

CHATHAM BOROUGH SHADE TREE COMMISSION  
September 17, 2019 7:30 p.m.

Chrmn. Colleen Truppo called this Regular Meeting of the Chatham 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. The Mission Statement of the Shade Tree Commission was read aloud.

Name	Present	Absent
Colleen Truppo, Chrmn.	X	
Kristy Chmura, Vice Chrmn.	X	
Ken Chmura	X	
Fran Drew	X	
John Tortorella		X
Patrick Florentino	X	
Beverly Klepper	X	
Tony Torello, Shade Tree Enforcement Officer		X
Dean Wilson		X
Council Member James Collander		X
Liz Holler, Minutes Secretary	X	

Also present:

Christopher Vitz, Morris County Director of Public Works, County Engineer  
Jackie Denk, an interested resident

Public Comment

Jackie Denk, a resident at 76 Washington Ave., expressed sadness over a neighboring tree being removed. She enjoyed its beautiful crown. Ms. Denk had recently emailed the Borough asking why the tree was taken down. Mr. Torello had emailed her back explaining that it was an ash tree. It would be dead in a few years due to Ash Borer. Ms. Denk questioned why the tree couldn't be treated and saved. She noted this particular tree had been on private property.

Chrmn. Truppo noted that a permit must be filled out to remove a tree on private property. Homeowners were given information by the Borough informing them of

the spread of ash borer and the treatment that they should have done on their ash trees.

Ms. Denk had pointed out to Mr. Torello that the tree had been removed by a developer. Mr. Torello had informed her that permits had been pulled for these trees.

After further discussion, Chrmn. Truppo said she will follow up with Mr. Torello and Vince DeNave, the Borough Engineer, on how this tree situation came about. Chrmn. Truppo will keep Ms. Denk and the Commissioners in the loop, by email, of what she finds out. Ms. Denk gave Chrmn. Truppo her email.

#### Motion to Adopt Meeting Minutes

Ms. Chmura made a motion to approve the minutes of the June 18, 2019 Shade Tree Commission meeting. Chrmn. Truppo seconded the motion. A voice vote was taken. The minutes of June 18, 2019 were approved as submitted.

Referring to the June 18, 2019 minutes, Mrs. Drew asked if a date had been set for a combined meeting the Madison and Morristown Shade Tree Commissions. Chrmn. Truppo said she will be reaching out to these Commissions and will invite them to a future Borough Shade Tree Commission meeting. She has received word that these neighboring Commissions are interested in such a meeting. Mrs. Drew suggested the Borough Council Chambers be reserved for this combined meeting.

#### Discussion Items

##### Christopher Vitz, Engineer & Director of the Morris County DPW

Chrmn. Truppo thanked Mr. Vitz for attending tonight's meeting. The Commission also appreciated Mrs. Drew making arrangements for Mr. Vitz's presentation tonight.

Chrmn. Truppo noted that there are Morris County roads running through Chatham Borough. Recently trees have been suddenly removed on these county roads without out any warning or notification to the Borough. Chrmn. Truppo asked if Mr. Vitz could explain what was the process, on the County level, for removing trees on a county road. Also, how could the Borough Shade Tree Commission, be included and help with this County tree removal process. Can the Borough Shade Tree Commission provide information to the County? Should the Commissioners attend any County meetings?

Mr. Vitz introduced himself and gave his professional credentials to the Commission. Mr. Vitz stated that as well as serving as the County Engineer, he is Director of Morris County's Public Works. He is also responsible for the Morris County Mosquito Commission, the County Shade Trees, County Roads, Bridges, Engineering, Transportation, and Morris County Buildings and Grounds.

Mr. Vitz noted that the Morris County Shade Tree is no longer a commission. It has morphed, at some point, into a division of the Morris County Public Works. It's no longer an independent commission. The Morris County Public Works is now down to eleven employees divided into two crews. Each crew has two trucks. Currently three employees are out on disability or medical leave, so Public Works is down to eight employees at the moment.

Mr. Vitz explained that with this limited number of Public Works employees, the Department is more "re-active" than "pro-active". The Public Works Dept. mainly answers complaint from the police departments in Morris County. Mr. Vitz explained how the Public Works employees access a tree accident situation. If electrical wires are involved with a fallen tree, JCP & L is called on to deal with it.

Mr. Vitz noted that there is 287 miles of county road in Morris County, that the County Public Works must oversee. The Morris County Buildings & Grounds and Morris County Parks Commission must oversee 100 different parcels of property. If a tree is deteriorating on any of these parcels, the Morris County Public Works employees have to respond.

Mr. Vitz stated that the Public Works employees are kept very busy. Many times, they have to respond to night time situations – trimming trees, branches, that are about to fall on the county road or have already fallen. Mr. Vitz distributed a photo of a large rotted tree that had fallen on a car on Berkshire Valley Road, a county roadway. The Public Works employees had to respond. Fortunately, there were no fatalities. Morris County was still sued, because the tree, even though it was on private land, fell across a county road.

Ms. Chmura told Mr. Vitz that the Borough Shade Tree Commission has an arborist looking at Borough trees that may have issues. She asked Mr. Vitz if the County could work with the Borough on County trees being reported on. Mr. Vitz agreed, indicating that the County would be willing to accept the decision from the Borough arborist about a problematic tree. Mr. Vitz stated the only exception would be if a County tree was in danger of crashing down, the County workers

would have to act fast. The Commissioners understood and agreed to this exception.

Mrs. Drew asked if the County could inform the Borough Shade Tree Commission when a County tree will be taken down.

Mr. Vitz agreed that the County Shade Tree Division will contact Chatham Borough when a request is made to remove a Borough tree on a county road.

Chrmn. Truppo and Vice Chrmn. Chmura asked how who will that contact point be in the Borough.

