

Borough of Emerson, NJ
Shade Tree Commission
Meeting, August 14, 2019

This meeting, held in the Chambers of the Municipal building located at 146 Linwood Ave, was opened by Councilman Ken Hoffman at 7:30 pm. Mr. Steve Frassa read the Preamble.

Roll call was taken

Fred Maltzan	Absent
Jessica Fricke	Present
Maria Buchert	Present
Craig Bosch	Present
Steve Frassa	Present
Councilman Hoffman	Present

Councilman Hoffman gave the Oath of Office to Mr. Bosch and Ms. Friske.

Councilman Hoffman asked if there were any nominations for Chair or Vice-chair of the Shade Tree Commission. Since there was a minimal attendance of the Commission members, the following motions to table the nominations/elections to the September meeting were made;

Motion to table the nomination/election of Chairperson, was made by Mr. Bosch, second by Mr. Frassa, by roll call all members were in favor.

Motion to table the nomination/election of Vice Chairperson was made by Ms. Fricke, second was made by Mr. Frassa, by roll call vote all members were in favor.

Since the meeting needed a chairperson, Councilman Hoffman asked for a motion to appoint Ms. Buchert as temporary chair to proceed with this meeting, which was made by Mr. Bosch, second by Mr. Frassa, by roll call, all members voted yes.

Councilman Hoffman stated he had taken the minutes at the last meeting and wanted Mr. Frassa to review them before they were accepted by the Commission.

The first order of business was the selection of a Tree Inspector. Councilman Hoffman told the Commission they would need to go into an Executive meeting to conduct the interviews of the candidates. Mr. Bosch made a motion to close the meeting to the public, second was made by Ms. Fricke, by roll call, all voted yes. The room was cleared and the meeting closed at 7:52 pm. Mr. Frassa also left the Chambers as he was a candidate and could not interview or vote on the matter.

At 8:49 the meeting was reopened and the public was invited to return to the Chambers.

Mr. Bosch made a motion to appoint Mr. Steve Frassa as Tree Inspector for the Borough, second was offered by Ms. Fricke. Ms. Fricke, Ms. Buchert & Mr. Bosch voted in favor.

Councilman Hoffman thanked all of the candidates for their applications and for attending the meeting. A notice would be sent to the candidate that was unable to attend.

Councilman Hoffman told the Commission that since the meeting would be quite lengthy he would like to change the order of the Agenda, to allow the public to appear before they continued with Commission business. Mr. Frassa made the motion to change the order of the agenda, second was made by Ms. Fricke, by roll call vote all voted in agreement.

A motion was made by Mr. Frassa to open the floor to the public, second was made by Ms. Fricke, by roll call vote, all were in favor.

Mr. David Cavella of 147 Ackerman Ave approached the podium. He told the members there are a line of trees on his property which are leaning dangerously, as well as dropping branches. He said he was concerned for the safety of the children in the area as well as homes. He said there has been a significant increase in the number of branches that have been falling.

Councilman Hoffman advised Mr. Cavalla and the audience that the Shade Tree Commission had been recently reinstated and the first meeting had been held in July. He said there had been many complaints received since the reinstatement. Some of the earlier correspondence may have been directed to the Environmental Commission or the Borough Administrator.

Mr. Frassa stated that he had visited the site, and agreed the trees needed to come down. One tree which is on Borough property has grown into other trees and cannot be safely removed without removing the other trees. L Mr. Frassa also mentioned that there is a fence in between the entwined trees. Mr. Frassa continued the trees should be removed and replaced.

Mr. Frassa wanted the Commission and residents to know that going forward Emerson would be proactive in regard to inspection and, where possible, treatment, if not, removal.

A neighbor whose home on Kensington, abuts Mr. Cavalla's property to the rear, has lived in town since 1976. She said the trees in question are very tall and sway dangerously during storms. The trees are on the crest of the hill and have no protection when a storm hits.

Mr. Hoffman thanked them and told the residents it makes it much easier on the commission when they appear and state the problems.

Mr. Izzo of 75 Park approached the podium, he said he had emailed earlier in June and July about the problem with the tree on the front of the property. Mr. Izzo said Mr. Frassa had come to inspect the tree, where it was lifting the fence and leaning toward the street, with fallen branches.

Mr. Frassa said there are three sycamores, 2 are dead and need to be removed; the other needs trimming, and has a fungus. He confirmed that the trees are lifting the walkway causing a tripping hazard. He said the sycamores are the wrong trees to be planted in that area.

Councilman Hoffman thanks Mr. & Mrs. Izzo and advised them an email would be sent to them advising them of the decision of the Commission. Email: nsperdu@aol.com.

