

## **BYRAM TOWNSHIP ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION MINUTES, JUNE 25, 2009**

The meeting was called to order at 7:45 p.m. Present were Chair Sheila Hall, Daven Baez, Adam Rosenberg, Caryn Segal, Michele Rehse, Dawn Boyer, Council Liaison Scott Olson and Secretary Margaret McGarrity.

### **Also present and first on the agenda were Tom Meyer and Jeff Pichet of the Sussex County Shade Tree Commission.**

Tom is also on the Branchville Shade Tree Commission and had taken Sheila and Margaret on a tour of Branchville's tree-planting sites (will do another tour for other ECers), and Jeff is a tree scientist working for Bartlett Tree Services, a world-wide company. Tom and Jeff advised the EC on the No Net Loss tree planting grant available to Byram and how to approach the possibility of getting grant money for up to approximately 1,000 trees.

Concerning buying/planting in general:

- Putting the right tree in the right location is most important.
- As trees leave the nursery, they often lose a lot of their root ball—including the finest roots that are the most important (smaller trees may retain a better root ball). Ideally, there should be at least one foot of root ball diameter for every one inch of trunk diameter—thus the 2-2.5" caliper trees required under No Net Loss would have at least 2-2.5' root balls (weight c. 400-500 pounds and are heavy enough to need a back-hoe).
- Good nurseries 'root prune' trees to help manage their growth and minimize losses when they are moved.
- When planted, the root flair should show. The tree tissues below the flair are different. 'Mulch volcanoes' cover tissues that should be in the air. Do a 'mulch donut' instead (Branchville uses wood chips, chipped by the Township's tree crew from prunings and tree cleanups).
- Some trees are more sensitive to poor planting etc. "Maples are known for killing themselves," Tom reports.
- Avoid planting all the same species—such monocultures are susceptible to pests (wooly adelgid, emerald ash borer, Asian longhorn beetle) and other problems.
- In Branchville, the Shade Tree Commission plants 20-30 trees each year (typically on Arbor Day, when this takes about 4 hours) and now have 700 trees in 70 varieties. After planting, they water all summer (five gallons/week), prune suckers and broken branches. DPW has 300-gallon tank on back of pickup truck; summer help does the watering. Tree-gators are expensive and still have to be kept filled every few days. All of their trees survived. Also all-volunteer planting—Milford, PA.

- Jeff does hazardous tree seminars: “If you shake a tree hard enough, a lawyer falls out.” Possible Tri-County Forum on this for homeowners? Rubber mallet and 1/8” drillbit to check for hollow trees.

Advice from Tom and Jeff on the No Net Loss project for Byram:

- Grant allows us to do the work ourselves or hire outside firm @\$300 per tree (planting plan, tree purchase, planting, maintaining for two years). This is not enough money to maintain through two years, according to Tom and Jeff.
- Could we split the tasks between in-house and outside? Expert oversight is important. Recommended arborists in Sussex County—David Wright and Barbara Abita (973-948-2090)..
- Step one—send some soil samples typical of our planting sites to Rutgers for analysis.
- Step two—select appropriate trees. Purchase from E.P. Jansen nursery, Vernon. Or Princeton Nurseries, Allentown (still in business?). Choose for caliper, grade, how well pruned at nursery, good pattern of branching.
- Trees of 2-2.5” caliper should cost c. \$150-200. Smaller trees at risk for vandalism and deer rub. Might also buy a few larger trees for important spots.
- Margaret will check on grant requirements—can we use grant money to get a 300-gallon watering tank and summer help? Can we pay for more expert help and fewer trees? Can we buy some larger trees for more money? Can grant period be extended to give us more spring planting seasons? Can we plant trees on private property, as they do most of the trees in Branchville and Sussex Borough (Branchville does not have any formal agreements with homeowners)?
- Plant at correct level—root flare showing; most roots are within the top 18” of soil; protect area around and under tree; add a transition soil zone between the native soils and the root-ball (mixture of native soil, good topsoil, organic matter). Plant in early spring; not summer/fall. Orient trees in same compass direction as at the nursery (put a ribbon on the north side of the tree). For a 2.5” ball, an 8’ pit.
- Watering through the first frost is critical. Trees often die in the second or third year from initial stress. Easier to water if we plant in groupings rather than scattered throughout town.
- Prune and shape during first few years. Tom and Jeff could do mini-seminar on pruning, and Tom will donate some good Japanese pruning saws.
- Try planting a few 100 trees in the first spring season and then decide whether to go for the full 1000 trees possible under the grant. Twenty trees/day over six weeks in the spring. Get professional oversight. Store 100 trees at the old leaf dump near C.O. Johnson and plant as we can. Can dig holes months or weeks beforehand—put barrels in holes to prevent accidents (hire contractor to dig the holes). Dig shallow so that we can hand-dig a bit deeper if necessary—trees should sit on undisturbed soils.
- Or buy two-three trees and do a practice run.
- Very important for EC members/Township employees to immediately start the training required under the Community Forestry Plan.
- Inventory the trees using GPS and keep spread-sheet on conditions, maintenance, problems.

