

MEETING MINUTES

Shade Tree Committee
City Hall – 280 Grove Street, Jersey City NJ 07302
Councilmember Mira Prinz-Arey, Chair

Meeting: Jersey City Shade Tree Committee Meeting

Date / Location: 13 January 2020 – 7:00 p.m.
Room 322, City Hall, 280 Grove Street, Jersey City, NJ 07302

Attendees: **Voting Committee Members**
Theodore G. Tasoulas, Vice-Chair
Denise Bailey
David Hurtle
Marc Wesson

Non-Voting Committee Members/City Representatives
Edward O’Malley, Jersey City Forester
Kate Lawrence, Secretary

Members of the Public
Matthew Trump
Zuzana Herrera
James Williams

Prepared By: Kate Lawrence

Date Prepared: January 25, 2020

ROLL CALL

The Committee meeting commenced at 7:03 PM. Four of five voting committee members were present. Three members are needed to meet quorum.¹

PUBLIC NOTIFICATION

Meeting notice was sent to the City Clerk’s Office, Jersey Journal, and Hudson Reporter on January 9th, 2020.

APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MINUTES

Meeting minutes for the meetings in November and December were approved unanimously.

¹ Matthew Trump is not yet an appointed member of the Committee, although at the time of the meeting it was understood by all members that he had already been appointed.

OLD BUSINESS

Meeting dates for the remainder of 2020

- As discussed at the last meeting, the Shade Tree Committee Meetings will take place at 6:30 p.m., on the 2nd Monday of the Month through June 2020.

NEW BUSINESS

Update from City Forester

City Forester Ed O'Malley gave an overview of tree-related activities in the City.

- So far, 150 Ash trees with Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) have been identified within the City.
- The 300 trees that were planted through the CSIP grant have been inspected by Parks & Forestry. The state will inspect these trees as well and will either reject or approve the plantings.
 - Committee Member Marc Wesson asked how the trees planted through the CSIP grant look.
 - Forester O'Malley stated that there was an approximately 20% mortality rate.
 - Committee Member Dave Hurtle stated that this was because of dome planting.
 - Forester O'Malley noted that this may have been true of some of the CSIP tree plantings, but other, more recently-planted trees, have been planted correctly. He stated that he had just drafted a streamlined contract for the next planting and submitted it to other staff for review.
- Mr. Wesson asked if there would be a spring planting.
 - Forester O'Malley and Secretary Kate Lawrence stated that yes, there would be.
 - Forester O'Malley stated that he was purchasing a larger number of different tree species than usual. He is looking to plant 200 trees.
 - Vice-Chair Theodore Tasoulas asked where they would be planted.
 - Forester O'Malley stated that it depended on where people applied. The Division of Parks and Forestry just finished planting 125 trees this fall.
- Committee Member Denise Bailey asked if the trees that had been planted were free for residents.
 - Forester O'Malley: Yes.
 - Mr. Wesson: That's new.
 - Mr. Hurtle: I like charging a small fee to make sure people take care of the trees once they're planted.
 - Forester O'Malley: That's why the tree planting contract includes a 2-year guarantee for trees.
 - Ms. Bailey: So, people are getting free trees?
 - Forester O'Malley: Not really. You can apply to have a tree planted in front of your house. Trees are also being planted in in other places as well, like parks and areas that have lost trees.
- Mr. Wesson: Are you going to get the planting contractor to water the trees?
 - Forester O'Malley: That's the plan.

- Ms. Bailey: Isn't there an opportunity for stewardship here?
- Mr. Wesson: They should get a brochure that tells them how to care for their tree.
- Dave Hurtle: The tree planting application has this information.
- Forester O'Malley stated that he was drafting additional information for residents.
- Ms. Bailey requested that a copy of the draft brochure be sent to the committee so that they could offer assistance.
- Vice-Chair Tasoulas: How does planting 200 trees fit into the total number of City trees?
 - Mr. Wesson: It's less than 1% of existing trees.
 - Forester O'Malley: You're losing more trees than that each year. It's not just important to plant new trees. We also need to take care of existing trees.
- Mr. Hurtle: Where are EAB-infected trees?
 - Forester O'Malley: I have a google map
 - Mr. Hurtle: How do I get EAB info to you?
 - Forester O'Malley: You can share locations in Open Tree Map if you want.
 - Forester O'Malley stressed that EAB is here in Jersey City and it was a priority for him to locate infected trees and treat those that can still be saved. He is creating a color-coded maps identifying the severity of the problem within the City. There are some really bad areas
- Ms. Bailey: The group SJC wants to help with identifying Ash trees. Can we work with you on how to do that?
 - Forester O'Malley: I really covered most of it; just some weird pockets left.
- Mr. Wesson stated that there should be a flyer that can be distributed.
 - Secretary Lawrence said that she would work with Forester O'Malley to create a poster and brochure.
- Vice-Chair Tasoulas asked if the City was mapping trees.
 - Forester O'Malley noted that this was a long-term project.
 - Secretary Lawrence noted that all of Ward A and a portion of Ward B were mapped last summer in partnership with NJCU.
 - Ms. Bailey and Secretary Lawrence discussed mapping methodologies. Ms. Bailey stated that SJC wanted to use Open Tree Map to crowdsource tree mapping. Secretary Lawrence stressed that the data that was gathered this way was not useful because it was inaccurate and incomplete "dirty data." Ms. Bailey stated that the volunteers needed training and resources. Secretary Lawrence restated that gathering crowdsourced data through Open Tree Map was not helpful to the City at this time. Ms. Bailey stated that SJC should come and discuss the worth of the program. Secretary Lawrence noted that the SJC and the City have already had this conversation multiple times.
- Vice-Chair Tasoulas asked about how the group can work to preserve trees. He asked if we should be getting grants.
 - Forester O'Malley stated that the CSIP grants were the major source for tree funding in New Jersey. He was interested in using CSIP grant funding for tree pit preservation. He is also interested in sidewalk grants for residents to deal with sidewalk issues caused by tree roots.
- Vice-Chair Tasoulas asked what the best thing was to improve tree health and increase the tree canopy.

