

City of Northampton, MA
Public Shade Tree Commission (PSTC)

February 5, 2020

Meeting Minutes

Submitted by: Beth Willard

Meeting Called to Order

Lilly Lombard, Chair called the meeting to order at 4:32 PM, and announced the audio recording of the meeting.

Members present and absent/introductions:

| Member | Present | Time if arriving late or leaving early |
|---------------------------------|----------------|---|
| Lilly Lombard, Chair | X | |
| Susan Lofthouse, Vice Chair | X | |
| Molly Hale | X | |
| Jennifer Werner | X | |
| Marilyn Castriotta | X | Arrived 4:44 PM |
| Rob Postel | X | |
| David Lukens | X | |
| Staff & Visitors | Present | Time if arriving late or leaving early |
| Richard Parasiliti, Tree Warden | X | |
| Beth Willard, DPW Clerk | X | |

Public Comment

- There was no Public Comment.

Approval of previous minutes

- Minutes were read by commission members.

| Motion | Motion By: | Seconded By: | Vote: |
|---------------------------------|------------|--------------|------------------------|
| To approve Jan.15, 2020 minutes | Molly Hale | Jen Werner | Yes 6, No 0, Abstain 0 |

Chair Report

- Suggested guests to PSTC meetings
 - David compiled a list of possible guests for future meetings.
 - The first, Tess Poe, is scheduled for the next meeting.
 - Lilly asked for other suggestions.
- Outreach to PB chair
 - Lilly and George Kohout discussed the consideration of treescapes in the planning process.
 - He will check with the Planning Board about Lilly doing a presentation at a future date.
- Leadership transition of PSTC
 - Lilly's term ends in April.
 - Starting next week, she will work with Sue (current Vice Chair), to help her transition into the Chair position.
 - Lilly will not be renewing her term as a PSTC member (expires in June).

- A search for a new member needs to be initiated.
 - As Sue will be taking over as Chair, a new Vice Chair will be needed.
- Gas leaks education/protocols
 - May 7 has been set as the date for the Urban Forestry Webinar on gas leaks.
 - Nathan Phillips, Bob Ackley, Brandon Schmidt, and Lilly contributed to it.

Tree Warden Report

- Lia Toyota
 - The Building Commissioner notified them that they were in violation of their permit.
 - They are required to have a certified arborist determine if the injured trees will live.
 - If not, they must replace them, using the current City tree list.
 - They are required to respond to the Commissioner by February 7th.
- Door hanger
 - Rich and Alicia Purdy created a door hanger to discuss planting a tree in a resident's front yard/public right of way.
 - When a location is staked, it can be left to inform the resident that a planting is happening.
 - It gives an overview of the tree program.
 - For possible set back locations, they can check the box, and send in their response.
 - The DPW Director is interested in planting trees as part of traffic calming on Clement St., so this could possibly be used for that purpose instead of a formal letter.
 - It is small enough to mail in an envelope.
 - Jen requested a copy to go to Councilor LaBarge before the Ward 6 planting happens.
 - Rich is working with the Director and they will talk with Councilor LaBarge.

STO updating

- The subcommittee met January 24, 2020 to work on possible changes.
 - The minutes of the meeting are recorded below:

2020-01-24, Minutes--Ordinance & Policy Subcommittee of PSTC
 Forbes Library, Mezzanine
 Present: David Lukens, Lilly Lombard

Meeting called to order 2:30pm

Updating Northampton's Significant Tree Ordinance:

- Reviewed existing tree protection ordinances in Cambridge, Arlington, Concord; Portland, OR
- Amended "Legislative Findings and Intent" section
- Explored higher protection for groves of trees given their higher ecological function and value
- Explored terms needed to be defined in Definition section of zoning: Tree Protection Plan, Tree Protection Zone, Tree Mitigation, Grove, Significant Tree
- Discussed requirement to save min 1/3 of all trees on lot

- Discussed exemptions allowed in current ordinance--potential for reducing exemptions, especially for NZ building since it may become the norm
- Discussed requiring a tree protection guarantee and having fines for non-compliance

Meeting adjourned 3:40pm

- The STO is a part of the Zoning code (§350-12.3)
- The ordinance only applies when the applicant submits something to the Planning Board.
- The subcommittee proposed reducing the tree size to 10 DBH.
- They proposed that when the STO is triggered, a tree plan would be required as part of the submission to the Planning board.
 - The definition of the tree plan still needs to be worked out.
- They proposed protecting groves of trees, which were defined as 4 or more trees of the same species forming a contiguous canopy, and 10 DBH or larger.
 - Permission to remove a grove would be required from the Planning Board.
 - If a grove was removed or damaged, the mitigation fee would be at a higher rate than for an individual tree (Section B-2).
- They proposed a name change to “Tree Protection Ordinance”.
- They proposed that sites being developed be required to preserve 1/3 of the existing trees.
 - If less than that, the mitigation fee would be at the higher rate.
 - Lilly noted that the justifications for this were also fleshed out (Part A).
- The current STP provides lots of exceptions to required mitigation (affordable housing development, Net Zero, etc.).
 - These exemptions were from an era that was attempting to encourage specific types of development.
 - Members felt these exemptions should no longer apply.
- Under the Enforcement Section (F#4), they proposed the City request a tree protection guarantee deposit, to be returned after all conditions have been satisfied.
 - David added some enforcement actions under it.
- Rich noted that if a developer was in violation of his permit, then the Building Commissioner would be notified, who would only issue an occupancy permit after all conditions were satisfied.
- Under the present ordinance, he does not maintain protected trees, just planted ones up to 2 years.
 - If a planted tree dies within 2 years, he can require a new one planted.
 - Jen suggested extending this period.
 - Even if a tree is protected, the construction could cause eventual death. There is a need to add some language here.
- Lilly, Rich, David, and Carolyn Misch plan to meet to work on it.
- The Planning Dept. is fast tracking zoning changes for non-conforming lots.
 - The City Council Committee on Legislative Matters meets Feb. 10 to work on it.

