

Upper Merion Shade Tree Commission Meeting

November 17, 2021 In-Person and Zoom Meeting

Attendees: Bob Dempsey, Tina Garzillo (Supervisor Liaison), Jerome Ocker (Chair), Barley Van Clief (Vice-chair), Jerry Recupido (Staff Liaison), Susan Ridgeway (Secretary), Jennie Ryan-Gisewhite.

Guests: Mary Ann Ahern (Parks & Rec Board), Theresa Landewe (EAC), Chris Marshall (Applicant)

Meeting started: 7:03pm

Introductions of Attendees.

Motion to accept the minutes from the July 14, 2021 meeting -- passed.

Tina Garzillo Reported:

- Mask Mandate is being lifted for the Township Building as of Jan 1, 2022.
- Sat, Nov 20th is the last outdoor Farmers Market – the Chili Cookoff will happen from 10-12.
- Holiday VILLAGE Dec. 4 from 12 -3pm will be held both inside and outside at the township building – many activities will be offered.
- Jan. 19th will be the next STC meeting – re-organization meeting.
- Budget will be posted on Nov. 18 and adopted in December. Fiscal Year starts Jan. 1.
- Fall Festival was a success, both in terms of attendance and financially.
- Future ideas for events at NorView include: Beer Garden, classes, food trucks, pop up farmers market

Jerry Recupido Report:

- Tree Planting on Saturday, Nov. 20 behind the Community Center pool. The Public Works crew will attend, bringing the registration tent, the gator, the trees and stakes and a water tank – meeting at 8:00 AM
- The crew will also help with the Holiday Village.
- It's Leaf Season now – all hands-on deck for pickup of residential leaves according to schedule.
- The crew has been elevating tree branches in various spots and has removed some dead trees. Jerome reminded that he has marked various trees needing attention along the Crow Creek Trail.

Old Business:

1. **Crow Creek Trail** – nearly completed except for 2 small bridges. Erosion blankets are still a question? Tina enquired about them and learned that some will be installed. Jennie reported that grass is growing in through the mesh. Jerome mentioned that he tagged dead & dying trees along the trail, some being ash that should be addressed soon. Other ash seem to be surviving. On Saturday, 30 trees will be planted by 6 PW crew and about 50 volunteers on the switch back. Barley and Jerome will stake out the planting plan on Friday, Nov. 19. Kenney Contractors will plant 6 required trees on Volpe Commons. Gerri Vattimo will obtain coffee/refreshments.
2. **Arboretum** –STC complimented Jerry and his team on the great job they've done cleaning up area. The ribbon cutting was successful with about 30 attendees on a beautiful day. Jerome and Jason Lubar conducted a tree id walk with attendees, which constitutes an education event. The agreement for the use of the parking lot is not yet in writing. Informally, we learned it's okay for occasional parking during non- business hours like weekends and evenings. A property survey is needed to define the boundary lines before other parking arrangements or use of the property can be considered.

We are working with two Boy Scout Eagle Candidates:

*Andrew will be working on tree signage & tree care/cleanup. Tina suggested geocaching as an additional activity.

*Michael may choose bamboo cleanup at the Arboretum or Vine removal along Crow Creek.

Tina suggested placing a sign at the Mount Vernon tuliptree, explaining its significance. Todd has gotten a replacement sign that includes the Township and ArbNet logos.

The Tree Tenders group has received BCA funding to restore the concrete bench and picnic tables. Because of the weight of the end pieces, it is not an appropriate project for Eagle Scouts. The Public Works crew will need to take a look and schedule with Barley.

3. Merck Volunteers worked on Friday, November 6 to release saplings at Heuser Park, along the Schuylkill River West Trail. About 50 volunteers showed up and cleared out weeds to help the young trees grow.
4. Community Fair on October 2 – Sue and Jerome staffed the Shade Tree table and secured some future tree volunteers. They will be added to the master list of volunteers.
5. Two dedicated Elm Trees were planted at the Skate Park entrance at the Township Building. They were container trees obtained from Tree Authority in Perkasié.
6. BCA grants:
 - a. The Tree Holding Nursery Area is still pending , waiting for the arrival of a part. Barley will ask for an extension.
 - b. The signage grant will also need an extension. Remaining funds can be used for Andrew’s Eagle project.
7. Planting buffer/screen at Thomas Road where the Crow Creek trail passes along private property. Jerome and Barley visited the area and have made species recommendations for a planting there.

New Business:

1. Arboretum Management Plan – Barley will send this to everyone. We will undoubtedly need money to act on some of the recommendations: removals, heavy pruning. The plan indicates 10% dead or dying now, and these should be replaced. We will need a Vision Statement to stay compliant with ArbNet requirements. Concepts discussed for the theme: a safe, secluded natural space, for education, and beautification. We will need to identify the boundaries and also indicate what we don’t want for the property. The Township is treating the healthy ash tree near the driveway against the Emerald Ash Borer.
2. The group congratulated Jerry R on becoming a Certified Pesticide Applicator! He has applied for certain equipment he will need to get started.
3. Plans, General – The Township has not yet hired a new Township Planner to replace Rob Loeper. The new Dropbox has now been set up. Future plans for STC review will be entered into the Dropbox, which may give us time to visit construction sites before trees are removed.
4. **Plans, Specific** - Jennie reported on the three plans we are to review at this time.
 - a. Chase Bank – plans are in compliance and made interesting choices for their trees and shrubs.
 - b. Top Golf – contributed to the linear park by including a walkway in their plans. Top Golf needs to use the tree replacement guidelines as specified in the new ordinance if large diameter trees will be removed. Tina confirmed that the updated tree ordinance is published on the website, so Top Golf and all others will need to meet those requirements.
 - c. Mancill Mill Townhomes – no trees are being removed because the land was clear-cut for soil remediation prior to the development plans. Jennie will write comments and concerns on the form and send in via email. Suggest Narrower-crowned trees in the selection of trees along the trail to avoid the need to limb up for safety. For white spruce, only use 3 instead of 5 in that space.
5. Theresa is interested in a Native Plant demonstration at the Community Garden for educational purposes. Jerome suggested she talk to Greta, the Community Garden manager. Bob Dempsey said there are several artesian wells on the property. He knows the locations – they drain towards Henderson Road. An ad hoc committee will meet to discuss informally.
6. 2022 BCA grant – Tina suggested maybe a kiosk with educational information at the Arboretum; we will use QR codes instead of paper, or a geocaching game. Barley thought maybe tree maintenance at the arboretum can be applied for.
7. Motion to adjourn meeting was passed – adjourned at 9:29pm