

BOROUGH OF WEST CAPE MAY

SHADE TREE COMMISSION

MEETING MINUTES

August 10, 2021

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting of the Borough of West Cape May Shade Tree Commission was called to order by Dave Hammond at 6:09 PM. This meeting is held in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act, NJSA 10:4-6 et seq., notice of which was sent to the Star and Wave and posted on the bulletin board in the lobby of Borough Hall, 732 Broadway, West Cape May, NJ.

ROLL CALL AND FLAG SALUTE

Members present: Dave Hammond, Susan Hoffman, Wayne Hoffman, Bill McCray, Matt Notch, Bill Oetinger, Harry Schmidt, and Barry Sullivan. Lisa Bernstein was absent.

Others present: Peter Burke, Deputy Mayor, Rhiannon Worthington, Deputy Zoning Official and Deputy Enforcement Officer, Geraldine and Jason Richardson, borough residents, and Joseph C. Bennett, Assistant Regional Forester, NJ Forest Service.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

After a review of the minutes from the July 13, 2021, meeting, a motion to approve the minutes was made by Wayne Hoffman and seconded by Barry Sullivan. The minutes were approved.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Bill Oetinger reported a balance of \$91,035.52. A motion to accept the report was made by Wayne Hoffman and seconded by Harry Schmidt. The report was approved.

NJ HERITAGE AND BIG TREE PROGRAM

Joseph C. Bennett, Assistant Regional Forester, NJ Forest Service, was in attendance to discuss New Jersey's Big Tree Program. New Jersey has been overseeing the Big Tree Conservation Program and keeping a record of the largest trees in the state since the 1930s. As part of the program, the Forest Service maintains the Official NJ Big Tree Registry, a compilation of the largest native and naturalized tree species in the state. to acknowledge prize and beautiful trees.

There are numerous big trees in the state. The classification of big trees is National Champion, Champion, Heritage Trees, Heritage Champion, Signature Trees, Trail Trees, and Emeritus. National Champion Trees are not only the biggest of their species in the state but are also the biggest in the United States. Champion Trees are the largest of their species in New Jersey. Heritage Trees are keepers of stories and facts from the past. They do not have to big trees to be classified as Heritage Trees. Heritage Champion Trees are the largest in New Jersey by species and they have a historic story associated with them. Signature trees are big trees that hold a ranking other than first place with respect to their species. Trail trees or trail marker trees have been intentionally shaped by Native

Americans to mark the direction of a trail. Unusual trees have a unique form or growing characteristics not typical of its species. Lastly, Emeritus Trees are trees that were taken down by man or nature.

To be considered, a tree must be nominated and then evaluated by a program forester. Although the program has been paused during the pandemic, Mr. Bennett encouraged us to nominate trees from our community. Nominations can be used to market the benefits of trees and unify communities.

CORRESPONDENCE

- **304 S. Broadway**

The property owner requested the removal of a white fir tree. The borough arborist visited the property on July 22, 2021. He recommended that the tree be removed and replaced with a medium tree from the WCM List of Approved Trees. Bill Oetinger made a motion to approve the recommendation. Harry Schmidt seconded. The motion was approved.

- **296 Sixth Ave.**

The property owner requested the removal of an apple tree and mulberry tree. The borough arborist visited the property on July 28, 2020. He recommended that both trees be removed and replaced with two large trees from the WCM List of Approved trees seconded, and the motion was approved.

- **433 Third Ave.**

The property owner requested the removal of two black gum trees. The borough arborist visited the property on July 22, 2021. He recommended that both trees be removed immediately and replaced with two medium trees from the WCM List of Approved Trees. Both trees have severe root and trunk decay. Bill Oetinger made a motion to approve the removal. Susan Hoffman seconded, and the motion was approved.

- **111 Columbia**

The property owner requested the removal of a white poplar tree. The borough arborist visited the property on August 5, 2021. He recommended that the tree be removed and replaced with one medium tree from the WCM List of Approved Trees. Susan Hoffman made a motion to approve the removal. Harry Schmidt seconded, and the motion was approved.

- **406 Fourth Ave.**

The property owner requested the removal of a catalpa tree. The borough arborist visited the property on August 5, 2021. He recommended that the tree be removed and replaced with one large tree from the WCM List of Approved Trees. Bill Oetinger made a motion to approve the removal. Dave Hammond seconded, and the motion was approved with Wayne Hoffman and Susan Hoffman abstaining.

- **314 Moore St.**

The property owner removed a black cherry tree without a permit. A citation was issued. Bill Oetinger made a motion to require the replacement of one large tree from the WCM List of Approved Trees. Harry Schmidt seconded, and the motion was approved with Matt Notch abstaining.

OPEN PUBLIC PORTION

- Geraldine and Jason Richardson were present to inquire about the status of their tree removal application for 320 Third Ave. The application for the removal of two trees was approved at the July 2021 meeting.

OLD BUSINESS

- **Code Enforcement**

Tree Removal 408 Third

Wayne Hoffman reported that he contacted the contractor identified at the July meeting who built the home next to 408 Third. He asked him to consider covering the costs of removing the dead tree. He declined.

Emergency Tree Removal Amendment

Wayne Hoffman reviewed a draft of an amendment to the current code that would mandate that a representative of the Shade Tree Commission be consulted prior to the removal of an emergency tree. A process to notify a commissioner will be developed.

Tree Protection Zone on Adjoining Properties

Wayne Hoffman reported that he consulted with Mickey Riggin, borough arborist, about the need to consider Tree Protection Zones on adjoining properties during construction. Mr. Riggin agreed that trees on adjoining properties need to be protected as well as those on the property being developed. This issue will become more and more important as large lots are being subdivided and larger homes are built on smaller lots. Shade Tree Commissioners were asked to take this into consideration as they review future building plans.

Process to Notify Property Owners of Dangerous Trees on Borough Right of Way

Wayne Hoffman reported that code enforcement and legal counsel have identified the process to notify property owners about dangerous trees on the borough right of way adjoining their properties. If a tree on the borough right of way needs to be removed, borough council will pass an ordinance stating such and requiring the adjoining property owner to remove the tree at their expense within 30 days. Following the passage of the ordinance, a letter will be sent to the property owner outlining the process. A draft letter was reviewed.

- **Tree Planting and Maintenance Grant**

Susan Hoffman reported that she has submitted a grant to the NJ Department of Urban and Community Forestry for a grant to fund the planting of 50 trees along the borough

right of way. She clarified that the maintenance portion of the grant (if awarded) would only cover trees planting through the grant and not existing trees.

- **Community Forestry Management Plan**

Susan Hoffman reported that the borough's Community Forestry Management Plan which was due to expire Dec. 31, 2022, has been granted a five-year extension by the NJ Department of Urban and Community Forestry.

OTHER BUSINESS

- **Strawberry Festival**

A request by the West Cape May Business Association to return the Strawberry Festival to Wilbraham Park was reviewed. The request was denied for the following reasons: saves on well and tear on Wilbraham, enhanced traffic flow at the BackYard Park, positive feedback from vendors and festival goers about the new location and the ability to control the flow of festival goers in the case of additional pandemic restrictions.

- **Other**

Following the positive feedback concerning the presentation of the NJ Heritage Tree Program, Barry Sullivan agreed to draft a process for West Cape May to work in concert with the state to identify and protect significant trees in our community.

ADJOURNMENT

With no other business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Hoffman, Secretary