

CHATHAM BOROUGH SHADE TREE COMMISSION

June 24, 2021

7:30 p.m.

Chairman Colleen Truppo called this Regular 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, Chrmn.	X	
Kristy Chmura, Vice Chrmn.		X
Fran Drew		X
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	

Steve Williams, the Chatham Borough Administrator, was also present and hosted the Zoom broadcast.

A legal quorum of Commissioners was not reached.

Public Comments

There were none.

Motion to Adopt Meeting Minutes

The minutes of the May 27, 2021 meeting could not be voted on due to a lack of a quorum.

Since a quorum was not present, Mr. Williams, suggested that Mr. Sweetin informally discuss JCP & L's tree trimming work in Chatham Borough – how JCP & L decides and goes about these projects.

Related to this, Chrmn. Truppo informed Mr. Sweetin that she had spoken to John Linson about doing a windshield survey of local trees in the near future. Mr. Linson has sent a proposal to the STC on that project. This project will cost around \$2,000. Chrmn. Truppo had also discussed JCP & L with Mr. Linson. She informed him that the STC would like notification from JCP & L when they plan their tree projects in the Borough. Mr. Linson reported that he would like to ride along when JCP & L is planning on doing their trimmings. There are times when Mr. Linson recommends that trees be entirely removed, not trimmed. Chrmn. Truppo pointed out that if the STC prevents JCP & L from taking down a tree that may have problems, and an incident occurs, the Borough can be held liable.

Mr. Williams reported that he had a recent discussion with JCP & L. They are under the impression that they can just come into town and trim trees as necessary. He asked Mr. Sweetin if BPU had given JCP & L that authority.

Mr. Sweetin explained the right-of-way of 10 feet from the wires out. That is JCP & L's "work zone". No arborist can work within those 10 feet. A smart arborist would notify JCP & L if he has to work within that radius. A qualified arborist can be allowed to work in that radius. Mr. Sweetin noted that JCP & L gives the municipality a 60-day notice before they even come in. A representative from JCP & L, like Mr. Sweetin, takes a document into the town administrator. The town administrator, the Police Department, the Department of Public Works, and the municipal Shade Tree Commission, if one exists, needs to sign off on the tree project.

Mr. Sweetin reported that New Jersey, a year and a half ago, was thinking of following New York's procedure. In New York, if a municipality denies the utility's tree project, and if something unfortunate happens, the municipality is the entity responsible for any finances resulting from that unfortunate episode.

Mr. Sweetin stated that JCP & L goes through a four year cycle of maintenance work. He noted the recent damage experienced by the emerald ash trees has been extensive. Mr. Sweetin explained JCP & L's "lock-out zone" which involves a ground to sky clearance. He reminded Commissioners that there are times when a tree is honestly beyond saving, and/or is already dead. There's nothing more that can be done. Some municipalities sell the wood from these trees for a serious price. People use this wood for heating during the winter months.

Mr. Sweetin reminded Commissioners that trees, like humans, have a set life expectancy. Also, if a dead tree is to be replaced, a good decision has to be made on a suitable tree replacement that will last and flourish. For instance, a flowering tree may look pretty for a while, but it may be planted in an unwise location and eventually experience problems.

At this point in the meeting, Mr. Williams excused himself from the meeting. He asked Chrmn. Truppo to take over as the host.

Multi-town Shade Tree meeting

Chrmn. Truppo reported that a meeting had been held recently with the Shade Tree Chairmen of Morristown, Madison, Chatham Borough, and Summit. It was an information-sharing session. One of the topics covered was how to educate the public on the importance of trees. It seems that developers, in their construction projects, want to instantly remove trees. At the multi-town meeting, the possibility of having a joint educational program to educate residents about the importance of trees was discussed. It seems like all the towns are losing more trees than are being planted.

Chrmn. Truppo noted that another multi-town meeting will be held this September.