Mr. Vitz agreed to contact Mr. DeNave, the Borough Engineer, on these requests and copy in the Borough Shade Tree Commission.

Mr. Vitz explained how the County Risk Management operates when it comes to County trees.

Commissioners brought up a recent incident where a county tree was taken down on Watchung Avenue without any notification made to the Borough. A Borough resident had requested this tree be taken down.

Mr. Vitz stated next time such a request is made, he'll have the County Shade Tree Divisions first go before the Borough Shade Tree Commission.

Mrs. Drew asked Mr. Vitz if it would be possible, before the County took down any more ash trees in the Borough, could the County tell the Commission the ones that the County is considering take down? Mrs. Drew could then look into getting these ash trees treated, rather than having them removed.

Mr. Chmura pointed out that there are four other entities that are looking at trees – the Borough Shade Tree Commission on local streets, the County on county streets, the State on State Highways, and the Utility companies.

Mrs. Drew still confirmed with Mr. Vitz if a list could be given to the Shade Tree Commission showing what Borough ash trees were being considered for removal.

Mrs. Drew will send Mr. Vitz a fact sheet on underground wiring on streets.

Chrmn. Truppo asked Mr. Vitz that if the Borough Shade Tree Commission ever obtained the funds, could they plant trees on Morris County roads within Chatham Borough.

Mr. Vitz seemed acceptable to that request, however reviewed the “clear zone” requirements for planting trees on a county road. An important requirement for a county right-of-way, is that the tree must be planted behind the sidewalk. Chrmn. Truppo agreed to contact the County if any of these type plantings were ever being considered by the Borough STC.

Mr. Vitz passed around a map of Chatham Borough indicating the 16 ash trees in Chatham Borough that the County is considering for removal.

Chrmn. Truppo asked if it would be possible to obtain an excel sheet showing these 16 trees. Mr. Vitz agreed, but it would be arranged by street. Chrmn. Truppo said that would be fine.

Mr. Florentino confirmed with Mr. Vitz that the County had no program for re-planting the ash trees, or any trees, that will be removed. This is a County budget matter. However, Mr. Vitz stated that the County Freeholders are well cognizant that people do want to plant trees.

Mr. Vitz confirmed with the Commission that the County will not remove any ash trees until they are evaluated.

Chrmn. Truppo confirmed with Mr. Vitz that any property owners who have county trees in the Borough, with issues, to appear first before the Borough Shade Tree Commission. Mr. Vitz also agreed to send a list of ash trees in Chatham Borough that are being considered for removal.

Chrmn. Truppo brought up, if the Commission’s budget allows, Commissioners would like to have their arborist visit the county roadway where they would like to plant a tree. The arborist can then make a recommendation what tree(s) would be best for that location. Mr. Vitz was fine with this arrangement, however he reminded Chrmn. Truppo that a road opening permit process from Morris County is required for any contractor who works within a county right-of-way. Insurance is required in this situation in case a motorist or homeowner is injured. Chrmn. Truppo took note of that requirement.

On other matters, Ms. Chmura asked if there was any way the County could warn residents not to over-mulch around trees. Could people be reminded that there is a correct method to mulching.

Mr. Vitz suggested that the Commission send him their advice on proper methods around trees. He will send this advice to the County's Public Information Officer to put in the County newsletter.

Mrs. Drew asked if there would be a way to educate residents, who don't live on county roads, that there are treatments available for their ash trees.

Chrmn. Truppo noted that Mr. Linson, the Borough arborist, felt that if the residents have not treated their ash trees, the trees should come down.

Mrs. Drew suggested a Commissioner could announce at a Borough Council meeting that residents still have time to treat the ash trees on their property.

Chrmn. Truppo asked Mr. Vitz if this ash tree treatment reminder could be sent out on the county level.

Mr. Vitz noted that he had learned on a recent webinar that ash trees that have been treated for ash borer over a 5 to 6-year period unfortunately became ill again two years later. The hope is that eventually the infestation will go away all together.

Commissioners and Mr. Vitz discussed the grant money that can be obtained for tree projects.

Mr. Vitz thanked Commissioners for inviting him to speak tonight. He distributed his business card and awesome pens promoting good stormwater management. If Commissioners had any further tree issues to discuss, Mr. Vitz asked them to contact him.

#### CEU check-ins

Chrmn. Truppo urged Commissioners to take more tree-related webinars thereby earning the necessary credits for the STC to receive accreditation.

#### Annual NJ Shade Tree Federation meeting

Chrmn. Truppo reminded Commissioners that the Federation meeting will be held on October 24<sup>th</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup> in Atlantic City. Additional CEUs can be earned when Commissioners attend classes at this event. Chrmn. Truppo noted that there is

money in the STC budget to cover the fee for any Commissioner who wants to attend this worthwhile experience. Any Commissioner interested in attending, please email Chrmn. Truppo.

#### Miscellaneous

Chrmn. Truppo reported that the STC has received an impressive pile of tree request plantings submitted by residents for this fall. Chrmn. Truppo will send an electronic copy of these requests to John Linson, the Borough Arborist, asking for his advice on the sites and species for these future plantings.

Ms. Chmura reported that she has the proceeds from the sale of her music CDs for the Commission. She will convert the cash into a check. Ms. Chmura's check will be given to the Chatham Borough CFO for the STC Tree Fund.

Mr. Chmura handed over a check for the Shade Tree Commission sent to him from the Chatham Woman's Club. The Woman's Club is closing down.

At 8:49 p.m. the meeting adjourned.

The next Chatham Borough Shade Tree Commission meeting will be held on Tuesday, October 22, 2019, 7:30 p.m., Room 301, Upper Level, Chatham Borough Hall.

Respectfully submitted:

Liz Holler  
Recording Secretary