



**ALTOONA SHADE TREE COMMISSION**  
**Minutes of February 21, 2018**

*In attendance:* Ted Newkirk, *Chairperson*; Jeff Arpino, Christ Harpster, Paula Over, Nancy Fellabaum - *Shade Tree Commission*, Lee Slusser-*Director*, Marilyn Morgan, *staff*

Ted Newkirk, Chairperson, called the meeting to order.

1. The December 20, 2017 minutes were reviewed and approved, vote by Nancy Fellabaum, seconded by Jeff Arpino. Motion passed.
2. **Public Comment** – There were no public comments at the meeting.
3. **Proposal to remove trees at Gospel Hill Park** – Roberts Four Seasons has purchased the former Kopp Drug Building on 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue for storage of his equipment. The owner has requested to take care of property in front of Gospel Hill. He wants to clean up the property, remove the invasive species from the area as some of the older trees in the park have grown to the height that they may become a hazard. Prune all trees over 6in diameter, clean out all the weed trees under a 3in diameter, power wash the steps, place a picnic table and provide privacy conditions. The City of Altoona ordinance requires that anyone who wants to touch a tree on city property, must get the permission from the Shade Tree Commission. Before this meeting Nathan Kissell, Public Works Director, Jordon Bechlele, Public Works Technician, Alan Sam, Arborist and Lee Slusser walked the site. Mr. Sam identified all the species. Pretty much there is not a decent tree on the property except for a few Poplar. The trees he thinks can be saved are mostly Norway Maple, he marked all the trees that he feels can be saved, which will help to stabilize the hill and protect it from erosion, until more trees can be planted and take root. Mr. Sam also pointed out that there are a good many dead Ash Trees on the property that need to be removed. Mr. Slusser said that after the trees are removed and the area is cleaned up that it should look pretty much like it did years ago. Originally there were no trees at all on the hill, which gave a view of the downtown area of the city. The Arborists recommended approval of this proposal, with the stipulation that they leave the trees that Mr. Sam marked. A motion was made by Chris Harpster that we approve the proposal with the stipulation that they do not take down any of the trees that Mr. Sam marked to be saved. Jeff Arpino seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.
4. **Preliminary Plans for City of Altoona Tree Plan** – This is the first, earliest draft of a tree plan.
  1. Begin an **educational program** to explain and quantify the benefits of trees, our regulation of tree management, and the responsibilities of private property owners regarding trees both inside and outside of the public rights of way. Sidewalk maintenance should be addressed as well. Objectives should involve additions to the City’s website, as that’s a cheap and easy way to distribute information.
  2. Establish a **tree planting program** funded by STC funds, potentially private donation, and potentially cooperative planting purchases funded by homeowners. Priorities and procedures would have to be developed.
  3. Develop and enforce updated and refined **standards and processes** for the planting, pruning and removal of public trees, especially in protected corridors.



4. Identify and remove potentially and immediately **dangerous trees** through code enforcement and STC funds where necessary, refining the processes to include arborist and Shade Tree Commission reviews where appropriate.
  5. Clarify the extent to which the STC can participate in removing dangerous trees without incurring **liability** to the City (this would be accomplished in the plan itself).
  6. Specify and clarify the **roles** of the Shade Tree Commission. Expand these roles to land development review where a certain number of trees or more is proposed.
  7. Evaluate and improve or eliminate our **licensing** of private arborists.
  8. Re-evaluate and potentially expand our specially designated or **protected corridors** where the STC's permission is required to plant, trim, or remove public street trees. Perhaps permits should be required everywhere?
  9. Examine the possibility of city led **cooperative sidewalk** repair or replacement projects, in which homeowners share costs and bid together.
  10. Seek more **funding** from both grants (e.g. TreeVitalize) and City Council so that the City may help more with the planting, pruning, and removal of street trees.
  11. Prepare a new, updated, **recommended tree list** for street trees and land developments, including small, medium, and large species. This could be accomplished within the plan itself, and probably would never be a goal or objective. Perhaps we could separate and highlight native trees, as was popular in Patton Township.
  12. Prepare a page of **site design considerations** for trees for our website. This may address items like sidewalk placement or structural soils.
  13. Develop awareness of and strategies for dealing with **invasives**. Altoona doesn't even think about those.
  14. Develop strategies for dealing with the ash trees that the City has been treating against the **Emerald Ash Borer**.
  15. Identify **neighborhoods** with special tree maintenance or planting needs.
  16. Set **policies** for deciding on tree planting, pruning or removal requests, such as "tree litter will not be considered as grounds for removal."
  17. Set **funding priorities** for STC funds.
  18. Set **MS4** strategies for tree planting, if possible. Can privately planted trees (in land developments) be counted?
  19. Potentially regulating **construction activities under the dripline** of public trees.
5. **Other Business**  
Penelec will be trimming trees in the spring of 2018. Our Arborists will be taking a look at what they are doing.
6. **Adjournment**  
Ted Newkirk motioned to adjourn meeting. Motion seconded by Paula Over.

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Shade Tree Commission