

SHADE TREE COMMISSION
BOROUGH OF DEMAREST

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

September 5, 2024, 7:02 PM

The notice requirements of the Open Public Meetings Act of the State of New Jersey have been satisfied by the inclusion of the date, time, and place of this regular meeting in the annual schedule and notice of regular meetings of this Commission. Such annual schedule and notice of regular meetings are posted at Borough Hall, was mailed to the Record and Star Ledger, and was filed with the Borough Clerk of Demarest.

The meeting was opened by Chairperson Linda Cetta at 7:02pm.

Present: Linda Cetta, Maureen Neville, Faye Sloan, Norman NG, Dimitri Gatanas, Council Liaison Adam Collins, and Mayor Brian Bernstein

Absent: Ronnie Friedman

Approval of minutes for July 2nd, Faye Sloan 2nd Maureen Neville All were in favor. A misprint in the number of trees to be removed was noted.

Old Business: Budget discrepancies were discussed, Council Liaison Adam Collins questioned if POs were submitted to the Finance Department and if they were updated. An email exchange between Borough Administrator, Julie Falkenstern, and Linda Cetta was read by Linda Cetta to the Commission and attendees which is attached. The Commission would like to change the Hazardous Tree Removal title to Tree Removal List. Dimitri Gatanas states, "The word hazardous should only be used if the tree is deemed hazardous." Mayor Bernstein asks the Commission, "Why was it named hazardous?" Linda Cetta responded, "to get a five-year plan approved by the State of N.J. certified tree expert Paul Cowey and Associates had to examine the health of every tree within the Borough Right of Way. Upon the inspection, trees were labeled as dead, dying, hazardous, to be pruned." The list was finalized in 2021. Mayor Berstein asks, "How many trees were hazardous?" Linda Cetta responded, "400, Removals were done by the former DPW Supervisor, and O and R, approximately 100 remain." Dimitri Gatanas asked Mayor Bernstein if the Borough provides a special budget for Borough trees?" Mayor Berstein replied, Chair Linda Cetta discussed that she asked the Borough Administrator, Julie Falkenstern, last year to consider contractual services. Mayor Berstein replied, Julie met with Frank DeCarlo to discuss contractual services and Frand DeCarlo declined." Chair Linda Cetta commented, "Maybe in the future we can go

out for bid for contractual services.” 4 Ash trees were removed at the Duck Pond using Open Space.” Mayor Berstein asks, “How many lists are there?” Maureen Neville responded, “2, a hazardous list and a removal list. ST is removing the remaining trees in phases, but budget has a factor in the removal.” Contractual services were discussed. Mayor Berstein requested that a comparison be made from the hazardous list to Paul Cowie’s list be updated, the importance of tree removal vs. Fall planting. Dimitri Gatanas has developed planting designs for future planting at the Duck Pond. Linda Cetta will request Shade Tree Secretary, Lee Campbell to go out for bids for the next phase of tree removal. Violations were received and deposited into the Trust which will be returned to the Borough. Emergency and hurricane procedures for tree removal were discussed. Dimitri Gatanas made a motion to plant 10 trees in the next year and set up a separate budget for planting, keeping tree removal priority 2nd Maureen Neville, all were in favor. Cemetery removal of bushes and replanting deer resistant trees. Dimitri Gatanas motions to have sponsor support the removal planting project, 2nd Maureen Neville, all were in favor. Mayor Berstein suggests that the Commission purchase a plaque with all who sponsored it. 21 Eric Place and 27 Elm St., and Landmark trees were discussed and how to determine if a tree is a Landmark tree. Mayor Berstein requested a more detailed report from ST and Borough Arborist, Ray Slayman if ST wants to declare a tree a Landmark tree. Mayor Berstein suggested a motion be made to notify the residents if a tree is in the Borough Right of Way, 1st motion, Dimitri Gatanas, 2nd Maureen Neville, all were in favor.

New Business: Motion to rename the Hazardous List discussion followed motion by Dimitri 2nd Maureen. Discussion of Borough Administrator, Julie Falkenstern, to remove hazardous trees, no discussion. Motion to plant at the Duck Pond 1st Dimitri Gatanas, 2nd Maureen Neville, all were in favor. Procedure for emergency tree work was discussed regarding who has the determination to declare it an emergency. Maureen Neville read the invoice for 150 Donnybrook. Norman NG asks who declares it an emergency? Chair Linda Cetta remarked PD and the DPW Manager, Shade Tree was not notified until after the weekend emergency, Dimitri Gatanas disagreed with how the procedure was handled. Faye Sloan asks Mayor Bernstein complaints regarding about unhappy residents and inspection results. Mayor Bernstein responded, “I will respond to residents and their concerns when I know all the facts.” Bi laws were tabled. Ordinance concerns were discussed, Dimitri Gatanas proposes a motion to discuss ordinance concerns and relay back to Mayor Bernstein, Norman 2ND Norman NG. Enrollment NJSTF, 8 CEU’s needed each year members attain. Fall planting opt in program Linda to discuss further. 2,500 trees need to be planted at compost to satisfy DEP. ST will not do sporadic plantings, to be discussed further. Missing trees continue to be an issue, who is taking the trees, solution to be discussed. Mayor Berstein suggested that Shade

Tree Commission meet in the Council Chambers regarding a state-of-the-art recording system.

Open to the public: None present

Motion to adjourn: Dimitri Gatanas, 2nd Maureen Neville 9:00pm

Respectfully submitted,

Lee Campbell Shade Tree Secretary