

RSTC Minutes for April 20th, 2020

Meeting called to order at 1740 hours by Mr. Kissinger, Jr.

Special Notes:

- This meeting was conducted via Zoom Video Conference
- Time change from the normal 1800 hours to 1730 hours due to CoVid-19
- This meeting covers material from last month's canceled meeting originally scheduled for March 16th, 2020 due to CoVid-19. Therefore this month's meeting is covering information for the months of February, 2020 and March, 2020.

1. Attendance:

- a. Lester Kissinger, Jr. – City Arborist, Shade Tree Administrator
- b. Robert Reimer – Member, Acting Chairman
- c. David Moodhart – Member
- d. Margaret Yevics – Member
- e. Thomas Ryan – Member, came into the meeting at 1800 hours.
- f. Donna Reed – City Council, **ABSENT**
- g. Jeff Thompson – Support
- h. John Denick – Support, **ABSENT**
- i. Kyle Zeiber – Public Works Operations Manager

2. Presenters / Guests:

- a. None

3. Review the minutes from February, 2020

- a. Motion to approve the minutes was made by Mr. Reimer, seconded by Ms. Yevics
 - i. All in favor. 3y, 0n
 1. Mr. Ryan was not yet present for this vote.

4. Report of permits

- a. For February, 2020
 - i. Removals – 1
 - ii. Pruning – 1
 - iii. Planting – 0
- b. For March, 2020
 - i. Removals – 1
 - ii. Pruning – 1
 - iii. Plantings - 50

5. Arborist Report

- a. Classes Attended
 - i. The ISA Penn-Del Shade Tree Symposiums held in February
 - ii. Webinar, Why do tree branches Fail held in March

- b. 0 – Letters sent out to property owner during the month of February and March.
 - c. 1 – Notification of Violations for hazards, pruning, or violations sent out to the property owners for the month of February
 - i. Ten are in citation still since 2019
 - ii. One is in citation from 2020
 - d. (2) – Notifications of Violations for hazards, pruning, or violations sent out to the property owners for the month of March
 - i. One awaiting re-inspection
 - ii. One in Citation
 - e. 0 – Adopt-a-Tree agreements for Spring of 2020
 - f. 0 – Invoices to property owners in February or March
 - g. 1 – Invoices for In House work during February totaling \$1,310.00
 - i. This work consisted of tree removal conduct at Barnhardts
 - h. 6 – Invoice for in House work during March totaling \$11,760.30
 - i. This work consisted of two removals and the planting of 50 trees.
 - 1. One planting occurred in City Park, 3 plantings along Centre Ave, and One planting at PW Facility
 - i. 0 – Contractor Invoices for February and March
 - j. 1 – Letters of interest received for the Spring 2020 Adopt-a-Tree
 - i. Have not heard back from the property owner multiple messages left.
6. Request for Variance in having to replant
- a. None
7. Review of Zoning Plans
- a. None
8. Old Business
- a. Ordinance:
 - i. Mr. Kissinger reports there has been some movement with this since the last meeting. He notes the Clerk's office took up interest. He states there were some additional changes suggested by the City Clerk which were made. He states it has since been sent back for their review and to be forwarded to legal.
 - 1. Remains Tabled awaiting a response
 - a. As of 2/18/2020 the City Clerk's office states it's still under review and will follow up.
 - ii. Draft Ordinance review by the Commission handout in May, 2019
 - 1. Commission has asked for more time to review.
 - a. Tabled
 - iii. Mr. Kissinger reports the final minor changes were resubmitted to legal for final review. He notes due to CoVid-19 things are a little behind and

expects that once reviewed it will be ready to move to City Council. Mr. Kissinger states he will update the commission once he knows more.

