

Draft MEETING MINUTES
Shade Tree Committee
City Hall – 280 Grove Street, Jersey City NJ 07302
Councilmember Mira Prinz-Arey, Chair

Meeting: Jersey City Shade Tree Committee Meeting

Date/Location: 24 May 2021 – 6:30 p.m.
Videoconference remote meeting via Microsoft Teams

Attendees: **Voting Committee Members**
Denise Bailey (called in)
David Hurtle
Matthew Trump
Theodore G. Tasoulas, Vice-Chair
Marc Wesson

Non-Voting Committee Members/City Representatives
Cameron Black, Sr. Planner, Jersey City Division of Planning
John McKinney, Jersey City Department of Law
Adam Cohen, designee for Chair Prinz-Arey

Prepared By: Hana Katz

PUBLIC NOTIFICATION

Meeting notice was sent to the City Clerk's Office, the Jersey Journal, the Hudson Reporter, and el Especialito on May 21, 2021. The agenda was also posted on the website for the Office of Sustainability, <https://jcmakeitgreen.org>.

ROLL CALL

The Committee meeting commenced at 6:39 PM. Four of six voting committee members were present at the beginning of the meeting.

APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MINUTES

Minutes from the April 19 Shade Tree Committee Meeting were approved 4-1. Denise objected via text.

NEW BUSINESS

Forestry Standards – Review & Comment on Species List updates

- John McKinney, Legal Department, cleaned up draft of Forestry Standards. No major additions to Forestry Standards from last public meeting.
- The Excel sheet was previously imported to Word to track changes and updates in document. All committee members have edit access.
- Private meeting was held to create an initial Species List of approved trees for City use. List was reviewed once previously prior to today's meeting.
- Group worked together to update and review the Species List.
 - Holy tree was removed from list during the last meeting due to unpopularity.
 - Bald Cypress and Pond Cypress deemed good for park and not suitable for street planting.
 - Crape Myrtle and River Birch were removed due to ecological and maintenance concerns.
 - Evergreen trees, white cedars, and other trees native to the Pine Barrens were introduced as potential additions.
 - Undecided about addition of Sycamore Maples and London Planetrees – need Edward O'Malley input.
 - Cherry trees should be restricted in preference rankings due to their popularity.
- Promoting diversity in tree choices:
 - Residents will pick three tree species, one of which will be planted in the front of their property
 - STC may lead education campaign with the goal of promoting biodiversity and presenting alternatives to non-viable tree choices.
- Restrictions of tree species choices:
 - Salt tolerance, root and trunk diameter, height, bark and leaf shedding, maintenance and upkeep requirements, invasiveness and ecological resilience, lifespan and lifecycle, diversity requirements to promote year-round greenification.
 - Fruit trees should not be planted near streets.
- Idea introduced by committee member to separate species column into two: 1) park trees and 2) street trees, prior to incorporation into standards for decision-making purposes.

OLD BUSINESS

Forestry Standards

- John McKinney led continued review and editing of Jersey City's Forestry Standards.
- Group agreed to review and resolve comments made on Forestry Standards document.
- Comment resolved regarding space allowed for developers performing construction work near an existing street tree.
- Language:

