

BOROUGH OF WEST CAPE MAY

SHADE TREE COMMISSION

MEETING MINUTES

February 14, 2023

West Cape May Borough Hall

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting of the Borough of West Cape May Shade Tree Commission was called to order by Wayne Hoffman at 6:00 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, posted on the bulletin board in the lobby of Borough Hall, 732 Broadway, West Cape May, NJ and read by Wayne Hoffman.

ROLL CALL AND FLAG SALUTE

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

Others present: George Dick, commissioner, Stacey McCaney, deputy code enforcement officer and Debbie Yamashita, resident.

Wayne Hoffman led the salute to the flag.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

After a review of the meeting minutes from January 10, 2023, a motion to accept the minutes was made by Wayne Hoffman and seconded by Harry Schmidt. The minutes were approved by unanimous vote.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Bill Oetinger reported a balance of \$86,2363. The treasury balance is up \$2, 119 for the year. The 2023 budget is under discussion and items for consideration should be forwarded to Bill Oetinger. Wayne Hoffman made a motion to approve the report and Barry Sullivan seconded. The report was approved by unanimous vote.

CORRESPONDENCE

- **116 Broadway**
The property owner requested the removal of a hackberry tree. The tree is located next to a drainpipe that is clogged. The owner is trying to clear the pipe without removing the tree. Dave Hammond made a motion to table the request to see if the pipe can be cleared without removing the tree. Susan Hoffman seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.
- **115 Stimpson**
The homeowner requested the removal of a 39-inch silver maple tree. The borough arborist visited the property on January 25, 2023, and recommended that it be removed. It is growing within 10 feet of the proposed construction area for a new septic system. Bill Oetinger made a

motion to approve the removal and require the planting of one large tree as a replacement. Bill McCray seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved.

- **901 Broadway**

The property owner requested the removal of a 50-inch silver maple tree. The borough arborist visited the property on January 25, 2023 and recommended it be removed and be replaced with one medium-sized tree. The tree is growing between two mobile homes and its roots have damaged one of the homes. Wayne Hoffman made a motion to approve the recommendation and to offer the property owner a consultation on the remaining trees on the property. Dave Hammond seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved.

- **414 Green St.**

The property owner requested the removal of a multi trunk silver maple tree. The borough arborist visited the property on February 9, 2023 and recommended it be removed and replaced with one large tree. The tree grows 20 feet from the house. The trunk attachment is weak, and the trunk has a decayed area. The risk potential is moderate to high. Bill Oetinger made a motion to approve the recommendation. Susan Hoffman seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved.

TREASURER'S REPORT/2023 INITIATIVES AND BUDGET

Bill Oetinger led a discussion about initiatives for 2023 and the budget implications. A report of the prioritized initiatives and resulting budget is attached.

OLD BUSINESS

- **Code Enforcement/Review of Landscaping Plans**

Wayne Hoffman reported that two court cases involving the illegal removal of trees have resulted in significant fines. A portion of the fee received will be allocated to the Shade Tree Commission.

Stacey McCaney continues to follow up with residents concerning the planting of replacement trees. To date, six additional responses have been received.

- **Wilbraham Park/Friends of Wilbraham Park**

The garden committee submitted a planting plan for 2023 totaling \$1,500. Bill Oetinger made a motion to approve the plan. Harry seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

- **Planning Board Projects**

There were no new projects.

- **Swimming Pools**

The ordinance will be introduced at the next commissioner's meeting.

- **Tree Planting Grant**

Susan Hoffman reported that the tree planting plan has been approved by the NJUCF.

- **Trimming of Hazardous Trees**

This will be done in coordination with the zoning office.

NEW BUSINESS

- **Donation of Landscaping/Maintenance Work in Wilbraham Park**

Wayne Hoffman reported that Joe Knoll donated the time he spent maintaining the park in 2022.

OPEN PUBLIC PORTION

There was no public comment.

ADJOURNMENT

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Hoffman, Secretary

2023 Initiatives

Unless otherwise stated, none of the initiatives listed in this document have budget implications.

Tree Grant

In 2021 we obtained a \$43,000 Grant from the state of NJ (Dept. of Urban Forestry) for the planting of 50 trees in the Borough. The Trees need to be planted in spring 2023. The STC's expense for this will be in man hours, rather than hard cost. However, since this grant will provide for the planting of 50 trees, it replaces the traditional spring & fall tree giveaway, which in turn saves approximately \$6,000 of expense on this 2023 budget.

Any resident receiving a tree will receive:

- A Resident Tree Agreement (RTA) which is to be signed by the owner. The RTA will outline the owner's responsibilities for items such as watering and mulching. This is not a requirement of the Grant, but is an effective tool for tree duration that is used in other municipalities.
- A loaned Tree Gator to provide for watering of the newly planted tree. This is not a requirement of the Grant, but rather an attempt to prioritize the health and longevity of the newly planted tree. There are sufficient Tree Gators in stock, and as such there are no budget implication for 2023.

