

Meeting Minutes
State College Borough Tree Commission
January 15, 2019

The Borough's Tree Commission (TRC) met on Tuesday, January 15, 2019, in the Administrative Conference Room of the Service Facility, located at 330 South Osmond Street. Mr. Sam called the meeting to order at 12:06 p.m.

Members Present

Lynn Herman, Chairman; William Elmendorf; Bruce Rohrbach; and Justin Wheeler

Members Absent

Elaine Schuckers, Vice-Chair

Also Present

Alan Sam, Arborist/Environmental Coordinator; Deb Hoag, Public Works Director; Jeffrey M. Bower, Esquire; Jasmine Fields, AmeriCorps; Autumn Busbee, Community Engagement Specialist; Jake Leonard, Maintenance Specialist; Edward Holmes, Operations Manager; Tanner Kibe, Dendritian; Austin Brown, Laborer; Ellen Roane, Department of Conservation and Natural Resources; and Stacy Hall, Administrative Assistant

Election of Chair and Vice-Chair

Mr. Sam asked everyone to introduce themselves since it was the first meeting of the new year. He then asked for nominations for Chairman and Vice-Chairman. Mr. Rohrbach made a motion that the TRC keep the same Chairman and Vice-Chairman as last year. Mr. Wheeler seconded the motion, and all were in favor. Mr. Sam announced that Mr. Herman would remain Chairman and Ms. Schuckers would remain Vice-Chair of the TRC.

Public Hour

No comments were heard during the public hour.

Approval of Minutes

On a motion by Mr. Wheeler and seconded by Mr. Elmendorf, the September 25, 2018 meeting minutes were approved as submitted. The vote was unanimously in favor.

Action Items

Request to Remove Street Tree at 332 South Gill Street

Mr. Sam explained that due to repeated damage to the public sidewalk, Mr. and Mrs. Williams, who reside at 332 South Gill Street, requested the removal of a 22-inch diameter white oak tree adjacent to their property. He added that the tree appeared to be healthy and structurally sound. Mr. Bower attended the meeting representing Mr. and Mrs. Williams. Mr. Bower explained to the TRC members that Mr. Williams was in poor health and the situation was upsetting to him. He said that Mr. Williams' mother lived in the house prior to him and had fallen on the sidewalk. He pointed out that due to the tree roots underneath, the sidewalk was treacherous to pedestrians and for that reason the Williams were requesting that the tree be removed despite it being healthy and structurally sound. He added that he and Mr. Fountaine, Borough Manager, looked at the tree together and Mr. Fountaine suggested that each member of the TRC look at the situation and come together to decide. Mr. Rohrbach asked if there was something that could be done to accommodate the tree and eliminate the hazard such as get an easement from the property owners to curve the walk around the tree? Ms. Hoag said work could be done if an easement was acquired from the homeowners. Mr. Wheeler said he thought the tree should be removed because it

was improperly placed along with the tree next to it that was leaning out over the road. However, Mr. Wheeler said he did not want to set a precedence of removing trees for the sake of the sidewalk as there were other trees in the middle of sidewalks that he would not want taken down. Mr. Elmendorf asked how much that tree was worth; Mr. Sam answered \$8,000 - \$10,000. Mr. Elmendorf also expressed concern that if the tree was removed, similar requests would follow. Mr. Sam pointed out if it was decided to remove the tree, the Borough would be responsible for removing the tree and grinding the stump, but the homeowners would be responsible for replacing the sidewalk. He added that removing the tree prior to replacing the sidewalk could possibly cause a more dangerous situation.

After a lengthy discussion, Mr. Elmendorf made a motion to deny removal of the tree and the applicants be made aware of the appeal process. Mr. Rohrbach seconded the motion. Mr. Elmendorf then amended the motion by adding research be done regarding the cost of replacing the sidewalk around the tree. The amended motion also included determination of the actual value of the tree. Mr. Rohrbach seconded the amended motion. All were unanimously in favor. Ms. Hoag said she would forward the information to staff to develop estimates if the sidewalk were to be curved around the tree.

