

Abington Township Shade Tree Commission Meeting Notes June 17, 2015

Participants:

Joe Ascenzi, Tim Gilmour, Ed Hayes, John Kennedy, Anna Nicholaides, Rita Stevens, Kathy Weir

1. TD Green Streets Project

We reviewed the project budget vs. spend. To date we have spent \$3,496 on trees and supplies. This leaves a working budget of \$10,866 for planting materials, supplies and services, and \$1,200 for evaluation and signage. PHS is on track for delivering training and consulting services for a project total of \$5,790.

We discussed the significant push needed during May and June to keep all new trees watered. Special thank to Tim Gilmour for taking the lead on this. In early June, we purchased 2 watering tanks with wagons and hoses that will ease the job and enable us to involve a larger set of volunteers.

- Rita will ask Barley VanClief for the list of newly trained Tree Tenders and invite them to participate in watering through the summer months., and continue to volunteer with us for fall planting. We will continue to use Signup Genius to coordinate volunteer signup.

Rita shared input from PHS employees Barley VanClief and Emma Melvin regarding desirable design characteristics should we decide to include rain garden features in this project.

We discussed how to best allocate spending among additional trees within Grove Park, the bus stop area of the Roslyn Valley Shopping Plaza (RVSP), and private residences within the project area. To arrive at a final allocation, we will complete the following actions prior to the July STC meeting:

- Kathy and Ed will complete a drive-by survey of residential streets to arrive at an estimate of total number of suitable planting sites, broken down by tree size (small, medium, large)
- Charlie, Glen, Tim and Rita will develop a planting proposal for additional trees within Grove Park.
- Rita will contact the township Engineer and the RVSP owner to assess the feasibility of modifying the bus stop planting area to include rain garden features.

Anticipating the need to enroll homeowners in the program, Anna and Rita will develop flyers to be distributed at homes with appropriate planting sites. Each flyer will include specific recommendations for tree selection and placement to ensure “right tree right place”.

Given the high cost and marginal quality of bare root trees we purchased from Schichtel's Nursery for the spring planting, we decided to purchase bare root trees for completing the TD Green Streets project from J Frank Schmidt and Son Co. Joe will provide a list of trees available for fall, and anticipate that we will need to order in late July through early August. Minimum order is \$2000, which is well within our project budget. To streamline our work, we anticipate including any additional trees for fall planting with this order.

The fall planting date involving TD Bank employees has been scheduled for Thursday, November 12. We will revisit this once we have a firm schedule for delivery of the planting stock. Rita will advise the funder of this contingency.

2. Ardsley Wildlife Sanctuary Forest Stewardship Project

Rita and Tim provided an update on activities completed in the past two months to begin to frame a forest stewardship plan for the Ardsley Wildlife Sanctuary. They include

- a series of walks by STC volunteers Tim Gilmour, Jim Rankin, Rita Stevens, Glen Stevens and Kathy Weir; and Eagle Scout candidate James Currie, to create a concept document that begins to frame the forest stewardship plan
- a 3-hour site assessment with DCNR Service Forester Jessica Salter, that begins to delineate forest management units
- a 5-hour site assessment with PA Game Commission's Wildlife Diversity Biologist, Dan Mummert; and Western PA Conservancy scientist, Betsy Leppo, who has extensive experience assisting landowners with vernal pool and wetland best practices
- a meeting with Abington Township Engineer Michael Powers to learn about the Edge Hill Tyson Reconstruction project, which involves capturing and diverting stormwater through the sanctuary; and to learn of how we might integrate the AWS stewardship project with the township MS4 program to manage stormwater

We will combine learning's from all of the above into a general planning framework, supported by a mapping of potential forest managements, for further discussion at our July STC meeting. BSA scouts are to work with us under James Currie's' direction during the next several months to map key areas and trails using GPS technology.

We recognize that this project will require an expanded volunteer base, and that much of the anticipated restoration work will require services beyond the capabilities of volunteers to get the invasives in check and meadow areas to a mow-able state. Further, we will need to install deer fencing to protect all newly planted areas. Given these factors, , we will seek to identify a range of resources, including fundraising to supplement township and volunteer resources. Joe suggested that we contact North Creek Nurseries to seek assistance with site analysis and development of plant lists once we have the forest stewardship plan framed.

We went on to discuss the Edge Hill Tyson Reconstruction Project. Joe expressed a strong concern about the potential impact of killing a very large number of mature trees, including 100-year-old oak trees, due to the number and placement of the proposed storm water inlets along Edge Hill Road and Tyson Avenue. Trees would decline over a number of years (e.g. 4-5 years) and there would be a significant financial burden to remove the dead trees, negative impact on stormwater management due to significant loss of canopy, risk of power outages related to declining or dead trees, and increased prominence of invasive species. The group questioned whether these issues have been adequately weighed in the project cost-to-benefit analysis.

- Members of the STC will attend the Edge Hill Tyson Avenue Reconstruction Project information meeting on June 25 at 6:30 PM at the Ardsley Community Center.

3. Plant List to Support Zoning Ordinance

We reviewed in detail the proposed new categories and plant list provided by County planner Michael Narcowich. We found several of the categories to be confusing, and recommend that they be refined and reordered for clarity and ease of use. Further we find the need to add a significant number of species, particularly native species, that are not included in this draft.

- Rita will contact Mike Narcowich and Mark Pennecale to discuss these concerns, then update the draft to incorporate these improvements. STC members will review and comment. Target completion is June 30, so that this new draft can be included in the Draft 3 zoning ordinance.

4. Advisory and updates

- a. **Grove Park-** we would like to understand township procedures for weed control along the gabions that line the main stream within Grove Park. Rita will follow up.
- b. **Business Landscape Contract for Tree Trimming-** Tara Wehmeyer asked for STC assistance in creating language for the township contract, which is out for bid at the end of June. The group finds the current contract language to be extremely weak, and recommends that boilerplate ANSI standards be used. Rita will provide this language.

For the future, the STC strongly recommends that the township establish routine support of a consulting arborist. Joe and Rita will provide a description of the scope of services needed and an associated cost estimate.

- c. **Noble Walkability Audit-** the public is invited to participate in a walkability audit of the Noble transit area on June 30, 4:00 to 6:30 PM. This will begin at the Curds and Whey Restaurant. 12-3 members of the STC plan to participate.