- Forester O'Malley said it was important to do a little bit of everything. He noted that there were many years of mismanagement of the urban forest, including bad planting and no maintenance. He was working to correct these issues.
- Mr. Hurtle noted that getting a lot of different trees may not be the best approach in an urban area because they might not thrive in tough urban conditions. He recommended saving species diversity for parks and open spaces.
 - Forester O'Malley agreed that it was important to choose from a select list of trees that do well in urban conditions but that adding a little bit of diversity was important too. He noted that the first two years of hardest for new trees.
- Ms. Bailey recommended using iNaturalist to help volunteers identify tree species.
 - Mr. Hurtle agreed that the app was useful.

Open Discussion

- Matt Trump asked if there was currently any plan for dealing with the spotted lantern fly.
 - Mr. Wesson and Mr. Trump discussed how the Tree of Heaven is a host for the spotted lantern fly.
 - Forester O'Malley stated that this was also an area of concern for the Division of Parks & Forestry. They posted information on how to spot and get rid of the spotted lantern fly for residents.
- Vice-Chair Tasoulas: I recall you saying you would need at least three people per ward to properly manage trees, instead of four total like you have currently. Would that stop trees dying?
 - Forester O'Malley: Yes. The City is slowly growing its investment in trees. There are currently 4-5 people managing trees.
- Vice-Chair Tasoulas asked how many dead trees there were throughout the City.
 - Forester O'Malley stated that there were a lot. He noted that he could take down dead trees all day. Part of the reason for this is that there is a backlog.
- Ms. Bailey asked for if updating the Community Forestry Plan was put off for a year.
 - Forester O'Malley stated that the State has put an extension on all management plans while they update rules.
- Vice-Chair Tasoulas: Are there any trees that give you a better bang for your buck?
 - Mr. Wesson: Yeah, trees I don't like — London Plane, Honey Locust.
- Vice-Chair Tasoulas: What is the sweet spot?
 - Forester O'Malley: That's where we are at with our current list of approved tree species.
- Vice-Chair Tasoulas asked if there are fast-growing trees should be planting.
 - Forester O'Malley noted that fast-growing trees are unstable. Mr. Trump, Mr. Wesson, and Mr. Hurtle agreed, noting that fast-growing trees often break easily.
 - Mr. Hurtle stated that one year the City planted a bunch of serviceberries; they all died. He noted that it is better to be conservative and only use tree species that will definitely thrive.
- Forester O'Malley said that he was looking for suggestions for species.

- Secretary Lawrence suggested revisiting the tree species list and the cost of trees for developers.

Public Comment

- Member of the public James Williams noted that it would be good to have individual citizen involvement in the absence of a fee. He said it would be good to have training for interested people and more information available.
 - Zuzana Herrera asked if there are any Blue Ash in Jersey. She noted that it is more resistant to EAB than other Ash trees.
 - Forester O'Malley said he had not seen any.
 - A discussion ensued about how a diverse forest is a resilient forest.
- Secretary Lawrence asked Forester O'Malley if he was being brought in to developer discussions.
 - Forester O'Malley said that had only happened once so far but that was ok. He noted that the list of approved tree species was adequate for most situations. He noted he did not have the time to review all site plans.
- Ms. Herrera asked if there could be an opportunity for volunteers with the right background to help with mapping.
 - Secretary Lawrence said that there absolutely was. She said there could be a potential tree mapping project with qualified volunteers starting in May.
 - Ms. Herrera volunteered to coordinate.
- Vice-Chair Tasoulas asked Forester O'Malley if he had a secretary.
 - Forester O'Malley stated that he did not.
- Vice-Chair Tasoulas asked what was the best use of Forester O'Malley's time and how can the Shade Tree Committee best utilize public interest.
 - Ms. Bailey noted that there was a lot of opportunities to use volunteers.
- Forester O'Malley briefly discussed the NJ State Salem Oak Tree project. The Salem Oak was over 400 years old and recently died. Fortunately, before that happened, the NJDEP had collected samples of the tree and propagated seedlings. Every municipality in New Jersey will get one.
- Mr. Hurtle noted that the City used to plant larger caliper trees during tree plantings.
- Secretary Lawrence asked for everyone's priorities for the next meeting.
 - Forester O'Malley stated he wanted to finish up CSIP planting reporting, distribute flyers, and create brochures.
 - Vice-Chair Tasoulas asked if the Committee could get a baseline of removed trees per year
 - Forester O'Malley stated he would look into it.
 - Mr. Wesson requested a review of Ordinance 321 at the next meeting.
 - One of the Committee members asked Forester O'Malley what he would like to see changed in Ordinance 321. Forester O'Malley stated that the enforcement portion of the ordinance is vague and the fees are too low.
 - Secretary Lawrence said that members of the Shade Tree Committee may want to consider creating sub-committees.
 - Ms. Bailey asked if the public need to be educated about getting trees.

- Forester O'Malley stated that yes, the City needed to get out the word about the spring planting and the Committee could help with that.
- Ms. Bailey noted that there should be a focus on getting trees planted in areas that really need it, not just places that are already getting trees.
- Secretary Lawrence agreed, noting that the City would also be coordinating with the MUA to try to get trees planted as part of the pipe improvements happening this year.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:59 PM.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Jersey City Shade Tree Committee will take place on Monday, February 10 at 6:30 p.m. in the BA's Conference Room at City Hall, Jersey City, NJ 07302.