

Morristown Shade Tree Commission (STC) Meeting Minutes

June 11, 2013

7-8:30 pm meeting, Room 201

Roll Call:

Tina Wahlstrom, Chair

Silvia LeBlanc

Michael Rockland

Karl Roettger

Kristin Ace

Chantal Diedrich

Louise Witt

Ann Bertucci,

Absent: Joe Torres

Guest: Jeff Hartke Morristown Director of Public Works/Town Engineer

Kathleen Margiotta

I. Statement of Compliance with NJ Open Public Meetings Act

At 7:04pm Tina Wahlstrom opened the meeting and the statement of compliance was made.

II. Minutes

Tina made a motion to approve the STC meeting minutes from April 16, 23 and May 14, 2013. The meeting minutes were unanimously approved.

ACTION: Tina will forward the minutes to Kristen Wedderburn for posting on the Town website, with a copy to Chantal.

III. Process for DPW and STC to work together

Tina described the process currently under consideration:

- A STC mailbox will be established and made available to the public. This is where requests regarding municipal trees may be submitted.
 - A mailbox address has been provided by the Town Administrator's office to the Chair but access has not been possible from remote locations after multiple attempts.
- Jeff will forward requests that come in from residents to the Chair's personal email until the assigned mailbox is functioning.
- The Chair will share these requests with the STC members. Requests will be discussed at the monthly STC meetings. Some requests may be approved by the STC at the meetings, and those requiring an arborist's assessment will be resolved before or at the next monthly STC meeting.

- A tracking spreadsheet of requests, contacts, actions and resolutions will be maintained by the STC and shared with Jeff Hartke, Michael Rogers and the arborist.
- The STC will email recommendations to Jeff as soon as they are made. For requests requiring input from an arborist, recommendations will be sent from the arborist to both Jeff Hartke and the STC. Jeff will manage execution of the recommendations through his department.
- The STC will be responsible for follow up with residents.
- The process may take several weeks, since the STC meets once a month.
- This process excludes emergency issues that could impact public property or safety. These will be addressed by DPW without input from the STC.

ACTION: Tina will write out protocol based on this discussion and agreement.

The sidewalk repair project was discussed. Louise requested an overall schedule since it is difficult to keep up with emails on a daily basis.

ACTION: Jeff will send out new package of sidewalk repairs that will happen later this summer.

The group discussed the need to be informed of this type of work well in advance of it being started. It is likely that the input of an arborist will be needed in order to ensure that appropriate solutions are provided to reduce potential damage to trees during the repairs.

Jeff agreed that he would provide the STC with advance notification, per the ordinance.

III. Tree Inventory Procedure

- Jeff shared a copy of the Shade Tree Crew's (DPW tree maintenance) notes with the STC. It is a list of hand written entries of work that has been done from September 2012 to the present. It lists pruning and removal activity predominantly.
- The STC discussed whether or not this was adequate information to address the needs for updating the tree inventory. It was agreed that while it was a good assessment of work that had been done, it did not include key assessments such as the health/status of the town trees that had been worked on (excluding removals) or other critical information that is required for an accurate inventory that can be used for future evidence based decision making. In addition, there is no new information on trees that have not been worked on.
- Jeff reported that DPW created a notebook of pictures, addresses, and damage to trees from Sandy. It was a FEMA requirement. This could be useful for updating the tree inventory as well.

- Jeff informed the STC that Morristown has 30 miles of municipal streets, and 10 miles of county and state roads. This is a relatively small and very manageable area.
- STC would like to see some examples of what type of reports can be generated from the ArcGIS database. Jeff agreed to the plan for Silvia (who has years of experience working with ArcGIS as a Forester in Brazil) to work with Mark Gandy to organize the current inventory in ArcGIS to make is usable for the STC.
- Tina reported that Michael Rogers had also approved this approach at an update meeting.

ACTION: Silvia to contact Mark Gandy to begin working on ArcGIS.

V. Planting trees

Jeff informed the Shade Tree Commission of specific timelines that would have to be met in order to accommodate a large scale Fall planting. A bid for planting should be put together by August. Jeff would target a bid to be awarded at the August 13 council meeting, or the September council meeting. Morristown usually gives a 2-year maintenance contract (bond) for the trees planted. This should be written into the bid.

