

Town of Odessa

Minutes of the TREE COMMISSION MEETING

Tuesday October 11, 2022 at 7:00 p.m.

Old Academy Building

315 Main Street, Odessa, DE 19730

In Person

Call to order

Chairman Pro temp Melaine Minear called the meeting to order at 7:06 p.m.

Roll Call

Commission members Michael Callaghan, Neeka Grove, Melaine Minear, Jeff Pyle and Quentin Schlieder were present. Mayor Harvey C. Smith, Jr., also attended the meeting.

Mayor Smith noted that while he will try to attend as many meetings as possible, he won't be steering the Commission in any particular direction. He noted that up to now, he has been a one man band responding to issues related to trees when constituents contact him. He hopes that the Commission will be able to relieve him of this responsibility.

Introduction of Members

Each member was asked to give a brief introduction. Jeff Pyle noted that he is a retired teacher who moved into the historic Davis Store in 2003. He is a volunteer with the Historic Odessa Foundation. Michael Callaghan stated that he and his husband both work for Discover Card and moved to their residence on Diemler Street in 2019. He works as a volunteer with the Municipal Park. Neeka Grove stated she moved to Odessa 16 years ago. She is a registered Architect and a member of the Odessa Historic Commission. She also formerly served as Chairman of the Tree Commission. Melaine Minear stated that she moved to Odessa two years ago and along with Carol Sheats and she have been pruning street trees in recent months. Formerly, she maintained the plantings in historic Pioneer Square in Seattle Washington. Quentin Schlieder clarified that he is not an ISA (International Society of Arboriculture) Certified Arborist that he is a professional degreed Horticulturist who prior to retirement in 2002 served as Director of the 14,000 acre Morris County Park Commission in Morristown, New Jersey and earlier as Director of the Willowood Arboretum in Gladstone, NJ and The Frelinghuysen Arboretum in Morristown, NJ. He resides in a historical Greek Revival home in Smyrna's Historic District near the Smyrna Opera House.

Mr. Schlieder circulated a draft directory of members of the Odessa Shade Tree Commission and requested that members review their entries and make any corrections they deemed appropriate. Since most members were uncertain of their terms of the appointments, Barbara Roberts will be asked to furnish that information.

Selection of Chairman and Secretary

Since no one expressed interest in chairing the Commission, Quentin Schlieder, noting Melaine Minear's recent volunteer work pruning the Town's street trees, nominated her to serve as

Chairman. Michael Callaghan seconded the motion which was adopted unanimously by voice vote.

Melaine Minear inquired if Quentin Schlieder would accept the nomination for Commission Secretary. He responded that he was willing to serve unless another member of the Commission would like the opportunity. There being no volunteers, Jeff Pyle nominated Quentin Schlieder to serve a Secretary. The motion was seconded by Neeka Grove and was adopted unanimously by voice vote.

Ordinance 2002-1 (amended 2005-3)

Chairman Minear noted that copies of the enabling ordinances, Ordinance No. 2002-1 and 2005-3 were attached to the agenda on the table this evening. She encourage members to study these documents prior to the next meeting.

2010 Community Forestry Master Plan

Mr. Schlieder advised that it would be helpful to obtain a copy of the 2010 Community Forestry Master Plan referenced in Resolution No. 2012-1/Tree Canopy. Mike Callaghan suggested that the document might be in the binder maintained at the Town office. Neeka Grove noted that a copy also may be available from Kesha Braunskill, Delaware Urban and Community Forestry Program Coordinator.

Quentin Schlieder distributed copies of the Resolution and Odessa, Delaware Tree Canopy Map with was available on the Forestry Department website.

Tree Inventory (updated every 2 years)

Mike Callaghan found the inventory map and report in the binder maintained at the Town office. Quentin Schlieder, noting that Neeka Grove was an Architect, inquired if she could have copies of the map and inventory report reproduced. She suggested that a digital format could be obtained from the State Forestry office, and agreed to make the necessary inquiry. This would enable the Commission to produce maps of varying sizes for its needs.

Quentin Schlieder suggested that once copies of the inventory maps and report were available, that the inventory be updated in stages with the first stage being Main Street from the Appoquinimink River west to Route 13 North.

He asked Mayor Smith if the Town has jurisdiction within the right-of-way since Main Street, Route 299 is a State highway, He responded that he believed that the Town does have jurisdiction over the trees. Quentin Schlieder noted that it would be helpful to determine the width of the right-of-ways of the various streets within Town limits, so as not to infringe on private property. He circulated a page from the Long Hill Township, NJ Shade Tree Commission which lists the widths of their right-of ways as an example to follow.

Mike Callaghan quoted from Resolution No. 2002-1 which on page one reads "**Street Tree(s)** is herein defined as a tree or shrub located on land lying between the curb or the edge of any street, lane or alley and the sidewalk, or if there is no sidewalk, the land lying between the curb or edge

of any street, lane or alley and a line one foot behind the line of utility poles along the street, lane or alley.”

Jeff Pyle initiated a brief discussion with Mayor Smith regarding the maintenance of sidewalks and whether the Town or the property owner was responsible. He especially expressed concern if damage occurred from the roots of a Town owned tree. The matter was deferred for further consideration.

Written Master Plan for Care, Preservation, Pruning, Planting, Replacing & Removal

Quentin Schlieder recommended a two year Master Plan for 2022-2024. He circulated a binder containing sample plans from Glen Ridge, NJ, Ithaca, NY and City of Plainfield, NJ. While some of these are professionally produced and quite sophisticated, he thought they might provide some guidance for developing the plan for Odessa. He offered to prepare a framework for the plan using the responsibilities outlined in Ordinance No 2012-1 which could be the basis for further discussion at the Commission’s next meeting. There was general consensus this would be a prudent way to proceed.