- Changes to Contributor names:
 - Credit should read City of Jersey City as the Standards document applies to all departments and divisions. Technically, it is the division of Park Maintenance per city ordinance. The addition of the word Forestry is unofficial.
- Definitions to be expanded.
 - Ordinance 321 will be used for reference.
- Changes to Step 6 I.B.1 City-Sponsored Tree Plantings:
 - Between one and two years changed to two years per industry standards and contractor.
- Content:
 - Standards should stick to city right-of-way.
 - Appendix review needed (A-F finished, G in progress)
 - Question Raised: Is “Related Documents” section too broad?
 - Answer: The section is meant as a placeholder for future items that may be added, such as green infrastructure standards, or to be used as an additional appendix for links to resources.
 - Group is gathering State resources to add to appendix as links. (ex. NJ State forestry initiatives, JC CFMP, etc.)
 - Standards, documents, and links
 - Question Raised: How often are community forestry standards updated?
 - Answer: The content of the community forestry unit’s expired standards will reflect the City’s goals in the next update. State allowed extra time for updating due to COVID-19 pandemic.
 - State not requiring exact due dates, in progress of updating State standards.
 - The changing guidelines from the State will not impact City document creation.
 - Group will refer to Manhattan and State standards for consideration when updating content.
 - It was suggested for standards to be updated by resolution year-by-year if changes are needed in the future.
 - It was suggested to insert a static link to the document to avoid having to constantly update the link itself as the plan updates.
 - Question Raised: Should there be more specifications about tree care provided in the standards (ex. How much water the species requires)?
 - Answer: Too many specifications can make updating the document difficult. A static link to a resource would be preferred.
- Tree pits
 - Mark Wesson: “The City should establish beautification standards to control the maintenance of tree pits.”
- Obligation for care
 - Question Raised: Is the City able to penalize property owners who do not maintain trees installed by the City, even if the property owner requested the species? Why should residents be obligated to care for city-planted trees when residents pay taxes?

- If city installs the tree without a request to do so by the property owner, the city should be required to maintain it and provide resources to residents to uphold care. If a property owner requested the tree installation, the property owner should uphold a responsibility to care for the tree's needs.
- Forestry Division should create and utilize a mechanism to maintain trees.
 - The greenification project reflects the need for a Forestry Division with a staff larger than just one forester to maintain the city wholly.
- Jersey City maintenance budget a concern.
- Separate conversation needed about administrative fees and penalties for neglect.
- For larger developers, there is going to be an enforced rule for maintenance.
- Standards just address HOW to care for trees. Planning board will address legal obligations and ownership issues.
- Watering
 - Watering trucks owned by the city are unreliable and need upgrading.
 - SJC public volunteer program suggested but relying on volunteerism is not preferred for a city-installed project. Volunteers are not a legally bound, guaranteed, consistent form of care.
 - Suggested to be included in maintenance contract.

PUBLIC COMMENT

- Reni Stoll – Will the city perform an audit / inspection of existing Pear trees, which are suffering from blight? Can someone from the forestry department be appointed to evaluate the current health of the Pear trees?
 - Edward O'Malley is trying to get arborist on staff who could potentially oversee maintenance of new planted trees.
 - Additionally, discussed the potential creation of a forestry department for every ward in Jersey City and the benefits it would have to the overall greenification project.
- Debra Italiano – Why not make Forestry Standards public knowledge? Forestry Standards should address the city's resources and budget for maintenance. The city has an idea of the resources they have and its needs, but this budget and overview information has never been shared even though it was requested multiple times. SJC wants to fundraise for a new watering truck. Public needs this information to be able to support the city's projects (private-public partnerships), and the maintenance plan should highlight responsible parties, as done by other municipalities, to identify other parties such as developers who will care for the trees, besides the city. This information, plus direction for care when change of ownership occurs, should be in the Forestry Standards. Public access and right-of-way are not entirely maintained by city.
 - Answer: If a developer wants to take care of a tree, it should be decided through a legal document other than the Forestry Standards. The standards are being designed

for street right-of-way. When a development plan is introduced to the planning board, it is approved and expected to be upheld. The planning board will reference standards when approving trees on the street and appoint responsible party. We are not referring the board and the public only to the forestry standards. The planning board approval is enforceable and creates condition that must exist regardless of change of ownership. It doesn't have to be codified due to binding law. Too many variables taken into consideration. Big developers and public right-of-way do not follow the exact same standards. All must go in front of planning board to set up parameters, must consider quasi-public right-of-way.

OPEN DISCUSSION

- Suggestion by Matthew Trump to move public comment to the beginning of the meeting for convenience of the environmental commission. Public input needed, but maintenance section and overall Forestry Standards document should be completed first before opening it up to public comment. Timing of input should be managed to stay within allotted time period of the meeting. Will discuss further before next meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Jersey City Shade Tree Committee is scheduled for Monday, June 21, at 6:30 p.m. This meeting will be held remotely as a videoconference. Virtual access information will be distributed before the meeting.