

CHATHAM BOROUGH SHADE TREE COMMISSION
January 28, 2021 7:30 p.m.

Commissioner Colleen Truppo called this Regular and Reorganization meeting of the Chatham Borough Shade Tree Commission to order at 7:30 p.m. This was a virtual meeting. All Commissioners and the Recording Secretary were present by way of Zoom.

Names	Present	Absent
Colleen Truppo	X	
Kristy Chmura	X	
Fran Drew		X – at an Undergrounding Advisory Comm. meeting
George Sweetin	X	
Dean Wilson	X	
John Tortorella		X
Patrick Florentino	X	
Beverly Klepper	X	
Council Member Karen Koronkiewicz	X	
Liz Holler, Recording Secretary	X	

Mr. Sweetin, a new member to the Commission, introduced himself. Mr. Sweetin has been involved in the green industry for over 40 years. For the past 2 ½ years he has been working with JCP & L doing tree assessments. Mr. Sweetin is a Licensed Arborist in the State of New Jersey. He has also been involved with the New Jersey Shade Tree Board.

Mrs. Truppo and Ms. Chmura welcomed Mr. Sweetin. They appreciated the experience he will be bringing to the Board.

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

Motion to Adopt Meeting Minutes

The minutes of the December 15, 2020 Shade Tree Commission meeting were approved as amended.

Mrs. Truppo asked Ms. Holler to make sure the Zoom address for the public is available on the agenda.

Reorganization Resolutions for 2021

The following Reorganization Resolutions for 2021 were unanimously approved by the Shade Tree Commission:

Resolution #21-01: Resolution of the Chatham Borough Shade Tree Commission Establishing the Annual Meeting Schedule for the Year 2021.

Resolution 21-02: Resolution Designating the Official Newspapers for the Publication of Legal Notices for the Year 2021.

Resolution 21-03: Resolution electing the Shade Tree Commission Officers for the Year 2021:

Chair: Colleen Truppo

Vice Chair: Kristy Chmura

Discussion Items

Chrmn. Truppo announced that Tony Torello, Director of Public Works, has agreed to attend one Shade Tree meeting per quarter. Mr. Torello will be on the STC Zoom call next month. If Commissioners have any questions for Mr. Torello to address, it would be helpful if the questions could be emailed to Chrmn. Truppo in advance of the meeting. She will make sure Mr. Torello receives these questions.

On other matters, Chrmn. Truppo noted that the DPW had helped with the Fall Tree Planting Program last autumn. Because DPW helped plant the trees, not a nursery, more trees were made available. Mr. Torello and Mr. Pietruano drove around town and found suitable locations to plant these trees. Unfortunately, some of the homeowners who received these additional trees on their Borough rights-of-way expressed unhappiness to the DPW workers. Chrmn. Truppo felt the STC should educate the public, letting them know that the Commission has the right to plant trees in Borough rights-of-way. Information has now been included in the latest Borough Calendar stating the Shade Tree Commission has the authority to plant trees in the Borough rights-of-way. Some residents don't realized that the line of grass between the curb and the sidewalk belongs to the Borough.

Vice Chrmn. Chmura reported that she has been looking at the web pages of neighboring Shade Tree Commissions to get some idea on how liven up the Chatham STC web page. Ms. Chmura had a rough draft of the Commission's Goals & Adjectives to look over. She liked the web page belonging to Bernards Township. They used bullet-points to list their goals & objectives, which is probably more reader-friendly than paragraphs in this situation. Also, photos of trees could be added.

Chrmn. Truppo will email Vice Chrmn. Chmura's draft to Commissioners. They are welcome to email any helpful comments to her. Vice Chrmn. Chmura urged Commissioners to look at the Bernards Township Shade Tree Commission website. She felt it was very user-friendly and easy to navigate.

JCP & L Tree Cutting on Lafayette Avenue

Chrmn. Truppo recalled from the last meeting that Mrs. Drew had reported that JCP & L had been cutting down trees recently on Lafayette Ave. There was some question whether Chatham Borough had been notified about these cuttings. Chrmn. Truppo had recently learned at a Rutgers seminar that the public utilities are exempt from having to notify municipalities. They follow a different code. Chrmn. Truppo asked Mr. Sweetin about this matter.

Mr. Sweetin answered that the Board of Public Utilities has strict standards. The utility companies have to meet these standards. A Right-of-Way exists 15 feet away from their wires. He explained that detailed reports have to be submitted by the BPU after a storm. Mr. Sweetin noted that it's not the utility company's idea to remove these trees. It's what the State requires. The tree work must be done within a certain required time.

