

Gettysburg Borough Shade Tree Commission Meeting Minutes 2/13/2024

The regularly scheduled meeting of the Shade Tree Commission was held on Tuesday, February 13, 2024, at the Borough Office. Present: David Rice, Chair; Susan Naugle, member; Martin Jolin, Member; Rebecca Brown, Alternate. Also present: Robert Harbaugh, Public Works Director, and Sue Cipperly, 314 N Stratton St. The meeting was called to order by Chair Rice at 7:00 pm.

MINUTES: Draft minutes for the November 14, 2023, regular meeting were provided prior to the meeting. Following a reading of the minutes, members accepted the minutes with one minor correction.

FINANCIAL REPORT: A report from the Borough Finance Department for year-end 2023 listed total expenditures of \$13,572.83 for the year and an unspent balance of \$2,902.17. Plans to pre-pay Schott's Nursery for spring 2024 trees did not materialize. Members reviewed expenditures for 2023. Borough Council approved a Shade Tree Budget of \$20,000 for 2024 and that is the current balance available. **Commission Members accepted the Finance Report as presented.**

PUBLIC COMMENT: Ms. Cipperly advised she is interested in the work of the Commission and is concerned about the steady removal of trees from the Borough.

PUBLIC WORKS UPDATE: Rob Harbaugh reported Public Works contracted with Cumberland Valley Tree to complete tree pruning on Seminary, Baltimore, High and Franklin Streets. That work is completed and paid for out of the 2023 budget. PW crews have also been pruning over streets and alleys and to keep branches away from buildings. Additional tree watering bags were also purchased from the 2023 budget.

SIDEWALK ORDINANCE REVISIONS: No status updates.

Members discussed how best to proceed with a pilot project aimed at repairing sidewalks damaged by trees. Since our current Shade Tree ordinance does not provide for payment for sidewalk repair or replacement, Susan suggested we draft a proposal and share it with the Borough Manager for his input.

REQUEST FOR TREE REMOVAL – 38 EAST STEVENS STREET: Marty Jolin has been working with the property owners and has consulted with Blevins Expert Tree Service. A PA One-Call was also completed. The Elm tree roots are encroaching on a gas line necessitating removal of the tree for safety reasons. The Oak is the cause of the primary tripping hazard, and the recommendation is that it be removed so the sidewalk can be fixed. Marty has pursued other remedies used by State College Borough to save the tree, but none appear to be an acceptable remedy due to unsatisfactory results and/or cost. Blevin's estimate for removal of both trees is \$4,000. Susan suggested removal of the concrete above the roots might reveal an approach to cut or shave roots that will save the Oak at a lesser cost. This would require a professional arborist evaluation. After further discussion, **a motion was made by Chair Rice to pay for the cost (lowest acceptable quote) for removal of both trees so that the property owner can proceed with sidewalk repairs to be paid by the property owners. Marty Jolin seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved.**

David noted that, once the trees are removed, any liability burden will shift to the property owner. Marty Jolin will discuss the decision with the owners and seek at least one more quote for tree removal. Rob will make final arrangements with the vendor for the removal.

UPDATES TO ORDINANCE LIST OF SUGGESTED TREES: Deferred to future meetings

ANNUAL REPORT TO COUNCIL: Susan presented a draft report for review. She will send a final version to Chair Rice for signing and forwarding to the Borough Secretary for presentation to Council.

OTHER OLD BUSINESS: None

SHADE TREE PRERMIT REQUEST FOR 633-639 RED PATCH AVE: A permit request to plant two street trees was submitted by property owner David Todd. Susan provided a photo of the property which is in her neighborhood. He asked that the Commission choose the trees. The grass strip is 3 ft wide and there are no overhead utility lines on that side of the street. It is a dead-end street with only one other street tree. Marty will assist in choosing the trees. Susan will contact the owner re willingness to pay for the trees.

DISCUSSION OF PLANTING SITES for 2024: The Commission will proceed with plans to plant the eleven (11) trees on our list for fall 2023 but not planted. Marty will check with Schott's Nursery about availability and price. Final approval of the list will be on the agenda for the March meeting.

Members discussed the recent remarks by Borough Council members regarding notification of property owners prior to planting. This followed complaints by downtown business owners about trees that were planted in front of their businesses/properties. Susan suggested we consider following a confusing section of the PA Borough Code regarding advance notice by publishing our list of trees to be planted as a legal notice in the Gettysburg Times, allowing for public comment. After further discussion, members agreed with Chair Rice's suggestion to send letters to owners of the properties listed on our spring planting list. Susan will verify exact addresses and David will contact the Borough Stormwater Authority to get owner names and mailing addresses and will send letters to each in advance of the planting.

OTHER NEW BUSINESS: Rob noted the Commission did not schedule a meeting in November and wondered whether we will be ready to submit a budget by the October meeting. David suggested we could schedule a special meeting in November, if needed.

Having no other business for discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 8:55 pm.

The next meeting of the Commission will be held on March 12, 2024.

Minutes prepared by Susan Naugle 02/14/2024