Street- Vail Mansion.** Maryanne Connelly-President of the Board of Vail Mansion came before the STC to ask for help from the town to care for the trees on the Great Lawn in front of Vail Mansion. They have recently lost 2 huge trees, and other trees need maintenance. She wants to know if the town can help with the pruning. It is a publicly used, park-like area for the town. **ACTION:** Rich will check with town to see if the DPW can help and prune trees- for public safety. Maryanne is very concerned for the trees, and wants to take care of them.
- VI. **Arbor Day:** All agreed that our Arbor Day ceremony went very well. Many were in attendance, such as our mayor, several council members, Mrs. Tracy and her grandson, and many veterans. There was a special guest: Congressman Rodney Frelinghuysen. **ACTION:** Tina will try to find out how much money has been donated for 3 more trees in Tracy Park. **Note:** Gator bag is not on our arbor-day maple. DPW keeps saying that it is coming.... **ACTION:** Rich will make sure it goes on.
- VII. **Spring Planting:** Rich went to nursery and tagged trees for the spring planting. Planting will start end of this week or next week!
- VIII. **Meeting Adjourned** at 8:40. Next meeting in two weeks, May 27th.