

**Minutes Interlaken Shade Tree Commission
November 1, 2016**

Sunshine Law Read

**Roll Call Present: Dalton, Heinz, Papp, Weaver
Insabella called in by phone**

Not Present: Hughes

Business:

Annual Report:

Latest activities were noted by Dalton, to give to Hughes. Hughes prepares and submits to state in February

**Shade Tree Ordinance Revisited and Discussed, with
Recommendations to Council, Points Being:**

-The current ability for a homeowner to remove 4 trees a year is too many. We recommend it be changed to 2-3 trees.

-The permit to remove a tree is too low. Also a separate application removal fee should be required, and an additional fee for each tree.

These fees should be put in a fund so that more trees can be planted. A fee of only \$10 to remove a tree is not a deterrent. It should be at least \$1(?)50 a tree to make a homeowner think twice.

-Tree contractors should be licensed by town. There are tree companies that have no idea of Interlaken's policies, evident by the topping of a town tree in the past month.

- With regards to the recent topping of a town tree in front of a resident's home, resulting in topping, look, and future of said tree, it will most likely have to be removed. There is no provision in the ordinance to fine a resident for doing this act. The ordinance only states that it may not be done. There should be consequence. Tree removal by homeowner at their cost, and possibly a fine or cost to replace.

- Interlaken has no code enforcement officer on a daily basis. This is causing many problems. By the time a code enforcement officer is aware, the damage is done. It states clearly in our bylaws that we, as Commissioners, have jurisdiction over the municipal trees. This, however, seems to be a problem with the town allowing us to do our job. We should be able to stop a tree company from performing work on a town tree as it is occurring. At the very least, a Commissioner as it sees

an infraction occurring, should be able to call the police to stop said action.

-The ordinance allows dead trees to be removed. Homeowners are saying trees are dead and no investigation is done before trees are removed. We found there has been trees removed which were actually alive. We believe a homeowner should come before the shade tree commission when many trees are requested to be removed, much like someone has to come before the planning board for permission outside set parameters. Or at the very least, a member of the STC could go to inspect or a licensed arborist should be called in before removal allowed. Especially in the case of a town owned tree.

- Rules about trees, and especially town trees, needs to get to the residents as soon as possible. Something could be put on the town website, where it can clearly be seen. Also, many older residents do not use the Internet, and many new residents are unaware of policies, so a newsletter should go out. A meeting should be set with borough clerk and Council liaison, to figure best way of communicating with residents. We have been told that Council may be putting out a newsletter. If so, we want a page devoted to Shade Tree. This meeting should also discuss the recommendations for amendments to the Ordinance.

ITree Conference Discussed:

-Dalton and Heinz attended the full day conference in Atlantic City.

- The Commission recently had the Shade Tree Inventory completed and is awaiting the compiled results. These will be delivered in an Excel format, which will have to be maintained through Excel and results can also be entered into ITree, which was covered in the conference.

- The ITree program to maintain the new tree inventory is not compatible with Mac. There is special software to make compatible, at a fee, which could then be maintained on a computer owned by Heinz. The STC feel it would better serve the town to have a separate computer at town hall, where it could be viewed in open. This also makes sense to maintain records as Commissioners are replaced. Work orders could be dropped off by DPW in an inbox and then entered at town hall. Part of the STC's remaining budget could be used to purchase a computer.

- This lead to a discussion about maintaining some sort of space at town hall for STC papers. Paperwork from past and present commissioners are in various homes from past and present commissioners. One central location is needed. A meeting with boro clerk should be had to discuss.

Tree Inventory:

- The STC is awaiting compiled results pertaining the Inventory.
- We know that municipal trees lining the streets will have to be removed. These will be identified in the inventory. We will use funds from this year's budget to take care of this, when we are informed of the results. There are some trees on municipal land, which are already marked with red ribbons, by the arborist for removal. We will have to access high-risk priorities and figure costs. We will act on removal as soon as possible. One such red marked tree near borough hall is next to the main JCP&L main line. JCP&L has informed us they will be removing very soon.
- A discussion with borough clerk needs to be had about an inexpensive pruning course which Bill Brash, the Inventory arborist, has offered to perform for our DPW, and anyone who else wants to listen. CEU's could be utilized for the course for DPW and STC.

Items discussed for Newsletter:

- Tree Ordinance and cutting of Trees needs permits
- No owner may alter or remove a town tree
- Topping is bad for trees
- Proper way to mulch a tree for optimal health
- Problems with Ash Trees

To sum up discussion for Town Clerk, Council and Liaison Meeting:

- Shade Tree Ordinance/ Tree Removal Jurisdiction
- Town Hall workspace and file cabinet. Computer needed.
- Newsletter and Website
- Pruning Course

Meeting adjourned.