

CHATHAM BOROUGH SHADE TREE COMMISSION

Tuesday, October 16, 2018

7:30 p.m.

By speakerphone from Charleston, S.C., Chrmn. Colleen Truppo called this Regular Meeting of the Shade Tree Commission to order at 7:30 p.m., Room 301, Upper Level, Chatham Borough Hall. The Open Public Meetings Act was read aloud.

Name	Present	Absent
Colleen Truppo, Chrmn.	X – present by speakerphone	
Fran Drew	X	
Ken Fekete	X	
Dean Wilson		X
Kristy Chmura	X	
Ken Chmura	X	
Council Member James Collander		X
John Tortorella	X	
Tony Torello, Shade Tree Enforcement Officer		X

Chrmn. Truppo read aloud the Mission Statement of the Chatham Borough Shade Tree Commission.

Public Comments

There were none.

Motion to Adopt Meeting Minutes

The minutes of the September 18, 2018 Shade Tree Commission were adopted as submitted.

New Business

Fall Planting

Chrmn. Truppo reported that the planting program is underway. She had met with Mr. Torello, Borough Engineer Vince DeNave, and Borough Arborist John Linson. Mr. Torello had suggested to her to ask Mr. Linson to become involved with these plantings. Mr. Linson is involved with planting programs in other towns. Chrmn. Truppo noted that Mr. Linson had participated in the Tree Windshield Survey in 2017. At that time, he had identified a number of trees that could be planted in different locations around the Borough. Numerous homeowner requests for trees have been submitted to the Shade Tree Commission (STC). The STC typically can only afford to plant 50 trees this Fall, based on its budget.

Chrmn. Truppo reported that Mr. Linson has agreed to look at the sites that she has recommended. As he has done for other towns, he knows of a nursery that will provide the best trees for these sites.

Chrmn. Truppo noted that the STC will do the plantings late in the Fall season. It seems that it gets later each autumn for the trees to become dormant. Chrmn. Truppo reported that the request

for Fall 2018 plantings has now been cut off. Tree requests can still be accepted, but will be put on the 2019 list. Sometimes a resident will cancel his/her tree planting request, and another requestor can move up and take his place.

Ash Yellow

Chrmn. Truppo reported that Ash Yellow is a disease currently affecting ash trees in the northeast. This disease affects the inside of the tree's ability to channel water and sugar up and down its trunk. There is no treatment for this disease. Next spring, when the leaves of the ash trees come out, Mr. Linson can then determine which ash trees should be taken down. New plantings can replace them.

Wiring Underground

Mrs. Drew distributed photos of what the trees in Manasquan NJ look like after JCP & L trims them.

Mrs. Drew recalled that on August 13, 2018, she spoke before the Mayor and Borough Council because Robert Waldon of JCP & L made an announcement that JCP & L was going to cut down a number of trees in Chatham, and spend \$400 million to do nothing to beautify Chatham streets or save any trees. To pay for this, JCP & L wants permission from the towns where they operate, to raise the cost on the electric rates for the next four years. Mrs. Drew reported that JCP & L is in 13 of the 21 New Jersey counties. The cost for JCP & L to recover after Hurricane Sandy was \$630 million. Mrs. Drew felt JCP & L could have spent that amount on underground wiring.

Mrs. Drew reported that Mr. Waldon also spoke about "enhanced vegetation management". In 2016, the BPU told the five utility companies in New Jersey that they no longer needed an arborist to look at a tree. BPU claimed that they could train one of their men to be "a vegetation manager".

Mrs. Drew felt that if the Commission could not convince the Mayor and Council to stop JCP & L before January 2019, Chatham will suffer the consequences. Residents will have to pay higher electrical bills for 4 years.

Mrs. Drew believed because of overwhelming scientific evidence of climate change, utility companies should be forced to put wires underground, instead of ruining our trees. Mrs. Drew explained how Manasquan NJ stopped the BPU's ruling that any tree within 15 feet of a telephone pole, must have its branches cut to the sky. The Mayor and Borough Council of Manasquan had voiced strong opposition.