b. Memorial Tree for Mr. Slifko

- i. Mr. Kissinger states the PA One Call for design came back clear for utilities in the proposed location at N.3rd and Centre Ave triangle. He notes that Mr. Denick and a member of Centre Park will be working on the design phase together to present a draft plan.
 1. No additional comments on the matter at this time.
 - a. Mr. Denick states he has not heard back from Centre Park
- ii. Mr. Kissinger will try and schedule both John Denick and Mike Lauter to attend a meeting to provide an update.
 1. Mr. Denick states he never heard back from anyone.
- iii. Mr. Kissinger states there has been no new conversations about this as of the end of year. He notes he will look to re-visit early this year (2020).
 1. No new progress at this time.
- iv. Mr. Kissinger reports that he and Kyle had a meeting with Donna Reed and member of Centre Park. He notes that the idea for Centre and Douglass have been scratched and the location has been moved to Centre and Windsor. A half a block from Johns residents.
 1. Mr. Kissinger notes a tree will be planted in the small triangle with a plaque to come in the fall. Mr. Kissinger states there will be a small Ceremony to mark the tree planting this Friday, April 24th, 2020 at 1630 hours. He notes social distancing precaution will be in place during this event.
 2. Mr. Kissinger states the ceremony in the fall will mark the tree with a plaque followed by cocktail hour. He notes Donna Reed and the Centre Park committed are working on this. Once more details are known he will pass them on.

c. 908 Rose St.

- i. Mr. Kissinger notes he received a 25 page Arbitration request about the appeal the commission ruled on. Copies were distributed previously.
- ii. Mr. Kissinger states after speaking with Linda Kelleher Council will not be taking action on the matter. Linda states the Commission should consider moving to the next step.
 1. A motion was made by Mr. Ryan, seconded by Ms. Yevics to advance the NOV's to Citation.
 - a. All in favor. 3Y, 0N
 2. Mr. Kissinger will issue citations and keep the Commission posted on the status moving forward.
 - a. Mr. Kissinger notes a Court Date has been set for September 17th, 2019 at 1400 hours
 - i. Court has been rescheduled till Nov due to request for continuance.
 - ii. Court date is set for November 26th, 2019 at 2pm.

3. Mr. Kissinger provides an update that two of the three citations were dropped. He notes the owner was found guilty on failure to comply with tree specifications in regards to proper planting. The owner was very vocal during the hearing and is now appealing to the Court of Common Plea. Mr. Kissinger states he will provide further updates as this continues to move forward.
 - a. Mr. Ryan asked if he hired an attorney. Mr. Kissinger states yes.
 - i. No new updates at this time.
 - iii. Mr. Kissinger states he and Fred Lachat (City Attorney) where schedule for an Appear Hearing in Court of Common Pleas on March 23rd, 2020.
 1. Mr. Kissinger states was canceled due to CoVid-19 and no new date has been announced. He will provide an update at a later time.
- d. Arbor Day 2020
- i. Mr. Kissinger reminds everyone that Arbor Day 2020 will be the 35th Anniversary the City has been participating in the Tree City USA program.
 1. Mr. Kissinger states Reading High had agreed to hold the tree planting celebration in front of the High School. He notes 15 trees where to be planted. However, with the recent CoVid-19 this idea has been scratched and postponed until 2021.
 - ii. Mr. Kissinger states we did meet the goal of planting 35 trees to coincide with the number of years receiving the designation as Tree City USA.
 - iii. Mr. Kissinger states this year's ceremony will still be held on Friday, April 24th, 2020 at 1630 hours. He states it will now be at the site previously discussed under the Memorial Tree for Mr. Slifko at Centre Ave and Windsor Street.
- e. Park Assessments
- i. Mr. Kissinger states the assessments are going well. He notes Nolde Pines has completed all the parks assigned in 2019. Those of which were Brookline Playground, EJ Dives, Reading Iron, Schlegel Park, 2nd & Oley, 3rd & Spruce, Front & Schiller, and 10th & South.
 1. Mr. Kissinger reminds everyone that the work done includes removals, pruning, crown raising, etc.
 - ii. Mr. Kissinger reminds the commission that City Park and Neversink were completed in 2018. He states Centre Park was completed in 2015 and will be revisited in the future.
 - iii. Mr. Kissinger provides an update noting Barbey's Playground will be started this week. The week of April 20th and upon completion the contractor will then move to Baer Park.
 1. Updates will be provided throughout the year.

