

CHATHAM BOROUGH SHADE TREE COMMISSION
Tuesday, December 18, 2018 7:30 p.m.

Chrmn. Colleen Truppo called this Regular Meeting of the Borough 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	
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
Liz Holler, Minutes Secretary	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 November 20, 2018 meeting were tabled. They will be reviewed next month.

New Business

Tree Planting update

Chrmn. Truppo reported that the Commission had received multiple bids. Cerbo's offered the best pricing and was awarded the contract. In total 52 trees will be planted in the Borough. So far, 46 trees have been planted. John Linson, the Borough Arborist, had made recommendations on the tree species to be planted. He also had recommended a number of trees be planted in Shepard Kollock Park and Municipal Parking Lot #6 on Center Street. Chrmn. Truppo noted that the trees that are planted in the fall do much better than plantings in the springtime. A number of residents expressed appreciation for the plantings.

JCP & L Discussion

Mrs. Drew noted that Chrmn. Truppo had asked her how, in 2016, Manasquan NJ had limited what JCP & L could do with regard to trees.

Mrs. Drew noted that in 2016 the BPU regulations were allowing electric companies to trim a tree any way they wanted to. Mrs. Drew showed a photo of a badly trimmed tree. She reported that

the BPU also decides what electric company will be located in what county. Mrs. Drew felt that our county, Morris County, is stuck with the worst electrical company – JCP & L.

Mrs. Drew distributed information on a State Assembly bill (A-2558) known as the “Vegetation Management Response Act”. This bill, if approved, would give control to all the electric companies to cut any tree down they wanted to. Mrs. Drew reported that the bill passed the Assembly 70 to 1. However, the bill still has to pass the State Senate. The State Senate will not vote on this bill until January 21st or later.

Mrs. Drew suggested that the Commission should form a protest group to go down to Trenton with signs objecting to this vote and advocating the saving of trees. She reported that she had sent a copy of this bill to Council Members Len Resto and Thad Kobylarz. Mrs. Drew read aloud Council Member Kobylarz’s reaction to the passing of this bill. Council Member Kobylarz will be writing letters to each and every State Senator to strongly object to this piece of legislation. He will also write to Governor Murphy on this matter, and encourages all Shade Tree Commissioners do the same.

Mrs. Drew added that Council Member Kobylarz will be crafting a resolution to create an underground cable advisory committee. Mrs. Drew felt that local students should also be involved in this protest movement. Council Member Resto then called up the Key Club at Chatham High School to set up a meeting to discuss this matter. Mrs. Drew strongly urged Commissioners to rise up and fight this bill, allowing JCP & L to have this control over our trees.

Mrs. Drew also distributed a letter from the Morris County Administrator in November, reporting that the Morris County Freeholders are initiating the so-called ash tree removal project on public property. The freeholders are spending \$600,000 to take down ash trees because they believe the emerald ash borer will kill all these trees. Mrs. Drew believed that the freeholders were not aware that these ash trees could be treated for this disease. She found it disturbing that Freeholder Deborah Smith stated that the ash tree removal project would be a “painfully necessary project”.

Mrs. Drew also reported that in January 2016, the new regulations came out from the Board of Public Utilities (BPU). That same month, she received a phone call from the town administrator of Manasquan NJ informing her that JCP & L will have their tree cutters arrive to start cutting down trees. The administrator sent the pertinent document for Mrs. Drew to read. After reading it, Mrs. Drew pointed out that town must be alerted way in advance of this tree cutting. Also, two public meetings have to be held concerning this project. If the residents were made aware of these requirements, they would be able to stop JCP & L.

Mrs. Drew reported that the Mayor of Manasquan alerted the residents sending a written notice of this tree-cutting project. She distributed to Commissioners a sign she had nailed to each of the trees on her property. In bold print the sign read: “Do Not Trim this Tree. I have hired Whitley Tree Service to do whatever trimming is necessary. I have notified the Mayor and Borough Administrator”. Her name and address had been included on the sign.

