

Borough of Phoenixville

Shade Tree Commission

July 12, 2010

Start Time: 6:39 pm

Attendance: Commissioners - Paul Kusko, Joan McCracken, Randy Morin. Staff Liaison -Melissa Gibbons, Dir. Parks & Recreation Dept.

#### **Minutes Review:**

- Meeting of June 7, 2010 were accepted as written and will be sent out via email.

#### **Shade Tree Service Requests**

##### **July 12<sup>th</sup> Inspection List:**

- 1201 South Main St. – commissioner agreed that suckers at base of tree should be removed; commission will recommend that Borough streets crew remove
- 910 Bridge St. – commissioners agreed that tree is unsightly but healthy; recommend that homeowner be notified that tree can be removed at owner's expense because the Borough is not accepting new removal requests & does not remove healthy trees.
- 400 Anderson Ave. – commissioners agreed that this tree (as well as the adjacent tree) has many dead branches that should be removed because they are a hazard; however, the Borough is not accepting new requests this year but if contract money is left over it is possible that the tree could be trimmed.
- 1205 Madison Ave. – Joan and Paul looked at tree and deemed it not a safety hazard but suggested there is a risk to the resident's lateral power line and should be trimmed.

##### **Last Month's Requests:**

- 210 High St. – this property is in the Elm St. Streetscapes project and due to new sidewalks with very small planting space containing a buried utility line it is not a viable place for a new planting. Property owner notified via email.

- Chester Hotel – owner was advised via email that the Borough is not accepting new removal requests and that the trees would probably be removed during an upcoming Streetscape project (timeline unknown).

#### **Follow-Ups:**

- Need to monitor progress on removals and maintenance due to amount of work that needs to be completed. Mr. Kusko asked if an additional contractor needs to be brought in to complete the work and not lose the available 2010 money
- Ms. Gibbons reported that Mr. Watson feels the current contractor can complete the work assigned. Re-visit at September meeting to see how much has been done and how much time is left.

#### **Plantings:**

- Although the commission decided not to apply for grant from PennVest to help with watering, the PA Horticultural Society still offered to help (\$500). Paul suggested that the Borough could use gator bags to help with watering. The Horticultural Society provided 30 water bags which, with our present stock of bags, have been deployed to 60 of the new Borough Park trees. Ms. Gibbons reported that she is still trying to work out who will do the weekly filling. She is looking to the water Dept. to fulfill that role.

#### **Violations:**

- 400 Virginia Ave. – last month commission reported violation to be cited by Codes Dept. Codes reported that it is acting upon the violation.
- 413 & 415 Carlisle Ave. –It was reported that Bartlett Tree Company was trimming two regulated trees. Mr. Kusko investigated. Homeowners didn't request a permit. Commission recommends that homeowners and Richard Dexter of Bartlett should be notified by Codes Dept. about the proper procedure for trimming or removing Borough trees. Trees were trimmed per ISA standards so no penalty is being recommended.
- 5 (or 7) Anderson Ave. – homeowner improperly trimmed lower branches off of two trees which caused some damage to bark around the removed branches; Commission recommends that the tree be treated by our tree company to repair the damage and levy that cost as the fine from the Codes Dept. Commission also recommends that the homeowners be notified by Codes Dept. about the proper procedure for trimming or removing Borough trees.

## Old Business

### **2010 Budget:**

- \$104,276.98 left out of \$156,680 for contract services

### **Web Site Update:**

- The website still has not been updated.
- Paul suggests that several items could be added including: Phoenixville is a Tree City USA, PennVest grant that funded tree plantings, etc.

### **PennVest Grant 2011:**

- No information yet.

### **Penn Horticultural Society Watering Grant:**

- \$500 offered to buy more gator bags

## New Business

### **Borough Tree Ordinance Review:**

- Borough Staff is asking the Tree Commission to consider changing street tree responsibility to homeowners (like sidewalks).
- Borough Council needed to make budget cuts in order to not raise taxes and Shade Tree budget was under consideration
- Joan recommends that it is a bad move for the Borough to shift the responsibility back to the homeowners for a variety of reasons: too much expense to homeowners, lack of stewardship, still regulates the permission for trimming/removals, etc. The last time the Borough turned the trees back over to the homeowners many trees were removed. Phoenixville Shade Tree Commission has been cited as an example by other towns for all the positive things it has done. Joan wonders whether the cost could be shared between homeowner and Borough.
- Randy suggests that some public outreach needs to occur and suggests submitting an article to the newspaper requesting public comment at the August meeting.
- Paul doesn't want to see the progress that has been made during the past 5 years be lost. He is afraid that Borough Mngt. is being shortsighted regarding this decision. This is not good for the long-term stewardship of the Borough's tree canopy. The sidewalk issue is being used as an analogy by borough mngt. Most residents have to deal with sidewalk maintenance but street trees are not on every person's property and some have 2, 3, 4, up to 7+

trees. This is essentially an unbalanced tax. The Borough does have 500-600 trees on their own property so they will always need to have some money dedicated to tree maintenance and removal. Property owner responsibility would also essentially require someone in the Borough staff to 'police' the street trees. If a hazardous tree is seen then the homeowner would have to either be notified that the tree has to be removed, or removed by the Borough and billed the homeowner for the cost. Paul also suggested that the Borough doesn't know the assessed dollar value of the trees (the intrinsic value of the tree for the positive work that it does as opposed to the liability of the tree).

- Borough budget was tight in 2010 and expected to be even tighter for 2011 and 2012. Since tree maintenance budgets have generally ranged from \$40K to \$80K that is all that the borough would be saving. The 2010 budget provided \$0 for tree maintenance and removal (contract services). The Borough provided \$150K from another account to complete the backlog of tree removals and trims.
- **Action items:** 1) Invite members of public to next meeting to discuss street tree maintenance; 2) post article at Borough hall, on webpage, on Borough TV channel, and in newspapers (Mercury, Phoenix, Daily Local, Community something??); 3) Work on spreadsheet of Borough trees to demonstrate inequity argument.

Meeting closed at 8:45 pm