- f. State EAB Treatment Reimbursement
 - i. Mr. Kissinger states he requested reimbursement for the amount of \$4,324.69 for the EAB treatment program in 2019. He notes that the inter-governmental agreement has been renewed for the years 2019 thru 2021 and reminds everyone that this is a 50:50 match.
 - 1. Mr. Kissinger states the invoice has been submitted. He has not heard or seen anything coming back yet.
- g. Ash Tree Treatment update
 - i. Mr. Kissinger states 76 sites were evaluated this spring. He notes all trees were re-measured and a list was placed out for bid.
 - 1. Mr. Kissinger states the bid closing was on March 16th, 2020. He notes 4 responses were received. Two being bids and two being a response of not interest.
 - ii. Mr. Kissinger states he will be proceeding with the lowest bid of \$9,305.27 received from Arbor Essence who conducted all the previous treatments. Mr. Kissinger states the second bid was in the amount of \$31,954.00 from Wolf Tree Care.
 - 1. Mr. Kissinger states treatments will begin once full leaf emergent occurs in early May.
 - iii. Mr. Kissinger reminds everyone that the first round of treatments for all Ash trees occurred in 2016 and wrapped up in 2018. He states the second round began in 2019 with an expected completion date of 2021.

9. New Business

- a. Budget:
 - i. Mr. Kissinger note no significant changes since the meeting in February. He notes he did not prepare a report for this month due to the lack of spending and will have a full report prepared for the May meeting.
- b. Tree Plantings
 - i. The Citizens Climate Control Lobby has continued partnering with the City and the Commission to planting trees throughout the community. Mr. Kissinger reminds everyone that they were very supportive last year during the plantings and even obtained students from Penn State Berks to assist in the plantings. He notes Penn States Berks has also continued to provide students with the opportunity to get involved with planting of trees as part of the volunteer hours.
 - ii. Mr. Kissinger states with the help of the Citizens Climate Control Lobby and one group of Penn State Berks students they were able to kick off this springs tree planting along the western side of Charles Evans Cemetery. He notes two of the three groups for students did not get to assist due to CoVid-19.
 - iii. Mr. Kissinger reports the plantings were successful despite the disruption from CoVid-19. He reports 50 trees total where planted this spring.

c. Spotted Lantern Fly

- i. Mr. Kissinger states PDA has begun marking trees in Eglemans Park, Pandora Park, and Angelica. He states PDA has worked to identify all the Trees of Heaven. Trees to be killed will be marked in blue, stumps will be treated, and chips will remain on site. Trees to remain as trap trees will be marked in red. He notes PDA will perform further surveying to determine efficacy of treatments and re-treatments in subsequent years if needed.
- ii. Mr. Kissinger states Berks County Conservation District would like to partner with the City to coordinate some sort of educational program regarding SLF. Suggestion would be to have an informational program and demonstration to show SLF control.
 1. Mr. Kissinger states he heard back from the Conservation District and that they will look to partner and hold some type of event during the Earth Day activities that have been rescheduled for this September. Mr. Kissinger states he will update the commission when additional information becomes available.

d. Downtown Tree Work

- i. Mr. Kissinger briefs the commission on a conversation that occurred with the Greater Reading Chamber of Commerce on continuing the efforts in performing tree work downtown. Mr. Kissinger states Aaron Gantz approached about continuing to partner and continuing the pruning efforts to address much needed concerns in the downtown district. He notes that Aaron states the Chamber has set aside \$20,000 over the next two years to assist in paying for this type of work. He notes the work could also include the planters along Penn Street.
- ii. Mr. Kissinger states Aaron suggests working in the boundaries of Chestnut Street to Walnut Street and 3rd Street to 7th Street. Mr. Kissinger states he has agreed to triage the trees in this area and come up with a list of what will need to be done and how many trees total.
- iii. Mr. Kissinger also notes that a discussion occurred about pruning and crown raising the entire length of 5th Street starting at Canal Street and working north to the City Line.
 1. He notes additional conversations will need to occur and that updates will be provided as he moves forward with these projects.
- iv. Mr. Kissinger reports he did a preliminary evaluation of the boundaries noted above. He states there are 42 blocks total with approximately 310 trees needing some type of pruning work and 6 trees for removal. He states he did reach back out to the Chamber to see if this is a project they would still like to proceed with due to the current events of CoVid-19.
 1. Mr. Kissinger states he is awaiting a response but in the meantime once full leaf emergent has occurred he will conduct a second evaluation to determine if additional removals are warranted.
 - a. Updates to follow.

10. Information:

- a. Mr. Kissinger states he continuously works to address the commission concerns.
- b. Next meeting is scheduled for May 18th, 2020 at 1800 hours.

11. RSTC Observations / Concerns:

- a. None

Motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Ryan, seconded by Mr. Reimer at 1830 hours