

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

February 19, 2020

Meeting Minutes

Submitted by: Beth Willard

**Meeting Called to Order**

Lilly Lombard, Chair called the meeting to order at 4:35 PM, and announced the audio recording of the meeting. Due to Lilly’s laryngitis, Sue Lofthouse chaired the meeting in her stead.

Members present and absent/introductions:

<b>Member</b>	<b>Present</b>	<b>Time if arriving late or leaving early</b>
Lilly Lombard, Chair	X	
Susan Lofthouse, Vice Chair	X	
Molly Hale	X	
Jennifer Werner	X	Arrived 4:37 PM
Marilyn Castriotta	X	
Rob Postel	Absent	
David Lukens	X	
<b>Staff &amp; Visitors</b>	<b>Present</b>	<b>Time if arriving late or leaving early</b>
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 Feb. 5, 2020 minutes	Marilyn Castriotta	Lilly Lombard	Yes 6, No 0, Abstain 0

**Chair Report**

- Tess Perrone has been rescheduled to the next meeting.
- Lilly is still planning a presentation to City council and Planning.
- Marilyn’s response to Mike Kirby’s letter was published in today’s Gazette.

**Tree Warden Report**

- Rich met with a Northampton High School student interested in an internship (5-10 hours/week).
  - He might use him to do planting and work with volunteers, as well as in the planning on the Pine Grove Golf Course reforestation.
- Lilly noted Williams College also offers paid internships, and suggested looking into the program.
- Rich met with Planning, Berkshire Design and Arcadia concerning the reforestation of the old Pine Grove Golf Course (about 60 acres).

- Manmade structures (both surface & subterranean) will be removed first.
- One section in the back 9 will be scarified and natural succession of trees encouraged.
- Tree planting areas will be carved out in other sections that are not near forested areas.
- Deer protection will be required in both cases of reforestation.
- The project will be funded through an MVP grant that ends in June.

### **STO updating**

- Lilly forwarded the current version of the STO to PSTC members.
- Lilly shared the document from the subcommittee meeting with Carolyn Misch.
  - They discussed the shift down from 20 DBH, the definition of a grove, and escalating fees.
  - They also shared some of the policies and regulations of other cities with her.
- Carolyn was concerned that it would be too stringent for small developers, such as the infill projects that Planning wants to encourage.
  - PSTC members noted that the infill projects have contributed to the loss of canopy.
    - 458 trees of 20" DBH or larger were removed over the last 5 years.
      - 104 trees have been replanted.
      - \$333,000 in mitigation fees have been received (95% by the solar project at 1010 Ryan Rd. this past year).
- Lilly noted that there were special stands of trees in the downtown area that should be preserved.
- The STO is triggered when a site plan is required, and it triggers an inventory.
  - Rich particularly noted the need for a tree inventory to see what has been lost.
  - David feels that 95% of the canopy loss in the Cambridge example is on private property.
    - There is a need to get the public to try to protect trees there.
- Instead of a contiguous canopy, a grove would be trees within 10 to 15 feet of each other.
- The minimum number of trees constituting a grove would be raised to 8.
  - Jen suggested looking at different sites to get an idea of what actually constitutes a grove.
- David noted there was some resistance to removing current STO exceptions to required mitigation (affordable housing development, Net Zero, etc.).
- Planning needs to be on board with changes to the STO.
  - David feels progress was made, but plans to continue to work with Carolyn Misch on it.
- There will be a legal review of the STO, so it will have to meet legal standards.

### **Planting Plan Summary, updating**

- Molly passed out the data collection sheets that were discussed last time.
  - She would like to get an idea of what is the important data to collect.
  - Mollie Freilicher showed Lilly how to superimpose data points from current maps over historical maps to get an idea of canopy change in an area.
    - Lilly found the canopy in downtown Northampton declined 7% from 2003 to 2018.
    - No overall change in canopy city wide has been found so far.
  - Molly would like to identify sites within the defined ¼ mile radius in downtown utilizing the data sheets.
    - For the right of way estimate, she used 10 feet from the curb.

- Rich suggested estimating the end of the right of way as the back border of the sidewalk.
      - 10 to 20 feet from the curb would be the estimated area for setback planting sites.
      - Lilly suggested considering and collecting data on any possible site in a front yard, with private property sites as a possibility for Tree Northampton.
    - Rich suggested adding another column to the sheet with the address of the site.
      - If there are multiple planting sites at one address, then locate each as a separate site.
      - Molly felt identifying sites as on the front or side of a property should be added.
    - Lilly suggested ranking planting sites, although subjective, was important.
    - The minimum size/volume of a planting area was discussed. Rich plans to provide some further clarification on it.
    - Molly will revise the sheet, send it out to PSTC members and they can start the survey.
  - Rich does not have a total yet on trees, as the volume wanted were not yet available.
    - 173 trees have been tagged on available nursery stock at Amherst Nursery.
    - About 30 trees are estimated for planting under the downtown EJ grant this spring, leaving potentially 70 downtown plantings for the fall.
    - Rich, Rob, and Alicia plan to look at the nursery stock again when Rob returns.
    - The data sheets should be completed by June or July, with plans for a fall planting.
  - Molly mentioned that Jonathan from Cooley Dickinson Hospital has not yet gotten back to the PSTC about the Arbor Day planting project.

**Picture Main St. planning process—PSTC input needed**

- Lilly sent PSTC members a rough draft of her presentation.
  - She discussed it with Wayne Feiden, and showed him the example of Greenville, SC.
  - She asked PSTC members to get edits back to her so that she can incorporate them into a document to discuss and revise at the next meeting for eventual submission to Planning.

**To Do list**

- Marilyn plans to work on the downtown siting project and edits for the Picture Main St document.
- Lilly plans to follow up with Carolyn Misch and to work on the downtown siting project.
- David plans to fine tune the STO in light of feedback from Carolyn Misch and to work on justifying the definition of a grove.
- Jen plans to email Jonathan at Cooley Dickinson Hospital, work on the downtown siting project, and work on the document for Picture Main St.
- Molly plans to work on the downtown siting project, and said that she will miss the next meeting.
- Rich plans to send Molly information on planting site soil volume, work with Rob on the RFQ for trees for the spring, and to work on rewriting the Tree Protection Guidelines.
- Sue plans to look at the downtown maps, check why Google Docs hasn't been working properly for her, and work on input for the Picture Main St document.

Motion	Motion By:	Seconded By:	Vote:
To adjourn	Molly Hale	Jen Werner	Yes 6, No 0, Abstain 0

Meeting adjourned at 5:56 PM.