

**Mountain Lakes Shade Tree Commission**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**May 8, 2024**

**Present** - Sandy Batty, Dan Amato, Doren Greene, Lucas Stelling, Cath Mitchell, Phyllis Deering, Marnie Vyff (via zoom), Chris Cannon (via zoom)

**April Minutes** - Passed as written

**Seedling Distribution** - There are lots of leftovers (roughly 75, mostly oaks). Phyllis has them in her driveway. Discussed sharing with neighboring towns at their events (Rockaway Valley plant sale) or the ML Garden club plant sale on Saturday May 11. Doren said members of the Woodlands Committee could plant some of them. Next year STC should aim for ordering 150 total, so STC can reduce the waste.

**Arbor Day** - Went well, aside from a microphone mishap. The kids performed and Marnie gave her presentation of the tree dedication for Chris Capodanno.

**Presentation to the Borough Council** - Lucas and Sandy presented, Doren was present to support. Presentation went well, but unsure if STC secured the vote necessary to use the Shade Tree Trust Fund for pruning incentives on private property. Presentation lasted roughly an hour. Chris Cannon offered that there was some concern around using the public trust fund for private pruning. Trust Fund is roughly \$22k, and that may increase because of the fees associated with the planned updated tree replacement ordinance.

**Highlands Regional Master Plan** - Sandy, Cath, and Lucas met with the Borough consultant on Highlands (Allison) who wanted to know if we have ideas for grant applications supported by the Highlands Regional Master Plan. A grant possibility is to fund the Community Forestry plan that the STC has to update next year. The STC also discussed applying for a grant to clean up parts of town-owned land, removing invasives in order to plant native trees. Doren mentioned rebuilding of the trails - Morris County has offered to assist and possibly pay if we agree to multi-use (meaning bikes on the trail where ML doesn't allow bikes on the trail).

**Briefing on Mushrooms/Growth on Trees** - Lucas shared a presentation about mushrooms and safety concerns. Marnie raised a concern that not all mushrooms are necessarily bad and in fact are intrinsic to the forest. The presentation focused on wood-decaying mushrooms.

**Tree Removal/Replacement Ordinance and Tree Replacement List** - Cath discussed the recommended list of replacement trees. The Ordinance will reference this list, but not actually part of it, instead the list will live on the STC website. Almost everything on the recommended list is native to the area. Discussed the merit of Eastern Redbuds as shade trees. STC may revisit having this on the list if too many are requested in the future.

Sandy met with Mitchell regarding the Ordinance, ultimately Mitchell wants to use the model ordinance, but insert the existing ML ordinance terms where possible, specifically replacing the model ordinance entire lot verbiage with the current ML ordinance set back verbiage. Preference

to allow 2 trees removed per year vs. 4 trees every 5 years in the model ordinance. Enforcement of the model ordinance is also difficult to navigate. STC discussed the merit of changing the diameter for removal to 6 inches vs. the current 8 inches. STC is recommending 6 inches.

Also discussed STC responsibility (in addition to the setbacks, rights-of-way), named public parks as well. Discussed trail maintenance and Sandy recommended specifically naming the trails in the ordinance. Lucas motioned to approve Sandy's recommendation, Doren seconded the recommendation (above). All in favor.

**Membership** - As a result of a STC member passing last month, STC is in need of a new member. Doren Greene agreed to elevate current alternate status to become a full member of the STC. Now there is a need for two additional alternates.

Discussion around the honorary tree for Chris. Lucas texted Cerbo's and they were interested in helping the STC out.

**Garden Club** - Plant sale is Saturday May 11th. Please attend!

#### **Liaison Reports -**

Woodlands: Doren shared that there's a new trail off west shore road. By Crystal Lake dam.

Meeting adjourned 8:30 PM  
Minutes taken by Dan Amato