



Princeton Shade Tree Commission

Meeting Minutes

July 25, 2017

Monument Hall-East Conference Room
1 Monument Drive, Princeton, NJ 08540

Present

Board Members:

Sharon Ainsworth, Chair
Lily Krauss, Vice Chair
Patricia Frawley
Pat Hyatt
Bernie Miller, Council
Liaison
Alexandra Radbil
Janet Stern

Staff:

Lorraine Konopka, Arborist
Ben Strauss, Recording
Secretary

Guests:

Ray Hirshman, Field Wood
Manor
Lisa Maddox, Lawyer (town)
Christopher DeGrezia,
Lawyer (102 Elm St.
owner)
Scott Tapp, Arborist (Elm St.
residents)
Giovanni (Elm St. residents)

Absent

Board Members:

Victoria Airgood
Welmoet Bok van Kammen

I. Opening Statement

At 5:00 PM, Chair Ainsworth calls the meeting to order.

II. Roll Call

Chair Ainsworth calls roll.

III. Public Comment

Chair Ainsworth recognizes the member of the public. Mr. Hirschman, a resident at Field Wood Manor, expresses concern about the ash tree plan, particularly regarding the 80 ash trees at Field Wood Manor. Arborist Konopka says that the Field Wood Manor ash trees has been placed on the ash tree injection list. So, if the town approves money for injections, her Department will inject the trees at Field Wood Manor as part of their first round of injections.

IV. Minutes

1) March 22, 2016

Vice Chair Krauss motions to approve the March 2016 minutes under review. Ms. Stern seconds. The committee unanimously approves the March 2016 minutes.

2) April 19, 2016

Ms. Frawley motions to approve the April 2016 minutes. The committee unanimously approves the April 2016 minutes.

3) June 27, 2017

Ms. Frawley motions to approve the June 2017 minutes. The committee unanimously approves the June 2017 minutes.

V. Budget Update

The committee does not hear a budget update.

VI. New Business

1) 775 State Road (Bottle King) Major Site Plan with Variances Planning Board Review – (L. Krauss)

Vice Chair Krauss says she drafted a letter on the 775 State Road application. She considers it a well thought out plan (for instance, permeable pavement on wetlands).

A member asks about the condition of the nine trees to be removed. Vice Chair Krauss says the trees have been neglected for many years.

Result: Adopted [Unanimous]

Move: Frawley

Second: Krauss

Ayes: Ainsworth, Krauss, Frawley, Hyatt, Radbil, Stern

VII. Old Business

1) Tree Removal Application Denial (102 Elm Road; Block 8501/Lot 3 and 5) – (L. Konopka)

Mr. DeGrazia from Drinker Biddle introduces himself as the lawyer representing the 102 Elm Road owners. He says that his clients tried to follow the correct procedures throughout the project and his clients did not authorize any improper tree removal (his clients recognize that a contractor, when resurfacing stucco on the house, removed two close trees above the eight inches that require a permit and that someone accidentally removed a third tree. A member expresses that the owners still have responsibility for removing those trees, even if they did not authorize their removal).

Mr. DeGrazia says he talked with Arborist Konopka yesterday. He now wants to come to a mutual understanding with the committee on a path forward. For instance, the owners created a new tree plan. They now have modified their original tree removal permit to only remove nineteen trees (save five additional trees).

Mr. DeGrazia discusses Arborist Konopka's request for an existing tree plan. Mr. DeGrazia introduces Mr. Tapp, an arborist from Bartlett Tree Experts. Mr. Tapp walked the property and confirmed the trees' statuses. Mr. Tapp hands members an existing tree map. Members ask Mr. Tapp about the map, particularly the distance of the trees from the property line.

Vice Chair Krauss criticizes the map's scaling, because the map does not show the distance between trees and the property line. She thinks (from her walk of the property) that some trees are far enough away from the property line to not need to be taken down for the wall's trenching. For instance, she thought one Norway spruce might be greater than 10 feet from the property line but she cannot tell that information from the map. She wants a plot plan of existing trees. She does not think that committee has enough information to make a decision (Ms. Maddox says that, if the other members agree they lack the information necessary for a decision, they could make a denial without prejudice and then the owners could submit a new application).

A member asks why the owners want to remove trees farther from the property line (that the wall's trenching would not affect). Mr. DeGrazia says his client wants new planting there and the current trees would block light to those new plants.