Mr. Sweetin suggested a book published by Rutgers "Fifty Trees Planted around the Home" giving good advice about planting trees. Unfortunately, it is no longer in print; however, sections of it can be xeroxed to help homeowners and developers.

Windshield Shield Survey

Chrmn. Truppo reported that John Linson will be sending a proposal for this Survey. Mr. Linson's fee for doing the survey would be under \$2,000. The STC has money in their budget for that project.

Chrmn. Truppo reported that Mr. Williams had recently notified her that JCP & L would be doing work at Center Ave. and Weston Ave. Mr. Linson offered to join in circuit with JCP & L representing the STC on these runs, and offer any recommendations.

Mrs. Klepper asked if JCP & L decides to trim or take down a Borough tree, how long does the STC have to comply, or will it be an immediate action?

Chrmn. Truppo answered that there is a 2 to 4 -week notice period. She clarified that the Borough can refuse JCP & L to take down a Borough tree; however, the STC should have the expert opinion of an arborist to back their decision. If that tree were to fall and hurt a person or structure, the Borough could be held liable.

Potential grant funding update

Chrmn. Truppo reported that there is some potential for some grant funding from the Department of Forestry. The deadline is in July. Chrmn. Truppo asked if Mr. Sweetin had any further news on this.

Mr. Sweetin reported that he had spoken with Mr. Torello, Director of Public Works, about the tree inventory. Mr. Torello has informed him that the current tree inventory is out of date. Any new data on trees was never inventoried. Mr. Sweetin noted that in Millburn every town tree has an inventory tag. He suggested tags could be put on Borough trees and have them included in the new inventory. This would help the Borough and the STC know how many tree species exist among Borough trees should an issue like ash borer should arise.

Chrmn. Truppo liked Mr. Sweetin's idea. The STC could apply for the grant money to pay a professional to do an up-to-date tree inventory of Chatham Borough trees.

Mr. Sweetin suggested first obtaining the number of Borough trees and their species.

Chrmn. Truppo asked Mr. Sweetin if a professional company were to do an inventory tree count, how much should the STC seek in grant money?

Mr. Sweetin felt that would be a good question for Mr. Linson. He would reach out to him.

Mrs. Klepper volunteered to help Chrmn. Truppo with the paperwork for the grant application.

Mrs. Klepper asked if the STC will be meeting during the summer months.

Chrmn. Truppo will sent out an email to see the availability of Commissioners for July and August meeting. At least one summer month, the STC will not meet.

Mr. Sweetin asked if there was any news on the Garden Avenue park.

Chrmn. Truppo noted that the Borough is currently doing a lot of work at Garden Park. Among the projects, are improvements to the Borough tennis courts. The STC has filed the paperwork for a memorial tree for Commissioner Ken Chmura in that park. Chrmn. Truppo reported that Mr. Sweetin has visited the park and decided on two locations that would be appropriate for the tree. Chrmn. Truppo noted that there will be a walkway and other plantings at Garden Park.

Mr. Sweetin felt a print-out is needed showing the location of all the future plantings, pathway, etc. to help the STC make the right decisions. Possibly there are plans already on file. Mr. Sweetin suggested some of the Commissioners together visit the Garden Park site in the near future and review what is happening. Vice Chrmn. Chmura should definitely be included when the possible tree planting locations are reviewed.

On other matters, Chrmn. Truppo reported that she has sent Mr. Torello a tally of the tree requests that have arrived by email from residents. The tree plantings will be done in the fall. With the DPW helping with these plantings, enough money will be available to plant additional trees in the Borough rights-of-way. Chrmn. Trullo suggested that Commissioners think about where any extra trees could be planted in the town.

Mr. Sweetin brought up the possibility of the STC hosting a tree walk for the residents on a Saturday afternoon. It could be a simple presentation on interesting trees in the Borough, even if it consists of a walk through a particular neighborhood.

At 8:35 p.m. the gathering dispersed.

The next Chatham Borough Shade Tree Commission meeting will be held on Thursday, July 22, 2021, 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Liz Holler
Recording Secretary