Mrs. Drew recalled that she and Mr. Drew had been informed by Robert Lee, from JCP & L, to be present on their Manasquan property at 8 a.m. on a certain day to meet JCP & L’s vegetation

manager. This vegetation manager will tell them which limbs would have to be removed from their trees. Mrs. Drew's sister-in-law video-taped the encounter Mr. and Mrs. Drew had with Mr. Lee and the JCP & L employees. Mr. Lee stated that he and the workers will return in two weeks to "minusculey" trim the trees. Mr. and Mrs. Drew returned to their property on that particularly date. Their presence prevented JCP & L from massively and unattractively trimming their trees.

Mrs. Drew reviewed the letters she has sent to JCP & L, with questions about installing underground wiring as an alternative. JCP & L did not answer any of her letters.

Mrs. Drew showed a letter she had written to the editor of the local paper concerning this tree trimming situation. She encouraged Commissioners to write similar letters to send to newspapers, government officials, etc. Mrs. Drew believed that the voting on this bill will be held on January 21st at the earliest. She will let Chrmn. Truppo know of any further developments. Mrs. Drew has also learned that this bill may be amended before the State Senate takes a vote. She will be receiving a copy of that amendment and will send it to Chrmn. Truppo.

Mrs. Drew will pass her thoughts on this bill to a friend in Upper Montclair NJ who is close to Governor Murphy. Even if this bill is passed by the State Senate, Governor Murphy still has to sign it. Mrs. Drew reported that she had sent a certified letter to Mary Ann Holden, a Commissioner on the BPU. Len Resto will be setting up a meeting with Commissioner Holden. Mrs. Drew plans to attend that meeting to help present the facts to the BPU on this tree situation.

Mr. Chmura asked who sponsored the A-2558 Bill – the Vegetation Management Response Act?

Mrs. Drew answered three people had sponsored this bill. They were representatives of Morris, Mercer, and Warren.

Ms. Chmura suggested the Commission contact the Natural Resource Defense Counsel about this bill. Chrmn. Truppo had contacted the head of the Shade Tree Federation about all of the NJ counties that would be affected by this bill.

Mrs. Drew noted that a contractor who is doing a development in Chatham Township is required to install the wiring underground. He informed Mrs. Drew that underground wiring would cost \$5,000 per house.

Mrs. Drew stated that she will get a list of the Assembly representatives who voted in favor of Bill A-2558, and State Senators, and Governor Murphy, and express their objection to this bill. She urged that the Commission form a protest group, on an independent level, and go to Trenton. Signs should be taken down to Trenton and carried by the group. The advisory committee that Len Resto and Council Member Kobylarz had recommended should reach out to entities beyond Chatham, just as Pilgrim Pipeline protest had done.

Summing up, Chrmn. Truppo and Mrs. Drew recommended that Commissioners should write to the following entities, giving their views on Bill A-2558: Governor Murphy, our State Assembly representatives, and State Senator Oroho.

Mrs. Drew urged that protest signs be made and displayed to really capture the attention of the public and the press. She also recommended that Borough residents be educated about this particular bill and its affect, if approved. Mrs. Drew felt that sending out a post card to educate residents on this bill would be a good move.

Mrs. Drew noted that Borough Administrator Steve Williams had given her a list of names of the legislators who actually choose the BPU people.

Mrs. Drew reminded Commissioners that Monday, January 21st is when the Senate will be voting on this bill. She has emailed Mr. Resto about meeting with a BPU representative.

Chrmn. Truppo suggested that Commissioners share their concerns about this bill to as many people as possible. The goal is to get as many people as possible to go down to Trenton to protest this bill.

Mrs. Drew felt that an organized protest will make a difference. She believed that the BPU has to hold two public meetings before tree trimming begins. Chrmn. Truppo will check with Borough Administrator Steve Williams about these two meetings. Mrs. Drew pointed out that if the Mayor and Borough Council passed a resolution stating that the Borough no longer wants the services of JCP & L. it would also make an impact.

Commissioners thanked Mrs. Drew for informing them of this issue and the impending bill.

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

The next Chatham Borough Shade Tree meeting will be held on Tuesday, January 15, 2019, 7:30 p.m., Room 301, upper level, Chatham Borough Hall. This will be the Commission's Reorganization Meeting for 2019.

Respectfully submitted:

Liz Holler
Recording Secretary