



ALTOONA SHADE TREE COMMISSION
Minutes of October 21, 2020

In attendance: Ted Newkirk, James Batrus, Nancy Fellabaum, Chris Harpster - *Shade Tree Commission*
Marilyn Morgan, staff *Guests Present:* Ken Decker, *Altoona City Manager*

Ted Newkirk, Chairman, called the meeting to order.

1. The June 17, 2020 minutes were reviewed and a motion for approval of the minutes was made by James Batrus. Motion seconded by Nancy Fellabaum. Motion passed.
2. **City Manager – Ken Decker** – Mr. Decker started out by saying that he appreciates all the volunteer Boards that have served the City. He went on to say that the City is going to lose 15 employees. About 2/3 of our budget are public safety, Police and Fire. About 100 of our most expensive retirees are Police and Fire. The volunteer boards are staffed by employees; Marilyn's position is one that will be cut, which in terms of the Shade Tree Commission, they still have the rest of this year to use the money in the account. In January there are still many conversations on what volunteer bodies we have and what we can do without and what we have to keep, i.e. The City Planning Commission, The Zoning Hearing Board are both Boards that will need staffed. The City will need to figure out how to do this; for the next couple of years, it is going to be a learning process for the City and Council. If the economy improves, he said, we may be able to hire more staff. The only other way of making ends meet would be to raise taxes which the Mayor and Council do not want to do.

Mr. Newkirk spoke on behalf of the Board stating that they have been very happy with the staff, it has been very rewarding, they are willing to do whatever is needed to move on. Mr. Decker went on to say that in the long term, the plan is to look for Grant Funding that will help in preserving what trees we have and some planting that most homeowners don't want to do because of the fear of having to take ownership and whether their taxes would be raised. He further said, we have talked a little about planting out some the vacant lots, as sort of mini-forests, to get some habitat as opposed to simply grassy areas that require so much more care.

Board members asked questions regarding how would they go about doing a project before the end of the year with no money. Mr. Decker said that if there is money in their budget, it needs to be spent. In government accounting, anything that is not spent by the end of the year goes back into the general fund. The Board members said that they have no idea how much money they have left to spend by the end of the year. Ms. Fellabaum asked about the projects that were approved at the last meeting. Marilyn stated that all of those projects have been completed through Public Works. Mr. Decker explained that if this were a normal year, they would have been allocated funding and in the Spring, they would be able to decide how to spend the allocation. Ms. Fellabaum then asked about the money that was earmarked for Ash trees along 17th Street. Mr. Decker said that Public Works has an account where he believes there is about \$20,000 that has been set aside for the Ash Borer injections. Mr. Decker told the board that if they have projects that they would like to see done, give him a list of to-dos and he will see what he can do to get them accomplished. Mr. Decker thanked the Board for their time and wished that he had better news.

After Mr. Decker left the meeting, the Board discussed coming up with a list of areas that the City needs to be proactive in keeping up with these areas particularly the parks. They also need to keep up with the Ash trees every two years. Marilyn suggested that the board put together a wish list

Ted Newkirk, Chairman
Paula Over
Nancy Fellabaum
Chris Harpster
James Batrus



which she can pass along. A motion was made by James Batrus that we make a to-do list before the next meeting to be passed on. Motion was seconded by Chris Harpster. Motion passed.

3. Adjournment – Motion was made for adjournment by Nancy Fellabaum. Motion passed unanimously.

Shade Tree Commission

mm/bf