Discussion Items

Recommended Tree List

Mr. Sam explained that the Recommended Tree List, which was included in the 2016 Master Tree Plan, included species and varieties of trees that were recommended for planting along Borough streets. He added the review of the Recommended Tree List was listed as a high priority in the 2019 Work Plan, and the list was attached to the agenda for review to be discussed at the next meeting.

Wood Utilization

Mr. Sam introduced Ms. Ellen Roane, DCNR, who came to discuss the municipal wood utilization effort she had undertaken with the state. He explained that as part of the Borough's approved Sustainability Plan, there was interest in finding additional ways to utilize urban wood waste. Ms. Roane gave a detailed presentation outlining the benefits of using urban wood to help the Borough achieve its vision of a sustainable future. She referenced the Baltimore Wood Project and distributed a handout to the members outlining that project. She concluded her presentation by stating the first step would be to determine wood available in the community, followed by species and size sorting. She suggested the best way to start would be to locate another community using urban wood to see what worked for them. She said she would be happy to work with the Borough on the project. Mr. Sam said the Borough had been discussing better ways to utilize urban wood and thanked Ms. Roane for coming to the meeting.

Other Matters

Draft 2019 Meeting Schedule

Mr. Sam asked that members to review and approve the proposed 2019 meeting schedule as follows:

Wednesday, March 20 at 12 p.m.
Wednesday, July 24 at 8:30 a.m. (Drive-around)
Tuesday, August 6 at 8:30 a.m. (Drive-around)
Tuesday, September 10 at 7:00 p.m. (Public Hearing)
Tuesday, September 24 at 7:00 p.m. (Public Hearing)
Wednesday, November 20 at 12 p.m.

He explained that all meetings would be held in the State College Borough Service Facility except for the two September public hearings, which would be held at the Municipal Building located at 243 South Allen Street.

Mr. Wheeler made a motion to approve the 2019 meeting schedule as written. Mr. Elmendorf seconded the motion, and all members were in favor.

Items of Information

2019 Work Plan

Mr. Sam said the 2019 Work Plan had been discussed previously and there were no changes. He added it was approved by Council on January 14, 2019 and the TRC was expected to give a presentation to Council in the first quarter of the year with a specific date to be announced soon.

2019 Conflict of Interest Statement

Mr. Sam explained that the 2019 Conflict of Interest Statement, along with an email explaining the purpose of the statement were attached for review. He suggested the members read it over and contact Ed LeClear (Planning Director) if they had questions.

Reports of Interest

Arborist's Report

Mr. Sam thanked the members of the tree crew who came to the meeting. Mr. Herman asked for a list of trees that were removed or trimmed and the cost involved. Mr. Sam referred Mr. Herman to where the list of removed trees could be found.

Mr. Sam said he was now supervising the tree crew. He announced that the budget passed with a 5.4% increase in spending, adding the increase was in equipment repairs, depreciation and public works services. He said the parks projects identified in the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) were not approved and the 2018/2019 Contract Tree Pruning Project was approved and awarded to Cutting Edge Tree Professionals. He reported that the Easterly Parkway rain garden and Tusseyview Park play grounds were completed. He said he was working on a master plan for East Fairmount Park and was also involved in working on crow harassment. He said the log sale had several logs identified, amounting to over 2,000 board feet with no takers. He reported that he and Mr. Elmendorf were still involved with Phase 3 of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Implementation Plan. He concluded by stating he will be working on spring tree planting, stump grinding, pruning, and Emerald Ash Borer treatments contracts.

Tree Crew Report

Mr. Sam reported on the activities the Tree Crew had undertaken since the last regular meeting in September, highlighted as follows:

- Deadwood pruning on several Borough streets
- Holiday tree set up/removal
- Municipal Building landscape project
- Tree removals (65 completed to date)
- Maintenance pruning in South Hills (approximately 60 trees)
- Snow removal duties of streets and sidewalks

Future Meeting Dates

Wednesday, March 20, 2019 at 12:00 p.m. – Service Building

Adjournment

With no further business to discuss, Mr. Herman adjourned the meeting at 1:16 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Stacy Hall
Administrative Assistant