

SHADE TREE COMMISSION MEETING – October 11, 2022

PRESENT:

Elizabeth Gil
Angelo Urato
Victor Fontana
Philip Romero
Dominick Azzolini

The meeting of the Shade Tree Commission for October 11th, 2022 was opened and called to order at 6:25 PM by Vice-Chairman Elizabeth Gil

Borough Administrator Christopher Eilert spoke to the Commission about the resignation of Shade Tree Commissioner George Meglio; to discuss what the future of the Board going forward. He wanted to have feedback from all the members.

Administrator Eilert gave a brief history lesson on the difference between a Commission and a Board.

Administrator Eilert discussed how we currently handle day to day calls within the Borough; calls are then sent to DPW Supervisor John Fantacone to go and look at whether it be a tree lifting a sidewalk, branches in wires, etc. Rich Schulz, from DPW, is trained and has a system as to the cycle of pruning and trimming techniques. Downes Tree Service is called in if it is determined a tree is a hazard – decayed or dying to have it taken down. Administrator Eilert emphasized that we are customer service focused. He stated that the JIF is making a big effort to address trip and fall issues due to raised sidewalks. This past summer we did a survey of raised sidewalks, took out trees that were raising sidewalks, putting new sidewalks in, and we planted 78 new trees this fall. – this is an example of efficient government- that this can be done during the day without volunteers. Administrator Eilert also spoke about Neglia Engineering having a licensed Horticulturist; that knows the correct kind of tree to be planted in the shade versus in the sun. Also, Downes Tree Service are certified tree experts. So, we have access to experts who can give us the best advice and guidance. Customer service should be handled by the employees. Borough Hall is open 40 hours a week, we have emails, text messaging – all ways for residents to contact the town. Administrator Eilert stated that what he would like the Commission to get involved in is the educational components and the Forestry Plan and our survey-huge help. As far as the Tree Survey – there is a sequence - every 3 or 4 years, where the volunteers would walk the neighborhoods and do a count of the trees and estimate the species. The educational aspect of how volunteers could help- take for example the Spotted Lantern Flies, there are resources out there, we could post things from the internet on our Borough Website that just an example. Borough Administrator mentioned the other piece that he would like the Commission to get involved in is the school education program, Arbor Day, that George Meglio had done for many years. We get credit, although it's not considered Shade Tree the Clean Water Act-creates a mandate for every town to have a Stormwater Maintenance Plan -what you put down the storm drains. We get credit for doing environmental programs. A discussion ensued about the responsibilities of a Commission; what they are empowered to do which was written in 1915, where times were different. Mayor and Council are of the belief that a homeowner should have a say as to what goes in front of their houses; within reason. Our #1 focus is that we are a customer service organization.

Borough Administrator Eilert opened up the discussion to the members. A discussion ensued about tree growth, how they are planted and lifting sidewalks. We take pride in our town. We spend a lot of money on water, we have more sprinklers on more public property to keep the flowers, grass alive. Jerry Incremona does a great job for the town.

Liz Gil discussed the echinacea the were planted at Veterans Park. They were planted beautifully – but someone just ripped it all out. Borough Administrator said that it was trampled by kids, so they took it out – Veterans Park takes a beating. Liz also mentioned ornamental grass down by the train station that also took a beating –some landscapers don't know what they are doing. Liz also mentioned about how landscapers/residents mulch around Borough trees. Borough Administrator reiterated the use of our website for informing residents of issues like the proper way of mulching.

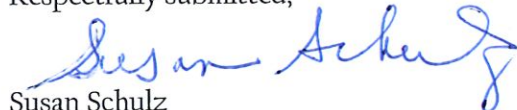
Angelo Urato discussed about residents taking a tree down on their own property; there are no regulations as to who is a certified arborist. Many other towns have in place where you need to take out a permit – no fee – its about the liability – hand in insurance policy – about safety. Administrator Eilert agreed.

Administrator Eilert would like a system in place that is more streamlined and less bureaucratic, we can sleep on it, time to think about it meet again - want thoughts and ideas – Borough Administrator feels strongly that it should go through Borough Hall. There was agreement amongst the members. Chris said the formality he will leave it up to the members. John Fantacone does a great job with the DPW as far as seeing issues, follows up.

Victor Fontana asked Administrator Eilert what does he envision for the Commission? Is it the education? Victor stated that someone from the town could go to those classes. Borough Administrator said we are at a stage now where are there no new spaces/opportunities to plant new trees unless if a new homeowner moves in and request one. Administrator Eilert stated that the Tax Assessor gets a listing each month of new homeowners, we can send a letter to those addresses. Welcome to town letter – ask if they want a tree. We do not want the entity to go away in the context of having people giving feedback, advice and some of the leg work with surveys. Nothing we have to decide now -can meet again come springtime. Never want to say no to volunteers. Liz Gil asked how important it was for the town to be a Tree City? Borough Administrator said he will do some research and clarification on it. Certain amount of education hours that need to be met, pretty liberal. We employ Paul Cowie as our Arborist, Downes Tree Service, Certified Tree Expert, qualifies us.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,



Susan Schulz
Shade Tree Secretary