

Gettysburg Borough Shade Tree Commission Meeting Minutes 11/14/2023

The regularly scheduled meeting of the Shade Tree Commission was held on Tuesday, November 14, 2023, at the Borough Office. Present: David Rice, Chair; Martin Jolin, Member; Rebecca Brown, Alternate Member voting for Member Susan Naugle who participated by phone and did not vote. Also present: Bradley LaBare, Public Works Foreman and Ron Fuchs and Michael Wedlock, residents of 38 East Stevens Street. The meeting was called to order by Chair Rice at 7:00 pm.

MINUTES: Draft minutes for the September 12 regular meeting were provided prior to the meeting. Following a reading of the minutes, members accepted the minutes as presented.

FINANCIAL REPORT: A report from the Borough Finance Department shows a balance of \$11,888.67 as of November 9, with bills yet-to-be paid totaling \$896.50. The remaining balance is \$10,992.17 with \$2,025 remaining for tree purchases. **Commission Members accepted the Finance Report as presented.**

Members discussed the option of prepaying Schott's Nursery for trees which were not planted this fall but will be planted in the spring. Schott's has advised they will hold the trees and Borough Manager Gable has confirmed prepayment is ok. **Members approved prepayment to Schott's for up to 11 trees if that can be worked out with Schott's.** Marty Jolin was not sure whether work had progressed to establish an account with them.

Susan advised that Harry Stokes has indicated he will reimburse the Borough for the cost of the three trees that he requested (\$236). She will contact Mr. Stokes.

Chair Rice advised that the proposed Borough budget for 2024 for Shade Tree is \$20,000 which will provide additional funds for a pilot project targeted at trees which have significantly raised sidewalks. Council will vote on the budget at its December meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT: Mr. Fuchs and Mr. Wedlock deferred comment until later in the agenda. There were no other public comments.

PUBLIC WORKS UPDATE: Bradley LaBure reported Public Works planted nine trees this fall. With a late start and many sidewalk cuts needed, they ran into other projects and did not have the manpower to plant all 20 trees. All nine trees came from Boyer's Nursery. Public Works has not been watering the trees because of Municipal Water Authority restrictions but noted that cool weather should help. Chair Rice noted we will need to complete tree lists earlier next year to provide a broader window for Public Works to plant.

Bradley advised they will need more watering bags for next year. The Commission had authorized the purchase of bags at the September meeting so Public Works can proceed with ordering and paying for those before the end of 2023.

REQUEST FOR TREE REMOVAL – 38 EAST STEVENS STREET: Residents Ron Fuchs and Michael Wedlock were present to discuss a letter they sent to the Commission dated October 26, 2023, requesting the Commission remove two street trees in front of their property so they can repair a badly raised sidewalk. They have been advised by sidewalk contractors that the trees – an oak and an elm - have to be removed before repairs can be made. Members who have visited the location agree the trees appear healthy. Marty noted that roots have also impacted the curbing and that may need to be replaced as well. He also advised of requirements in the Borough Municipal Code, Chapter 22, Subdivision and Land Development, Section 1014 regarding proper construction of sidewalks.

After much discussion about repair options, Commission members approved the hiring of a certified tree arborist to provide an assessment of the possibility of root cutting/shaving as a way to repair the sidewalk and save the tree to include the 38 East Stevens Street and two other similar problems at locations in that same area of the Borough.

Chair Rice advised the Commission will re-visit this issue at our February 2024 meeting to determine how to proceed. The property owners expressed concern about potential liability if someone falls and is injured. David pointed out that they have done due diligence by bringing this to the attention of the Borough which also has responsibility to correct this problem. In the meantime, Member Jolin will work with the owners to make temporary repairs to lessen the tripping hazard.

SIDEWALK ORDINANCE REVISIONS: No status updates.

OTHER OLD BUSINESS: Susan noted that Public Works usually contracts for tree pruning at the end of each year and suggested the Commission approve that expenditure so the Public Works Director can contract with Cumberland Valley Tree Service to get that work done. **Members unanimously authorized the Public Works Department to determine where pruning and stump grinding is needed and contact a licensed tree pruning service to complete the work.** Current balance in the Shade Tree budget to cover contracted services is \$5,625.

UPDATES TO ORDINANCE LIST OF SUGGESTED TREES: Ms. Naugle provided an updated draft for review. The list incorporates trees on the Media PA list but not on ours. She asked members to review the new trees and think about how best to format the list.

DISCUSSION OF PLANTING SITES for 2024: Deferred until February meeting.

COMMISSION MEETING DATES FOR 2024: The Commission approved the following 2024 meeting dates for publication as required by the Sunshine Act: February 13, March 12, April 9, August 13, September 10, and October 8. Meetings will be held in the Borough Office.

ANNUAL REPORT TO COUNCIL: Susan will draft a report to Council on the Commission's 2023 activities for review by members at the February 2024 meeting.

OTHER NEW BUSINESS: Marty expressed concern that the Commission has been deferring action on Baltimore Street in anticipation of a major revitalization project, but nothing seems to be moving forward. He also suggested the Commission take a firm stand on including as many trees as possible in the design. According to Marty, the current design removes most of the current trees and only ends up with a net gain of three trees. He proposed the Commission send a strongly worded letter calling for the inclusion of more trees and that the Commission resume planting trees on Baltimore Street next year if nothing is happening. Susan will check with Main Street Gettysburg regarding the status of the project. This will be discussed further in February.

Members had received tree information for the nine trees planted in October. As happened in the spring, the information will be provided to property owners and/or residents. Susan asked members to contact her if they are interested in helping to distribute the information. Becky suggested we consider door hangers to alert residents of tree plantings. Further discussion of pros and cons will continue next year prior to spring planting.

Having no other business for discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 8:15 pm.

The next meeting of the Commission will be held on February 13, 2024.

Minutes prepared by Susan Naugle 11/15/2023