

MINUTES OF LEONIA SHADE TREE COMMISSION'S REGULAR MEETING HELD OCTOBER 13, 2021

Present: Christine Healy, Imanta Bergmanis, Vivian DeMarco, Mark Spiegel, Soo Joung Woo, Kathi Verbeek, Laura-Lindsay Sewell and Bill Ziegler (Counsel Liaison). Absent: Julie Ulbrich

Approval of minutes September 8, 2021 - approved

The meeting is in compliance with the Open Meeting Act as the date, time, and place of all regular meetings were filed with the Borough Clerk and have been properly publicized.

Public Portion: Sally and Victor Klig of 497 Park Avenue were present. The Kligs live across from 496 Park Ave. whose homeowner had requested the removal of a large Pin Oak planted between the street curb and sidewalk which had caused the sidewalk to slope and heave more than two inches with its roots growing over a deteriorating curb. The homeowner had reported to the Commission that the heaving sidewalk was creating potential liability of trip hazard and in the winter the heaving and slanted sidewalk was causing water to accumulate creating ice sheets resulting in serious slipping hazard. Mses. Healy and Bergmanis evaluated the tree issue, met with the homeowners to discuss their concerns and ultimately concluded that there was no feasible option that would allow for the homeowner to provide a safe sidewalk without compromising the health and stability of the tree. Ms. Klig questioned the Commission's decision to remove the sidewalk. Ms. Klig inquired whether a sidewalk expert had been consulted and whether there were any other options to removing the tree. The Kligs had sent an email to the Commission prior to the meeting which the Commission had responded to explaining the options the Commission considered to address the conflict between the tree and the sidewalk and the safety concerns expressed by the homeowner and the reasons those options were not feasible in this case. Ms. Klig also requested the Commission to consider whether there could be public notification and opportunity for residents to provide their input about the removal of a mature street tree. After Ms. Klig had concluded, Mr. Spiegel emphasized that the Commission took this decision very seriously and discussed the increasing challenge throughout town caused by trees planted in areas too small between the curb and sidewalk. Mr. Spiegel explained that the Commission recently created the Private Property Planting Program which allows the Commission to work with homeowners on planting trees on their property in the area between the sidewalk and their homes at no cost to the homeowner. The goal of this new program is to ensure that the right tree is planted in the right place allowing the tree to the extent possible to grow to its full potential. The Commission thanked Mr. and Ms. Klig for attending and sharing their concerns and thoughts with the Commission. The Commission expressed that it would consider the suggestion for public notification and input.

Liaison Report: Bill Zeigler reported on key matters affecting the borough being addressed by the Mayor & Counsel.

Chairperson Report: Christine Healy reported that there is nothing in specific to report that will not otherwise be covered by the other agenda items.

Commissioners' Reports: Presbyterian Church/Fort Lee Rd: Ms. Verbeek inquired whether the tree in front of the Presbyterian Church on Fort Lee Road that is a potential hazard has been removed. Ms. Verbeek had reported that because this tree is on Fort Lee Road, Bergen County is responsible for its removal and that she notified John Villareal from the DPW that this tree needs to be removed and she understand that Mr. Villareal has sent a request for its removal to the County. Ms. Verbeek offered to follow-up with Mr. Villareal on the status.

312 Magnolia – Ms. DeMarco reported that the tree planted in the right-of-way by Downes >2 years ago was not looking as healthy as when reviewed in Spring 2021. Ms. Healy noted also having seen the tree and recommended again deferring further review to evaluate status in the Spring 2022. Ms. DeMarco will convey this to the homeowner.

123 Sylvan – Ms. Bergmanis noted that this street tree which is dead has been marked and referred to the DPW for removal.

Walk About – District 4 for 2021: There was discussion on the status of completing the District 4 Walk About. ‘PictureThis-plant identifier’ was recommended as a helpful app for tree ID.

Fall Planting 2021: Ms. Bergmanis reported that a list of 35 trees has been delivered to Downes. Downes submitted the lowest bid in response to the request for proposal that was prepared by the Commission and sent to 5 tree-planting companies. Ms. Bergmanis thanked the Commissioners for delivering the letters to homeowners on the list notifying them a tree will be planted as part of the fall planting. The homeowners from the following properties have indicated they do not want a tree planted by the Commission in front of their homes:

322 Crescent Avenue
200 Christie Heights

Private Property Planting Program: Ms. Healy reminded the Commissioners of the list of private property planting sites that was emailed to them and requested that each Commissioner reach out to a few of the homeowners on the list to discuss the new program and the opportunity to participate in the program.

Media and Marketing: Ms. Verbeek showed the mock postcard she and her husband created for the private property planting program. Once finalized the postcard will be sent through the mail to Leonia residents. There was discussion on next steps and finalizing the postcard.

New Ordinance – Permit Process and permits: Ms. Healy reported that several trees have been removed in town without permits. Council Liaison Zeigler noted that if a tree is being removed on private property with no clear removal permits, that the resident or STC member is encouraged to call the Leonia PD for verification of permitting.

Memorial Plantings: Ms. Healy reported that Brian McAlear reached out to Ms. Ulbrich about designating one of the newly planted trees in Wood Park as a memorial tree. Mr. McAlear expressed that he would like to reimburse the Commission for the cost of planting the tree and would purchase a plaque from the same vendor, in the same style as others in Wood Park. Ms. Ulbrich has been in conversation with ACS to coordinate possible memorial planting for Viola Scarangella on the school grounds.

Spotted Lantern Fly – in Leonia: Ms. Sewell reported that the short informational pdf was posted to the Leonia List Serve this week to inform residents of the SLF local sightings and of mechanisms for removal by homeowners. Ms. Bergmanis reported that this same informational flyer had been posted to the STC website by request.

Leonia Arbor Day proclamation for 2021: Ms. Healy proposed that typically the Arbor Day proclamation is read out loud by the Mayor at Leonia Day in May. Due to ongoing Covid-19 pandemic Leonia Day was not held this year. Ms. Healy proposed instead this year that the

Mayor read out loud the Arbor Day Proclamation at a Mayor & Council meeting. Mr. Ziegler responded that he thought that would be possible.

Downtown Leonia – Tree Planting Project: Ms. Bergmanis and Ms. Healy reported on meeting with Andrea Wardrop, the interim Borough Administrator, and John Villareal and Chuck Moran from the DPW to discuss planting new trees in downtown Leonia.

Update on Landmark Tree Black Oak 205 Oratam Terrace: Ms. Healy reported that the Mayor & Council affirmed the Commission's designation of the Black Oak at 205 Oratam as a Landmark Tree via a resolution of recognition.

Review proposed revisions to Chapter 275-16 Landmark Trees: Ms. Healy and Ms. Bergmanis reported on their conference call with Brian Chewcaskie, the borough attorney, regarding Chapter 275-16 of the Tree Ordinance addressing Landmark Trees. There was discussion on the proposed revisions to Chapter 275-16 made by Mr. Chewcaskie. There was discussion on proposing a revision to Chapter 275-16 that gave authority to the Mayor & Council to unilaterally designate without the consent of the property owner a tree as a Landmark Tree that represents an exceptional specimen tree which is determined by the Mayor & Council to be of unique and intrinsic value to the general public because of its size, age, historic association or ecological value.

CEUs: Ms. Healy reported that a minimum two members with a total of 8 CEUs is required annually. The Commissioners were encouraged to attend the Hazardous Tree Identification course at Rutgers on December 2, 2021.

New/Old Business: None reported.

Adjourned at 9:35 p.m.