

Upper Merion Shade Tree & Beautification Commission

March 15, 2023

Attending: Tina Garzillo (Supervisor Liaison), Chris Marshall (Chair), Jerome Ocker (Vice-Chair), Jerry Recupido (Staff Liaison), Sue Ridgeway (Secretary), Barley Van Clief

Guests: Mary Ann Ahearn (Parks and Rec); Theresa Landewe (EAC)

Meeting Called to Order: 7:00pm

Approval of Minutes: Motion - Chris Marshall, Second - Jerome Ocker and Susan Ridgeway. Approved

Supervisor Liaison Report: Tina Garzillo reported that March 23 is the annual breakfast meeting with volunteer board chairs and Supervisors. Since Chris has a staff meeting Jerome will attend. The Comprehensive Plan will be brought up – a goal is to identify key items that were missing and need to finish, such as Stormwater mandates. Hope to have Shade Tree provide input to the plan as well as other citizen boards.

The Joint Meeting with Supervisors will be April 27 at 7:00 PM. Handouts or PowerPoint presentations are helpful. All STC members may attend and participate. It will be televised. Joint meetings are a recap of last year and things you are working towards.

Moore Park Multi Modal Trail Project: The BID will ask for a DCNR grant to work on project design, and are asking Shade Tree to provide input. May or may not get the grant. Jerome and Barley attended an introductory meeting. The BID held a breakfast advocacy meeting Advocacy, discussing statistics for the township. Tina asked to consider a narrower trail in the area of Burgess Arboretum to reduce impact on the trees. As the plan stands, there could be a width of 20 feet of construction impact. Jerome asked if there was any progress about the House at the Arboretum

The Concert Under the Stars is returning and will be announced on March 27. Some concerts are free – expanding the number of concerts.

April 22 – Earth Day celebration at Township parking lot. The Tree City USA and Growth Awards for Upper Merion will be announced.

A 30' x 80' tent is being constructed for the Farmers Market at Nor-View Farm. There will be a new sign out front. The intent is to also have events there.

Staff Liaison Report: Jerry Recupido reported that last month alone over 700 hours were devoted to tree work. They have already moved 75 dump trucks of downed logs from Crow Creek Trail, but need to finish the Covered Bridge Road section. Many ash trees were removed at McKaig Nature Center. They cleared out trees around the bend at Walker Road, and removed low-hanging limbs and other problem trees along the roads. Swedeland Park has tree with crack down the middle near playground – it will have to come down. Lost 1 tree into another tree at township building – so both might have to come down. Thanks to Jerry for all the work!

Old Business:

Volunteer Work Day – Jan 21, 2023 – Jerome reported that we had a good crew and did a lot of work removing sycamore saplings that are shading out planted trees, repairing deer guards and clearing out weeds. It looks more like a park trail and you can see the planted trees now for future maintenance.

Crow Creek Trail– There will be a ribbon cutting on April 27 at 4 pm at Volpi Commons.

Schuylkill West Trail Connector –A large retaining wall has been installed, requiring the removal of many trees. The area between the trail and Lafayette Apts was cleared and seeded with grass; Jerome suggested we plant some trees there.

Working Trees Projects:

Meadow Grant – Theresa reported on a meeting with DCNR and WildLawn, who is going to write a grant for Turf-to-Meadow conversion on the hillside above the Community Garden. We haven't heard any update. If the grant is received, WildLawn will prepare the meadow for planting and plant.

Raingarden – A Montgomery County Environmental Grant has been submitted for construction of a raingarden at the bottom of hill at the Community Garden, on the side near the Ross Road field. We should hear the result in May. Joe Brophy, who works with the Community Garden, has been very helpful. Dr. Rob Traver of Villanova, who wrote the storm water manual for the state of PA, met us at the site and offered valuable advice for including a forebay. Geoff Hickman said the stormwater consultant from the Township could help with the final design. This work likely will need to coordinate with Meadow Grant, if received. Diane Reilly, chair of the Stormwater Authority, has found educational sign graphics from the PA Master Watershed Stewards that will cost \$80.

Jerry asked if there might be a grant for removal of the ash trees at Sweetbriar Park. There are lots of ash trees and some are falling. Residents called and said trees fell on their property. Barley said she would look into it. Now the ash trees are probably brittle.

Tree Nursery -- Vytas Masalaitis, McKaig Nature Center Ranger, has ordered 500 seedling trees that are available from the Chesapeake Bay project. Jerome will going drive to Duncannon on April 6 with Vytas to pick them up. Vytas has pots and we will need lots of help putting the trees in the pots. Theresa can reach out to the clubs at the High School and get some volunteers. In another order, there are 250 bare root saplings that will arrive the last week of March, which will also be stored at the nursery. Jerry will provide mulch and compost for potting.

New Business:

Beautification Awards– The STC voted to take a hiatus with the Tree Beautification award for this year. There need to be some changes in the procedure, timing, etc., that will need further discussion. Gerri Vattimo is interested in helping out.

BCA grant – Theresa has submitted a joint application (with the STC, EAC and Stormwater Authority) for the raingarden project previously discussed. If two grants are awarded, we will either find a place for another raingarden, naturalize the basin at Volpe or extend the plan at the Community Garden, pending approval.

American Waters Grant– This is due March 31. The project must be in the service area of PA American Waters (indicated by red fire hydrants). Merrill C Young Park has a collapsed stormwater drain. Jerome suggested getting having Park & Rec or the Stormwater Authority take the lead for the grant. Barley will send the info to Mary Ann so Park and Rec can get involved. Jerry suggested keeping the new Ross Road Park in mind.

Bare Root Trees -- Barley will coordinate the residents picking up bare root trees at Nor-View on Earth Day. Jerry will pick up the trees in Philadelphia on Wednesday, April 19. Upper Merion will have 21 trees total, of which 6 are replacing trees on Township property.

CentiMark Volunteer Day – This is an Upper Merion corporation that does commercial roofing. On April 14 from 9am to 1pm they will work on the small trees on the hillside below the Heuser gravel parking lot. We will need experienced tree tenders to supervise and answer questions.

Moore Road Multi Modal – As mentioned above, Barley and Jerome went to the BID meeting and expressed our concerns for encroachment at the Arboretum. The BID is inviting us to participate on the design committee. If the trail must be on the Arboretum side of Moore Road, we suggest that they research and use avant garde construction techniques such as siliva cells to respect the trees there

Friends of Sweet Briar Park – A resident wants to start a Friends Group to help with basic maintenance at the park. She will attend the Tree Tenders training and coordinate with Jerry and Parks & Rec. It must be made clear what responsibilities and capabilities they will have.

Work Day – March 25, 2023 – Work will continue on the Schuylkill West Trail at Heuser Park, specifically clearing around the larger trees that were first planted after clear cutting. Chris and Sue can't make it.

Earth Day – April 22, 2023 – The event will be at the Township Building from 11 AM – 2 PM. Jerome will bring tree samples for tree ID. Sue will staff the booth with an activity for children, and Vytas will give out tree saplings and sell deer guards to support the work at the tree nursery.

Meeting adjourned at 8:57pm.