Planting Plan Summary

- Molly discussed the proposed priority area of ¼ mile radii around Northampton center and Florence center with respect to increasing canopy cover there to 40% or more.
 - Identifying potential planting sites within these 2 areas needs to be done.
 - After the basic area of ¼ mile radius is done, then move to concentric circles of ¼ mile radius around the edge of the initial ¼ mile radius.
 - Lilly pointed out that the current canopy coverage in these areas is about 27%.
 - Molly divided up the ¼ mile radius area into sections, and passed around maps of those sections.
 - They suggested looking at both city and private (within 20 ft. of a ROW boundary) locations for planting sites, using a data collection sheet (also passed around).
 - Lilly volunteered to start on the data collection.
 - Rich was concerned about the timetable, given current PSTC planting commitments for this spring and summer, and suggested it should be a fall project.
- There was a discussion about the 40% threshold for tree canopies.

Neighborhood Planting Project

- Review submitted application
 - A copy, with a spreadsheet of possible planting sites created by Lilly and Kyra Anderson, was attached to today's agenda package.
 - There were no other applications.
 - This will be a fall project.
 - Rich sent the setback brochure to Kyra.
 - Sue passed around a thank you card to last year's project neighborhood contact for PSTC members to sign.
- Rich asked if 400 trees was the new yearly planting goal.
 - He also noted the number of unfinished projects that were still on the plate, and his concern about possibly not following through on commitments in a timely fashion.

Picture Main St. planning process—PSTC input needed

- Lilly attended the Planning Dept. workshop on re-inventing Main St.
 - She submitted her personal thoughts on the tree canopy (or lack thereof) along the street.
 - She felt the PSTC should make a formal submittal to the Planning Dept. of their ideas.
 - Lilly's presentation (available on Google Docs) can be used as a base for discussion on the subject at the next meeting.
 - The Planning Dept. on line survey about the project has only one sentence about trees, and there is no comment section.
 - There has been lots of public push back on this project.
 - MaDOT will be funding both the King St. and Main St. redesigns.

Arbor Day preparations

- Molly got the plan Rob and Jen created for CDH to Jonathan Slater, along with an introductory letter and contact information.
 - Jonathan had some concerns about the dripline of trees extending over the parking lots.
 - His boss is interested, and hopefully CDH will be on board after reviewing it.

- A quick turnaround is needed.
- Rich has the 19 trees for it on the bare root list.
- The Senior Center is planned as the backup site.
 - Rich and Rob are planning to meet with the director, Marie Westberg.
 - The Senior Center is not in the Environmental Justice area defined for the grant, but it is within an Environmental Justice zone.
- Marilyn sent a request to Laurie Sanders of Historic Northampton about screening The Eastern White Pine there for Arbor Day, and is waiting to hear back.
- Rich has ordered the whips.
- David spoke with Gwen Agna at Jackson St. School about the poster contest.
 - Rich reached out to several people he knew at the schools and also emailed the principals.
 - Several suggestions of schools to contact were made, all of which were on the list Marilyn created in 2019.
- Marilyn had suggested an article on volcano mulching in the Gazette last time.
 - Lilly indicated a preference to do an article discussing trees downtown.
- Rich suggested using the every door direct mailer as a talking point when handing out the whips, or tucking into the utility bills.

Poll of meeting times

- Any interest in shifting the regularly scheduled bi-weekly PSTC meeting to any of these windows: 9:30-11 am, or 3:30-5 pm, or 6:30-8 pm
 - David has asked about shifting the time on Wednesdays.
 - There was no consensus on any of the times proposed.

Any other business not anticipated by Chair

- Jen mentioned that she could drop the tree calculator book with Lilly to look at.
- Rich reported that the Mayor was not adverse to a name change for the PSTC, but at present he was focused on other pressing issues, and suggested revisiting it after the override vote.

To Do list

- Marilyn plans to work on the survey of planting locations downtown when the data sheets are available, and to do a follow up with Laurie Sanders.
- Rob plans to review the Environmental Justice overlap with the grant area and to work on pruning.
- Jen plans to review the STO and the proposed changes, to send Lilly a booklet she had on protecting trees during construction, to bring in the tree calculation book, and with Molly, to follow up on the CDH project.
- Sue plans to review the STO language, to work on a personal letter to the Planning Dept. about the Main St. re-design, to do the Main Street on-line survey, to check on the school list email, and to meet with Lilly.
- Molly plans to review the STO, do the on-line survey, and with Jen, to follow up on the CDH project.
- David plans to meet with Rich, Lilly and Carolyn, and to nudge Gwen Agna about the contest.
- Lilly plans to meet with Sue, to nudge George Kohout and Gina-Louise Sciarra about making presentations to their respective organizations, to complete the on-line survey, to meet with Rich, David, and Carolyn, to work on an op-ed piece and have a conversation with the Mayor after the override vote.

- Rich plans to meet with Rob and Marie Westberg, to meet about the STO on Monday, to get grant maps to PSTC members, to draft the door hanger & every door direct mailer revisions, to contact Kyra about the neighborhood tree planting program, and to put together the spring tree order with Rob.
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| Motion | Motion By: | Seconded By: | Vote: |
|------------|--------------------|---------------|------------------------|
| To adjourn | Marilyn Castriotta | Sue Lofthouse | Yes 7, No 0, Abstain 0 |

Meeting adjourned at 6:33 PM.