Tree Inventory & 5 Year Plan

This year's emphasis involves trees in the Borough Right of Way and well as trees located on private property with limbs that overhang the Borough Right of Way. Pruning needs for these trees have been identified. Pruning requirements need to be communicated to the tree's owners, and appropriate follow action taken (probably to be completed by / with Code Enforcement).

Black Duck Wetlands Area

Note that the name "Black Duck Wetlands Area" is for identification purposes. If this initiative comes to fruition, a more suitable name will be determined.

This initiative involves the piece of unoccupied Borough owned land adjacent to the Black Duck restaurant on Sunset. Blvd. Because the Area is designated by the DEP as wetlands, site preparation is limited to the clearance of brush and downed trees, removing undesirable trees, and planting new trees. The property is currently overgrown. The initiative would be to convert it to managed open space, similar to the Pollinator Park.

At this time, initial clearing of the edges of the lot is underway. The next step will be to determine the financial impact (if any) of fully clearing the lot and making minor improvements. Depending on the cost, we will investigate the availability of Grant funds to cover the cost.

Regulatory Changes

Potential changes include:

- New Construction: Revise the Borough Regulations as they apply new construction to include (1) Borough Arborist review prior to construction activity at contractor expense, (2) definition of the term “construction activity”, (3) process for Arborist recommendation (as final & approved by the STC, Code Enforcement and the contractor), (4) Stop Work Orders clarification as a strike on the three strike process.
- Requiring Permits for all tree removals, including new construction.
- New construction replacement trees should (1) be included on the initial and approved landscape plan, and (2) reviewed and approved by Code Enforcement, and the STC. Also, a Certificate of Occupancy cannot be issued until all replacement trees are planted.
- Homeowner Tree Removal: Eliminate the restrictions regarding homeowner removal of trees that are permit-approved for removal.
- Increase of Tree Removal Permit cost to \$55 for the removal of one tree. For permit requests for the removal of multiple trees, the cost would be \$55 for the first tree plus \$35 for each additional tree. Based on current monthly volume of Permit requests (and given that Permit requests are for the removal of one tree), the elimination of the \$20 disparity between the tree assessment cost and the tree permit fee, will save the STC approximately \$160 per month. Also investigate whether this fee can be adjusted in the future (based on increased Arborist charges) without regulatory action.
- Increasing the monetary penalty associated with the unauthorized removal of trees.

Borough Arborist

Given our increasing reliance on Mickey, we should have a good handle on his succession plans. If we deem them insufficient, we should (after discussion with Mickey) develop a backup plan. This would probably entail vetting one or two arborists for potential engagement. Factors to be discussed would include (but not be limited to) cost, experience with municipal representation, and experience in municipalities with the characteristics of West Cape May.

De-Vining

This effort seems to be effective, and (in the absence of other information) should continue.

Preferred Tree Vendor

This would involve putting out an RFP for the purpose of having an approved tree professional. The benefit of this is that we would be able to avoid the time and labor needed to obtain three bids tree removal or remediation projects above a certain dollar level.

Public Forum

Partner with the Environmental Commission to provide an educational forum regarding STC activities, shade tree information, and current noteworthy items relating to trees and the tree canopy

Resident Letter

Potential subjects include (not prioritized):

- Tree & Sapling Giveaways
- Spotted Lanternfly (what to look for; what to do)
- Resident Street Tree responsibilities, including limits on overhand on Borough streets, County roads, and sidewalks
- Heritage Tree Program
- Tree Removal Permits and Penalties
- Home Herbicide Use
- Arbor Day

The proposed budget includes funding for this initiative.

For Possible Consideration Later in 2023

Wilbraham Park Turf Management

The following is not included in the 2023 Proposed Budget, but it does have budget implications.

It has been suggested that we improve the appearance and durability of the grassy areas at Wilbraham Park. The initial materials estimate is \$2,000 as follows:

- Spring Lime (pelletized): \$20.
- Spring lawn fertilizer: \$140
- Fall lawn fertilizer (starter): \$240
- Generic Plant Fertilizer and humus: \$100.
- Fall Lawn Coring (Rental or Contract): \$400.
- Fall Over seeding (grass seed) \$300.
- Sprinkler heads and hose for over seeding: \$200.
- Irrigation Supplies (new nozzles, replacement hose etc.): \$200.
- Other as needed: \$400

A complete cost estimate will need to include labor cost, or at least an assessment of what labor can be supplied by volunteers.

Website

This would be an update / improvement to the Borough's Website as opposed to having a separate STC site.