Additional information was provided to the STC to facilitate planning: \$36,000 is the bid threshold, and it spans work done over a 12 month period. Typically, if the cost is below this, the project doesn't have to go out for a bid and is therefore faster. It's possible that if our Fall planting is not extensive we could get 3 quotes for the Administration's approval. As we plan we will also have to take into account the Spring planting; we would have to add that work into the total cost and that would determine the appropriate process and timeline. This was valuable information for the STC for understanding the lead time necessary to undertake a large tree planting project.

Members of the STC thought this timeline may be too difficult to meet. The plan has been to make sure the tree inventory is updated first so that we can thoughtfully plan what and where to start planting. Tree planting decisions will be based in large part on knowing what tree species we have, along with their size and condition.

VI. Trimming trees

Tina reported that on Washington Avenue the recent tree pruning looks to be rough. Trees are pruned badly; tree pruning seems to be shredding the bark, stubs are left, and many cuts are not smooth. This may be due to unsharped tools. This is not good practice if we want to maintain healthy trees. Pictures were shared with the group.

Karl wanted to make sure that the assessment was correct, so the specific location of the trees was provided to him

Louise made a motion to write a letter to Jeff Hartke that poor techniques have been used for pruning town trees (ex: Washington Ave.) Tina seconded the motion and it was passed unanimously.

ACTION: Kristin will write a letter to be approved at the next meeting.

VII. Tree Inventory proposal from The Land Conservancy

The proposal from The Land Conservancy was reviewed by Kristin. They need approximately 3 months to update the 2011 inventory (Phase 1), and 9 months to do the whole town. (Phase II)

Tina reported that Michael Rogers was reluctant to approve the proposal from The Land Conservancy, and had questioned the need to get the inventory updated through an outside contract.

Although the STC had previously voted on the need for a professional update to the tree inventory, further discussion on the topic continued. Some felt strongly that we should work with The Land Conservancy, because of their prior work on the Morristown inventory in 2011. A discussion on the proposed phased approach also took place.

Karl expressed his discomfort with just one proposal. He suggested that since Princeton used Davey Tree to do their inventory we should reach out and get a proposal from them.

ACTION: Karl and Anne to solicit a proposal from Davey

ACTION: Tina to inform Michael Rogers, that the STC clearly believes that a formal update to the inventory must occur this year, that the DPW Tree Crew journal will not suffice, and that we will get a second proposal.

Tina made a motion to approve the use of an outside contractor to update the tree inventory since there is little value in updating the database of the inventory with the notes from DPW. It does not provide the information that we need to manage our tree forest. The motion was seconded by Louise and there was a unanimous Yeas vote.

Tina made a motion to approve a phased approach to our inventory, as described in the proposal from The Land Conservancy (Phase I-update 2011 inventory, Phase II complete inventory of entire town), The motion was seconded by Louise. The motion was passed with all Yeas, and one abstention from Karl.

Tina informed the group that Michael Rogers said that the DPW Tree Crew would not use the hand held GPS devices with the iTree system.. We will have to come up with a different solution for maintaining the inventory once it has been updated.

The STC also discussed the likelihood that the Fall planting will be on a smaller scale than originally thought, because it is going to take longer to get the tree inventory completed. The Spring planting is likely to be more extensive.

VIII. Elm Street Garden

Kristin updated the group on her site visit with Kathleen regarding the proposal for a garden at the island at the intersection of South and Elm.

There are 7 shrubs in the plan, which is all the STC has responsible for; the STC has no jurisdiction over annuals and perennials. In addition, the plan does not include any impact to the one tree at the island. However, The gardeners proposing this project need be aware that we may decide at a later date that a new tree may go into that space and this might disrupt their planting. The STC voted unanimously to approve the shrubbery plantings.

ACTION: Kristin to contact Kathleen with the recommendation from the STC.

IX. Other Business

All other agenda items were deferred to the next meeting due to the lateness of the hour. We did not address the Statement of Work for the arborist RFP, or the list of resident requests

The STC decided that we should meet again in 2 weeks. . All voted yes.

X. Meeting Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 9:19pm.