Mrs. Drew noted that she had recently given a presentation to the Chatham Borough Mayor and Council naming at least three communities who had successfully placed all their wiring underground.

Mrs. Drew explained to Commissioners how Ft. Collins, Colorado, had put wires underground for 7,300 homes. No one was charged a cent for this project. She discussed the underground wiring installation done for Pawley's Island, South Carolina. The residents there are charged \$300 a year for ten years. The town paid the other \$350 a year for ten years.

Mrs. Drew gave each Commissioner a brochure that had been sent to residents on Pawley's Island, informing them of the advantages of installing underground wiring, thus saving the trees from drastic pruning methods and preventing power outages. She has the contact name of the gentleman responsible for this program. Mrs. Drew's sister had sent her a recent article reporting that the last telephone pole had been removed on Pawley's Island.

Mrs. Drew discussed Anaheim CA's plans to put their wires underground. They are in year 35 of a 50 year plan. A 4% increase on electric rates is paying for it. A friend of Mrs. Drew's, who lives in The Villages, in Florida, also had underground wiring installed. She will get the details on how this community went about it with Sumter utilities.

Mrs. Drew related what JCP & L had discussed with Mayor Harris about doing an underground installation. They had informed the Mayor that such an installation would cost a few million dollars. Mrs. Drew had contacted the JCP & L representative for further details. It was not encouraging.

Mrs. Drew recommended that the Shade Tree Commission look at the data she had distributed. The Commission could then specifically ask JCP & L for a written quote as to what it would cost to put wires underground. If JCP & L can't do that, Mrs. Drew suggested the Commission ask the Public Service companies of these communities that she had just reviewed, regarding the costs involved.

Mr. Fekete suggested getting the NJ state officials involved with this situation.

Mrs. Drew noted that since she has given her presentation in 2016 to the Mayor and Borough Council on underground wiring, nothing has been done. She felt that the Shade Tree Commission, as a group, could act. The STC could ask that the representative from JCP & L for a written quote on the cost of installing underground wiring in Chatham Borough. If this representative doesn't give the quote, the Commission can find out from another utility company.

Mr. Fekete asked if there was a chance that Chatham Borough could switch utilities.

Mrs. Drew discussed this possibility. She had asked Borough officials about the possibility of Chatham Borough joining Madison Borough's electric company. Unfortunately, one of the Council Members pointed out that Chatham Borough would then have to become part of Madison Borough. However, Mrs. Drew felt the Commission could research other possibilities.

Mr. Tortorella brought up the possibility that the Board of Public Utilities would have control over which utilities control what areas. A monopoly usually exists within a particular area.

Mr. Fekete questioned what rights Chatham Borough had as a municipality. Mrs. Drew noted that JCP & L is no longer a New Jersey company. It is really First Energy located in Ohio.

Mr. Tortorella pointed out that the decision-maker for the Borough's utility company be found. Pressure can still be applied regarding this issue.

Mr. Fekete offered to do research on this matter.

Chrmn. Truppo stated that she was looking on the website of the BPU. It looks like their office is in Trenton. It seemed like Chatham Borough had no recourse in who their utility provider would be. JCP & L may decide not to give a quote. Chatham Borough should find out what were their rights on this matter, or the lack thereof.

Mr. Tortorella suggested that there may be ways for a municipality to require utilities to do things in a certain way because the municipality is granting this monopoly to provide a certain service to captive customers who don't have the ability to obtain services from another company. Mr. Tortorella felt that most of the conversation, on this matter, should be directed to the BPU. He pointed out that BPU should have a public advocate who looks out for the rate payers. Mr. Tortorella felt that the public advocate would be the one the Mayor and Borough Council should communicate with when it comes to the interests of the public.

Mrs. Drew felt an attempt should still be made to communicate with JCP & L on this matter. If JCP & L refuses to communicate, the public should be made aware of their refusal. Ms. Chmura offered to go with Mrs. Drew to visit JCP & L and request a quote on what underground wiring will cost.

