

Pennington Borough Shade Tree Committee
Meeting of April 5, 2022 8:00 pm
Via Zoom, Meeting ID:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83062181731?pwd=MHYrdUI5UnhaUTcvcnovTHFwRnk4Zz09>

Minutes

Present: Suzen Witcher, Cecil Vidican, Mike Rheinhardt, Gabe Rosko, Nadine Stern, Morris Fabian, Rick Smith, and Kate Fullerton. There were no members of the public present.

Open Public Meeting Statement was read and the meeting was opened.

Approval of Minutes: All in favor of the approval of the March 1, 2022 minutes.

Old Business

Mr. Rheinhardt provided an update on the brochure/bookmark project. He stated that he was introduced to Kim Waters of Zo Graphics and she is working on a design. He expressed concern that it will not be ready for Arbor Day on April 29.

Mr. Smith reported on the Annual Accomplishment Report. He is waiting for final administrative paperwork for the New Jersey Urban and Community Forestry Program annual report before he can send it to the State. Mr. Smith continued with a status report on the grant for the 20 trees. The State Forestry office has the Maintenance Plan and all the necessary paperwork.

Mr. Fabian provided his report on Tree Trimming and Removal. He stated that the Tree City USA report was accepted. The Borough has received the Tree City USA stickers for the signs, and they have been put up through the Borough. There was a conference call with Michael Martini today regarding the tree grant. The 20 trees area waiting at the nursery. Mr. Rosko and Mr. Fabian will check on them soon. They should be planted in early May. There are a few memorial tree requests that have been submitted. There were no remarkable take-downs or pruning in the last month. The East Welling road project is being worked on.

Mr. Rheinhardt reported on preparations for Pennington Day. A table has been secured with payment. It was decided that the rest of the Pennington Day preparations would be done at the May meeting.

Preparations for Arbor Day were discussed. Ms. Stern confirmed that the Borough Council had approved a proclamation. Mr. Smith reminded the Committee that they have the stamps for the cookies, so members won't need to stamp the cookies as in years past. We need to ask Ms. Sterling to make copies of the coloring book that we usually give the kids. Ms. Vidican has prepared a press release, but has not been able to confirm the details with anyone at Toll Gate. Mr. Rheinhardt stated that the Principal does know the specifics, but the First Grade teachers are new this year, so they are not familiar with the process. The Arbor Day celebration will be April 29 at 10am along Main Street.

Mayor Davy had received a letter from the Arbor Day Foundation that was distributed to Committee members for discussion. The letter promotes a new K-12 program acknowledging tree-oriented educational lessons within local schools. There is an application for recognition by the Arbor Day Foundation for this program. There were questions regarding whether Pennington and the Hopewell Valley Regional School District does enough to qualify for this program, who would be the appropriate person in the school district to respond to this application, and would it be appropriate for the Shade Tree

Committee to pass the application to the school district without assistance. Mr. Rheinhardt offered to discuss the program with the Toll Gate Principal, Jane Ellen Lennon, as that is the only school in Pennington. Ms. Vidican will discuss the program with the principal at Timberlane Middle School, as they have done many proactive, tree-positive activities. It may be that both Hopewell Township and Hopewell Borough have received letters regarding this program as well.

Ms. Stern provided a Council Update. The Arbor Day Proclamation was approved. The Borough Council has decided that Zoom meetings are the best method for public meetings, so each Borough Committee will have a Zoom account going forward. This means the Shade Tree Committee will be able to control our own Zoom meetings.

There was a discussion regarding the historic use of Committee versus Commission for this body that manages shade trees for Pennington Borough. Mr. Rosko reviewed the history of the body – up until about 15 years ago, previous Chairs had thought it was a Commission, since one of the original Chairs called it that. The funding was amiable enough, that no one noticed that the body was not a Commission. When the ordinance was reviewed around six years ago, it was discovered that the group is legally a Committee. Ms. Witcher asked about the legal impacts of being a Committee versus a Commission. This question has come up previously, and the Borough Attorney has advised Committee members that as the Committee is advisory, any decisions are made by the Borough Council, and any liability is held by the Borough Council. Ms. Vidican offered to refer to the CORE training video regarding Committee liability, while Ms. Fullerton was willing to review the minutes for the meeting with the Borough Attorney.

The next meeting of the Shade Tree Committee will be May 3, 2022 at 7:30pm.

The meeting adjourned.