Mr. David O of 980 Soldier Hill Rd approved the podium. He said there are 2 trees at the end of his driveway that are causing a safety hazard as they are blocking the line of site. His biggest concern is for personal safety, when backing out of his driveway. Councilman Hoffman asked Mr. O if he were a new resident. Mr. O replied the home is the property of his wife and family. Mr. Frassa said he has inspected the trees, which are leaning toward the street. He said the cars fly by in that area and Mr. O cannot see out, nor can approaching cars see him. He confirmed the situation is an "accident waiting to happen." Councilman Hoffman advised Mr. O he would be advised by email of the decision of the Commission. Odavid@gmail.com

Since there were no other residents in the audience, a motion was made to close the floor to the public by Mr. Bosch, second by Ms. Fricke, by roll call vote, all were in favor.

Councilman Hoffman told the commission that due to an error in publication of the Secretarial position, they would not meet on those applications at this meeting. The Secretarial position would be reviewed, candidates interviewed and appointed at the September meeting. He asked if the members wanted the ad run again or were there sufficient applications. Mr. Bosch wanted to know if they could contact each other in regard to the applicants. Councilman Hoffman told them they could not make a decision by email. They would have to interview the candidates at the next meeting, and then make a decision. Mr. Bosch said there was no need to run another ad, Ms. Buchert agreed. He advised Mr. Frassa that he would be eligible to be involved in the meeting and selection process.

Councilman Hoffman suggested they come up with a list of questions they would like to ask of each candidate, so they are prepared for the September meeting.

Ms. Buchert referred to correspondence that had been received in regard to a Champion tree in the Borough. Mr. Frassa said it was a most unusual tree, which appears to have been "trained" to grow the way it is. Ms. Buchert asked if it was a Borough tree, who takes care of it, who determines the age, condition, etc. She wanted to know how the tree was determined to be a champion tree, who determines the age and measurements? Mr. Frassa said there was a state forester who determined the age to be 300 yrs. He continued that it was a Borough tree and he would do his best to be sure it is preserved. Mr. Bosch left the meeting at 9:25 pm.

When asked about historic preservation, Councilman Hoffman said it would be an involved process. The Historic Committee would have to send a proposal to the Land Use Board who would have to change the Master Plan. In the end the Shade Tree Commission would have jurisdiction. Mr. Frassa told the Board the background of the tree, which was on the "Graff" family property. His concern is development and the builders taking the tree down. Councilman Hoffman asked if a copy of the certificate could be obtained, to help them preserve the tree.

Ms. Buchert said the Commission needed more information on how a “champion” tree was determined and how it could be protected. Councilman Hoffman asked Ms. Buchert to do some research to obtain the information for the members.

Ms. Buchert then went on to the Ordinance by-law changes. One of the most important changes was the right of the Chairperson to cancel meetings. However, there must be a legitimate reason given, such as a lack of quorum, inclement weather. It is important that members RSVP when receiving notices about upcoming meetings. The Commission Secretary should be advised no later than 48 hours before the scheduled meeting. Mr. Frassa made a motion to accept the changes to the bylaws and present a letter to the Governing Board, second was made by Ms. Fricke. By roll call vote, all were in favor.

Ms. Buchert asked about the Tree Management form and what it contains. Councilman Hoffman said the form asked for information on where the tree(s) are located, why they are to be removed, will they be replaced. There is a formula of no less than two to 1 replacement or \$ 150.00 per tree to be replaced. Circumference measurements are done at 4 ft. from the ground (MBH) measurement at breast height. Sick, dying or diseased trees are not included.

Mr. Frassa made a motion to defer the Commission committee appointments until a full membership was present. Second was made by Ms. Fricke, all were in favor.

Councilman Hoffman reviewed the budgetary numbers (\$37,950.00) as well as the Escrow funds (\$23,727.00) for tree replacement that are available. He also mentioned that additional funds are expected from the developer of 166 Palisade Ave.

Mr. Frassa advised the members that trying to transplant a 3 inch tree is not an easy task and more than likely the tree will die, due to the shock to its system. He said by planting 1 inch trees, the success rate is much higher and the trees will grow faster.

Ms. Buchert mentioned how power lines and the pruning being done by the utility companies can severely damage a tree. Mr. Frassa told the members that very often the wrong type of tree is planted in particular some of the maples that had been planted in town.

Ms. Buchert asked Mr. Frassa why he recommends the public attend meetings. Mr. Frassa replied that he wanted the members to hear from the residents the fears they have in regard to safety of home and family. He said there are many trees in the Borough that need to be inspected, but are not clearly visible, such as those on paper streets and in the woods.

A motion was made by Mr. Frassa, second was made by Ms. Frassa. all were in favor, to close the meeting to the public. The meeting was closed to the public at 9:45 pm for review of the proposed trees to be removed,

When the general meeting resumed, Mr. Frassa made a motion that Ms. Shust return as temporary secretary for the September meeting, second was made by Ms. Fricke, all were in favor.

Councilman Hoffman said emails should be sent to all candidates to come to the September meeting for an interview.

Mr. Frassa made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:27 pm, second was made by Ms. Fricke, all were in favor.

Respectfully submitted

M. Marie Shust

Temporary Commission Secretary