Chrmn. Truppo offered to research to see what advocate the Commission could go to if they don't get a response from JCP & L. She is also interested to find out how Madison started their own electrical company. Perhaps Chatham Borough could replicate what Madison accomplished.

Mr. Chmura suggested Mrs. Drew touch base with Council Member Resto to help her reach out to JCP & L.

Ms. Chmura wanted to talk with the President of the NJ Shade Tree Federation about this underground wiring.

Mr. Fekete suggested this concern be raised at the public portion of the Shade Tree Convention. The audience could simply be asked if they would like to join Chatham Borough in seeking underground wiring and its cost for their communities.

Mr. Tortorella questioned what other equipment is hung on telephone poles. There would have to be a buy-in for any other providers who use those poles.

After further discussion, Mr. Chmura felt the best person to alert the public of this wiring situation with JCP & L would be Chrmn. Truppo. Mrs. Drew said she and Ms. Chmura will gather the necessary data to educate the public on this issue.

Mrs. Drew believed she had heard Governor Murphy expressing a desire to have telephone wires installed underground. She will check further into this matter.

Chrmn. Truppo noted that Commissioners could report back on their findings at the next Commission meeting.

Old Business

Tree at 27 North Summit Avenue

Chrmn. Truppo noted that this matter had been discussed at the last Commission. Since the last meeting, the developer had been instructed by the Borough Engineer to install two stormwater retention tanks. Unfortunately the roots of the maple tree in question, would have to be cut. She and Ms. Chmura had met with the developer, the Borough Engineer, and Mr. Torello on the site. Placing the future driveway in another location would compromise another existing tree on the property. The upshot of this meeting, was that the developer offered to replace the existing 12-inch maple tree with two 6-inch or larger trees. Ms. Chmura had made a good suggestion on where to plant these two trees, which was accepted by the developer.

Chrmn. Truppo reported that Vince DeNave, the Zoning Officer, will be adding a checklist requirement for all builders, that even before they go before the Zoning Bd. of Adjustment, if the builder proposes to remove a Borough tree, he must go before the Shade Tree Commission and submit a request to remove the tree.

Follow-up on Ash Tree on Second Street

Charm. Truppo noted that John Linson has looked at the tree. Mr. Linson believed that this tree had the Ash Yellow disease. He stated that if the homeowner or JCP & L wanted to remove the tree, the Borough should give permission. So far, this tree is not a “hazard tree”, however it is dying.

Mr. Fekete suggested Mr. Linson put his findings in writing for the Commission. The Commission could then visit the tree themselves. Chrmn. Truppo said she had a written report from Mr. Linson.

The Board decided to wait and see on any further action. Chrmn. Truppo will be sending copies of Mr. Linson’s report to Commissioners.

Miscellaneous

Chrmn. Truppo announced that Ken and Kristy Chmura will be attending the Shade Tree Conference this Thursday.

Mr. Tortorella reported that he has discovered that Governor Murphy had been interviewed by public radio in March after some nor’easters had hit New Jersey. Governor Murphy had stated that he would push to have more power lines buried underground so they won’t be torn down by falling trees. Governor Murphy wants to challenge the myth of how expensive it is to install wiring underground.

Chrmn. Truppo reported that she had participated in a walk of the new Shepard Kollock Adventure Trail with members of St. Paul’s Episcopal Church of Chatham.

Chrmn. Truppo will reach out to Mr. DeNave to see if a Planning Board or Zoning Board member could attend a Shade Tree Commission meeting.

Mr. Fekete suggested that the Commissioners have a chance to review the new checklist that Mr. DeNave is organizing, particularly on proposed tree removals.

At 8:43 p.m. the meeting adjourned.

The next Chatham Borough Shade Tree Commission meeting will be on Tuesday, November 20, 2018, 7:30 p.m., Room 301, upper level, Chatham Borough Hall.

Respectfully submitted:

Liz Holler
Recording Secretary