Grants

Mr. Schlieder reported that he had done some research on the Delaware Urban & Community Forestry Grants. Due to the scarce resources to establish and maintain new plantings of trees, it is recommended that safety tree work at the municipal park be considered. It is recommended that the efforts and resources of the Commission be applied across several neighborhoods with inventory on Main Street, plantings on High Street and Third Street and pruning at Municipal Park. Neeka Grove offered some other suggestions for watering new tree plantings based on her past experience with the Tree Commission. These will be detailed in the new Master Plan. Michael Callaghan noted that there is a dedicated group of volunteers who assist in the maintenance of the municipal park who also should be considered as a potential resource.

Since the Park pruning project is an option, Quentin Schlieder distributed Bulletin 6 of the *Tree City USA Bulletin* series – *How to Hire an Arborist*. He noted that it contains excellent guidance on how to select prospective contractors. The matter will be reviewed further at the November Commission meeting.

Although there is nothing on line regarding the 2023 grant cycle, he anticipated the guidelines and deadlines would probably be similar to those for the 2022 grant cycle which included the following:

- In 2022 Delaware’s Urban and Community Forestry Program accepted applications for up to \$5,000 in matching grants for tree planting and management projects on public land and community open space.
- Matching grants range from \$500 up to \$5,000
- Requires a 50-50 match in cash (non-federal funds) or in-kind services
- One project in one category: tree planting or tree management (hazard removal, inventory, or pruning)
- Project must be on public land or open space
- EIN Number required – no payment to individuals

- Site visit by urban forestry staff must take place before project submission
- Site visits requested at least a week ahead by emailing the UCF Program
- Deadline to apply via the online application form was March 4, 2022 at 4:30 p.m.

Mayor Smith confirmed that \$3,000.00 has been budgeted by the Town for tree work. Neeka Grove emphasized the importance of the value of the in-kind services toward the required match, which would help stretch and leverage the available financial resources.

It was recommended that Kesha Braunskill, Delaware Urban and Community Forestry Program Coordinator, be invited to a future meeting. The Commission members concurred.

Community Outreach and Education

Quentin Schlieder briefly reviewed the following ideas for fulfilling the community and outreach function of the Tree Commission:

- Plan a pruning workshop for this autumn and a tree identification walk for early next spring. He noted that he had offered similar activities during his service on the Smyrna Shade Tree Commission. The sessions were quite popular and served to attract and train volunteers.
- Develop a pamphlet about the Tree Commission. Quentin Schlieder circulated one he had prepared for the Smyrna Shade Tree Commission, on which he served.
- Develop policies and responses to FAQ's about the town's trees. He distributed samples from Haddonfield and Linden.
- Develop a Facebook page. Mayor Smith added that during the last tax bill, residents were asked to provide an email contact and this directory could be used to distribute information.
- Plan Arbor Day Celebration including a tree planting dedicated to an event or person, a distribution of a seedling to each attendee and acknowledgement of a significant tree specimen.
- Prepare for Tree City USA designation. Quentin Schlieder distributed a survey to determine if the Town would qualify which will be reviewed at the November meeting. This suggestion also should be explored with Ms. Braunskill of the Delaware Forest Service.

Neeka Grove suggested that a plant and tree seedling sale might be useful in raising funds and public awareness and support.

Chairman Minear asked members of the Commission to propose any other initiatives which could be considered.

Other Business

Quentin Schlieder briefly discussed establishing a Tribute Tree Program and suggested that a pilot project on 3rd street near the playground be undertaken. He circulated a prototype of the marker and certificate for the project and added that he will donate and plant a 7' containerized Sugar Maple once the location is authorized. He also distributed guidelines of a similar project in Parker Colorado. The location has been designated with white utility flags and Chairman Minear encouraged members to inspect the location. She will order a ticket from Miss Utility before the planting takes place. Quentin Schlieder provided her with the Miss Utility pamphlet which includes information on how to obtain a ticket.

In light of the possibility of two rather significant development projects, Quentin Schlieder recommended the concept of tree banking be discussed at next meeting. Under this concept, if a developer requests relief from any of the landscaping requirements of the zoning ordinance, he can make a monetary contribution toward fulfilling the obligation elsewhere on public property within the Town. Quentin Schlieder will email information from Cherry Hill Township, NJ and general information about such programs to the Commissioners prior to the next meeting. Neeka Grove offered to explore the current landscape requirements for new development. If the Commission develops such a program, it will require action be the Town Council.

There was brief discussion about Quentin Schlieder's concern over projects like the inventory where if a quorum (3) Commissioners participate it may be considered a public meeting and should be publicly noticed to conform to the requirements of Delaware's Sunshine law. This might also apply to a pruning workshop, volunteer event or even the proposed plant sale. Mayor Smith advised that it would be prudent to post the activity on the bulletin board at the Post Office; however, as long as no public business is transacted and no official actions are taken, he didn't believe this should be a problem.

Commissioners were encouraged to propose fundraising ideas for discussion at the November meeting

Next Meeting Date and Time

Chairman Minear announced that the next meeting of the Odessa Tree Commission is scheduled for Tuesday, November 8, 2022 at 7:00 p.m. at the Academy Building. Mayor Smith noted that this is Election Day; however, he didn't perceive any problem at this time.

Adjournment

There being no further business, Chairman Minear entertained a motion to adjourn the Meeting. Quentin Schlieder moved to adjourn the October 11, 2022 meeting of the Odessa Shade Tree Commission at 8:12 p.m. Neeka Grove seconded the motion which was adopted unanimously by voice vote.

Respectfully submitted,

Quentin Schlieder
Secretary