The 84 Elm neighbors, the Fines, wrote a letter of support for removing the trees. They do not like that the trees leave debris and block the sun. They also worry that one of the trees might fall over in a storm and damage their house (Arborist Konopka says that, as healthy trees, they would not fall down like that). The 114 Elm neighbors, the Merritts, like the wall, because they think it will improve the value of their property. They also dislike the current trees, because they block the light.

Arborist Konopka asks if the Merritts referred to the trees on the owner's property (near 84 Elm) or on their own property. Arborist Konopka clarifies that the committee also has concerns that

trenching for the wall on the 114 side will negatively affect the trees on the Merritts' property. Mr. DeGrazia says Ms. Carco, his client and 102 property owner, spoke to the Merritts on two occasions. The Merritts liked the wall. About the Merritts' trees, Ms. Carco said she would pay to replant any negatively affected and the Merritts accepted that proposal.

Mr. DeGrazia thinks a new engineering technique, bridging pylons with steel beams to reduce the amount of trenching (fourteen feet between pylons, seven feet from the center of the trees), will prevent most of the damage to the trees on the Merritts' property. The steel beam will lie six inches above the ground. Mr. Giovanni says the technique has worked successfully; he checked recently where he used it five years ago. Arborist Konopka expresses concern that the trees' drip lines (which denotes the tree's root zone) extend beyond seven feet. She likes the proposal but worries that it still will impact the Merritts' trees. She would want a tree inventory of those trees to figure out which trees to prioritize.

Chair Ainsworth asks if Arborist Konopka wants to inspect the Merritts' property. Arborist Konopka says she can inspect it for an accurate tree count but she does not know if the Merritts have any concern about their trees, especially given they have placed their house on sale.

Arborist Konopka asks if the owners have considered any other barrier, instead of a six foot, cinderblock wall. Other Elm residents do not have walls along their property. Mr. DeGrazia reiterates that the owners want a wall and do not want a fence (for aesthetic reasons).

Chair Ainsworth expresses that the committee should consider the resulting loss of tree canopy, with its negative natural impact. Arborist Konopka agrees and adds that the committee must also consider the streetscape and the resulting negative aesthetic impact (it will look less like a mature neighborhood, without those mature trees).

Mr. DeGrazia says that any building requires removing trees and the tree ordinance recognizes that fact. He considers the type of tree canopy a personal preference. A member expresses concerns that the landscaping plan's new trees (thin Cryptomerias and ornamental Arborvitaes) will not add much to the canopy. She also thinks the plan could have more diversity and shade trees.

A member worries about setting a bad precedent if the committee lets the owners remove the trees. She wants a compromise of saving more than five trees, so there is a grove of them. Members discuss saving specific trees.

Mr. DeGrazia says the owners would agree to a compromise of keeping the trees closest to the street (a cluster of Norway spruce and a few other trees) and removing the ones in back. Most members agree with that proposal (saving twelve trees).

Motion that 102 Elm Road property owners will save (according to the map) all of the green, all of the yellow, 3, 4 5, 6, 7 of the red and, if bridging is needed between 3, 4, 5, client will look into it, and client will look into bridging on other side, bridging subject to Construction Department's approval

Result: Adopted

Move: Krauss

Second: Frawley

Ayes: Ainsworth, Krauss, Frawley, Radbil

Nays: Stern

Abstain: Hyatt

Ms. Maddox says she will send Mr. DeGrazia a letter with a summary of the committee's discussion.

Mr. DeGrazia thanks members. Members thank him.

2) Review of Draft EAB Management Plan – (S. Ainsworth)

The committee does not discuss.

3) Ash Tree Treatment/Removal – (L. Konopka)

Arborist Konopka reports that her Department will open the bids on Thursday (July 31). They will then go through a process to find the most responsible, acceptable bidder.

4) EAB Adopt-A-Tree Program and Tree Fund – (P. Frawley/A. Radbil)

Members discuss notifying participants about tree injections, possibly with door hangers.

Arborist Konopka says participants need advanced notification, probably a week before, in case they want to back out from the injection. If they want to back out, her Department will move that tree from the injection list to the removal list.

VIII. Other

1) Brochures

Ms. Stern says she handed out the brochures to about twelve real estate agencies, the library, town hall, and some tree services. She gives some to members and Arborist Konopka.

Ms. Hyatt says she also found some volunteers to translate the brochure into Spanish. When the volunteers complete their work, she will give it to Ms. Most who will give it the printer.

IX. Adjournment

The committee adjourned at 7:28 pm.

Minutes Respectfully Submitted by Ben Strauss, Recording Secretary

Date Approved: 9/26/17