Mr. Sweetin was familiar with the tree-cutting that was recently done on Lafayette Avenue. He believed the Board of Public Utilities was in that area before and after the work was done and had done inspections both times. Mr. Sweetin had taken photos of the trees before and after the tree cutting.

Chrmn. Truppo felt that JCP & L was constantly present in the Borough, cutting down trees. What more work is planned? Residents often call the Borough to ask why a tree is being removed, when it is really for the utilities to answer.

Mr. Sweetin answered that as far as notification goes, planners, like himself, have to notify the towns. Some towns have the Borough Administrator or Mayor, Public Works, Police Department and Shade Tree Commissioner sign off on a tree removal project. Other towns just have only their town administrators to sign off on the project. However, the tree companies still have to notify the Police Departments if they need to close down a road. It's really up to the town administration what the tree companies can and cannot do.

Mr. Sweetin noted that he has seen in the industry, a beautiful tree gets planted, but in a number of years, it becomes much larger with prominent branches that could seriously affect a resident's electrical power. He has seen both spectrums on this situation. Some people want all the trees removed, and others don't want any taken down.

Chrmn. Truppo suggested that the Commission be given an inventory of the location of the trees that are removed. It may give the Commission ideas of where to plant new trees in the future. She was interested in knowing how detail-oriented Chatham Borough was considered by the BPU when planners want to remove a tree.

Mr. Sweetin believed Mr. Torello, the Director of DPW had met with a planner on a recent tree removal project. He had looked at the trees that had been tagged. He pointed out that there are instances where a tree is planted between the curb and the sidewalk, and there is not enough soil space to maintain it. Unfortunately, there are times when an overly mature tree is affected by road improvements, new infrastructure, etc. and it begins to decline.

Chrmn. Truppo felt it was important to put the correct shade tree in the best location where it can thrive. Mr. Sweetin's guidance would be appreciated on this. She noted many residents want tiny ornamental trees planted, which are pretty, but are not shade trees.

Mr. Sweetin reported that he has met with people who have had to evacuate their homes after a bad storm, because of a tree damaging their houses. Unfortunately, bad feelings then develop about trees after these episodes.

Mr. Sweetin suggested a homeowner should be advised on the best type of tree to be planted between the curb and the sidewalk. The utilities, water, etc. also have to be taken into consideration, with what type of tree should be planted.

Chrmn. Truppo pointed out that every street in the Borough has a different right-of-way. In some cases, perhaps a larger or different tree would be better planted inside of a right-of-way.

Chrmn. Truppo was glad that Mr. Sweetin has joined the Commission. He could help explain why certain tree projects have to be done in the Borough. If trees have to be removed, the Commission, with Mr. Sweetin's help, can decide what trees would be the best replacements.

Chrmn. Truppo brought up to Council Member Koronkiewicz the plan to have a subcommittee meet with you, Mayor Kobylarz, Mr. Torello, Borough Administrator Williams, to educate the public that the Borough Shade Tree Commission has a right to plant trees in the Borough right-of-way. She asked Council Member Koronkiewicz if she had even talked with other Council Members about this matter, or had brought it up at a Council meeting.

Council Member Koronkiewicz stated that she had mentioned this matter at a Council Meeting in December. She has also spoken briefly with Borough Administrator Williams about trees that have been removed private property, and the escrow involved. She agreed it would be good idea to still hold a subcommittee meeting as suggested by Chrmn. Truppo.

On other matters, Chrmn. Truppo brought up that three informational meetings for the public have been held regarding the River Road development. She had phoned in a question at one of the meetings, inquiring about how much green space would be created at this development. She asked Council Member Koronkiewicz if the Shade Tree Commission could attend a Planning Board meeting to encourage the developer to create a greet space and plant some good trees.

Council Member Koronkiewicz answered that the developer had expressed an interest in planting trees around the property; however, the way the development is designed, it won't work out. The developer has offered to make a donation to create open space elsewhere in town. This offer would include planting trees.

CEUs

Chrmn. Truppo noted that Core training courses are always available from time to time for Commissioners. She reminded Commissioners that ten CEU (Continuing Education Units) are required per year.

Mr. Sweetin reported that during February a Tree Day is held at County College of Morris. It's a two-hour virtual event.

At 8:36 p.m. the meeting adjourned.

The next Shade Tree Commission meeting will be on Thursday, February 25, 2021, 7:30 p.m. It will be a virtual meeting.

Respectfully submitted:

Liz Holler
Recording Clerk