**May minutes:** motion by Adam; second by Michele; unanimous.

**Other business:**

PSE&G powerline project: Scott provided an update. The Highlands Council just declared the project consistent with the Highlands Regional Master Plan and accepted PSE&G's offer of \$18.6 million to offset environmental harm. NJDEP still would have to OK the exemption. The Highlands Council voted 8-2 to accept the revised PSE&G plan and the \$18.6 million; many others believe it is a sell-out and a bad precedent.

Riverbank Sparta: They got a preliminary permit from FERC to pursue further testing. Have not presented an alternate transmission route yet. Byram's Council intervened, along with others.

Reprint of updated Trail Guide: Ideas thus far:

- Blow-ups of specific trails;
- Mile-markers to tell where trailheads leave the roadways;
- Get copy of Mendham OS/Trails booklet (Margaret to call ANJEC);
- Change route of Highlands Traffic;
- Planning Board approval of Hudson Greenway; Nick Cutrone wants to help map trail on this parcel as he lives near the Colby Cemetery and gets people trespassing across his land;
- Check Adam's GPS info, sent to Margaret;
- Concentrate on content and revised layout if necessary or even go to a booklet;
- Develop a large, more visible trailhead marker;
- Margaret to check on how much we set aside from last year and what may be available from this year;
- Put the final product on the website, including the links to trails in neighboring towns.

EC section on Township website: Scott will send to Sue the information that was on our section before the Township website was changed. Sue and Margaret will develop and maintain the new site. Decide what to include. Do include the list of grants obtained by the EC.

Trails and streams: Arnell open space parcel—Brenda Holzinger of NYNJTC sent a map showing the parcel lines and the trail, which appears to stray onto contiguous parcels. Margaret will get Chris to check for accurate boundaries vis a vis the trail.

Organizing the work on Arnell: get the Open Space and Recreation Committees to send volunteers also. How to do? Pick up the litter along the road (get DPW to use Police ATV's to pick up litter deeper into the parcel?). Was this litter mentioned in the environmental appraisal done for the Open Space Committee in preparation for purchasing this parcel? Adam will visit the parcel to scope out what we need to do; Margaret to send him a copy of the grant application. Get help from SLAP?

Letter to Chris about lake management plans under Highlands: No response yet.

Lackawanna Cutoff: Comment period on new sections of Environmental Assessment due July 17; Scott will send the link to all and Margaret will email our initial comments to all. We should compare to the Highlands ERI maps for priority preservation areas and for C-1 streams/tributaries. Assemble draft comments before next EC meeting. Margaret will ask Joe Sabatini who should send and sign the letter.

Tri-County Regional Forums: Dawn will organize the summer workshop with Foodshed Alliance at SALT (July, September?).

June 14 trail maintenance workshop with NYNJTC at SALT—Adam all day; Sue and Dawn for the a.m. In p.m. out on the Arnell trail and did several 100' of sidehilling and stone steps. Margaret will get summary of attendance etc. from Brenda Holzinger and add to file on EC events.

Quarry buffers: Highlands ERI map shows connection with C-1 segment of Lubbers Run, which should mean 300-foot buffers for the wetlands near the quarry. Margaret will assemble the information.

Sustainable NJ-Walmart grant application for Village Center Economic Development: We did not get this grant—very competitive and grant went to cities and large towns.

Highlands ERI: Margaret will finish in time. Sue helped out while Margaret was on vacation. This is just a basic start; corrections and additional text and integration with our existing NRI comes later.

Governor's Environmental Excellence Awards: Joe Sabatini asking if the EC has ideas; Sheila will send requirements to all for consideration.

EC chair: Must submit our recommendation before July 6 to the new mayor. Sheila? Sue? They will discuss.

Musconetcong Management Plan: Michele signed up for the Recreation and Scenic Committee, but she cannot make the August 18 meeting. Ask Rowena's husband Vince (Michele will email them).

**Adjourn:** 10:30 p.m. Motion by Adam; second by Dawn; unanimous.