



New Jersey Community Forestry Council
Meeting Minutes
Virtual Meeting
January 12, 2023; 10:00 AM

The January bi-monthly meeting of the New Jersey Community Forestry Council (“Council”) was called to order by Chairperson Brash at 10:00 a.m. and the Open Public Meetings Act notice was read. The notice was also available in the meeting packet. The roll call was taken by Ms. Dudas.

Members Present: Bill Brash, Kristin Ace, Matthew Simons, Lisa Simms, Dr. Jason Grabosky, Dr. Melanie McDermott, Pam Zipse, Wayne Dubin, Carl Bowles, Lori Jenssen, Mark Beamish, Vinh Lang and Neil Blitz.
Excused: Barry Emens and Steve Chisholm

NJ Forest Service Staff Present: State Forester Todd Wyckoff, Technical & Operational Advisor Terri Slack, Assistant Regional Forester Brian McDonald, Forester Levon Bigelow, Grants Administrator Patricia Shapella, Forestry Technician Emily Farschon and Forestry Assistant Sherry Dudas. Quorum was met upon completion of roll call.

Approval of Meeting Minutes for 12/8/2022 Meeting

Chair Brash called attention to the December meeting minutes. Mr. Chisholm moved to approve; Mr. Dubin seconded. Chairman Brash called for a vote on the minutes. The vote was unanimous to approve the minutes.

State Forester’s Report

State Forester Todd Wyckoff announced structural changes to the DEP’s Forestry program. He has been appointed as the State Forester of New Jersey and continues to be the Bureau Chief of Forest Management. He reports to Administrator Greg McLaughlin. Mike Hart has accepted a Supervising Forester position responsible for Private Lands, Urban and Community Forestry (“UCF”) and No Net Loss (“NNL”). Carrie Sargeant has been reassigned to the NNL program. Brian McDonald is now the Coordinator of the UCF Program. Council congratulated Mr. Wyckoff and asked questions about specific initiatives. Mr. Wyckoff promised to share a revised organizational chart when it is completed. Most likely in the spring, the US Forest Service will be conducting a programmatic review of NJ’s Forestry program which was discussed.

Staffing of the UCF program is still a work in progress. There is an open Program Specialist Trainee position, and some already existing staff may be placed in other positions. Mr. Wyckoff hopes to grow the program with people.

Regarding prospective new Council members, Mr. Wyckoff updated Council as to his efforts at broadening the diversity on Council by working with the DEP’s Environmental Justice unit. He encouraged Council to submit names of prospective Council members to him. If members wish to serve another term, or if they choose not to serve another term, they need to send a letter Mr. Wyckoff.

Mr. Bigelow continues to write the revised guidelines and Mr. Wyckoff expects to have an outline for programmatic review by the end of January/early February. It will go to the guidelines subcommittee in February and the hope is to have a draft for Council review by the March meeting.

Federal funding opportunities for Urban and Community Forestry work was discussed. Arbor Day preliminary planning has begun with Mr. Wyckoff beginning the process of having the Governor renew the Arbor Day Proclamation. He emphasized to Council that Arbor Day is important to him, and he welcomes members' thoughts on how the state's Arbor Day is celebrated this year.

Chairman's Report

Chair Brash reached out to Rich Wolowitz from the Shade Tree Federation regarding their standing seat on the Council. The NJ Nursery and Landscape Expo is at the end of the month in Edison and the Garden State Tree Conference is in Atlantic City on March 2nd & 3rd. Members who may be serving for another term on Council need to let Mr. Wyckoff know as soon as possible. Wayne Dubin is retiring from the Council and was thanked for his service to the Council; he is not retiring from the forestry realm in general. The Chair and Carl Bowles would like to help Kristin Ace identify federal sources of funding and ways in which to train municipal Department of Public Works staff regarding tree care. Mr. Bowles shared his contact info to help coordinate this effort. Ms. Zipse suggested the Committee to Advancement of Arboriculture ("CAA") can help with this as well. They have experience with training programs for municipal tree groups. Chair Brash will be reaching out to CAA to keep them in the loop and explore partnership opportunities. Lori Jenssen offered the assistance of NJNLA as well for this effort. Carl Bowles will invite Mr. Wyckoff to a future meeting to talk to PWA members about tree care education possibilities.

New Business:

Fiscal Report

Pat Shapella reported on the fiscal state of the program, which was provided by UCF's fiscal officer and provided in the packet. Several communities will need funds for plans plus the guidelines are anticipated to require tree inventories, so the Chair sought clarity in the status of future funds. Ms. Shapella confirmed that there will be money left over in the current round (a portion of the \$3.3 million), so approximately \$1.770 million is projected to be leftover for the next round and can be used for future years' projects. Plans that were expiring at the end of 2023 have now been extended to have an expiration date of the end of 2024. Mr. McDonald provided clarity on timelines for communities' plans and inventories. Capacity issues with consultants and the DEP were acknowledged. Inventories will be a big push in 2024.

Program Report

No new community forestry management plans were received since the December meeting, so the number of total approved CFMPs is 253. Grant agreements are being drafted and the program is closing out on some outstanding agreements. Ms. Farschon updated the Council regarding her receipt of six Annual Accomplishment Reports (AARs) and needs the remaining 150 by the deadline of February 15th, 2023.

Legislative Issues

Ms. Slack reported that OSHA has two proposed items of interest: one proposal addresses heat illness prevention in outdoor and indoor work settings and OSHA hopes to convene a small business review to start that process. The other is the tree care standard which OSHA hopes to have out by May of this year.

Discussion on how tree crews in municipalities can be properly trained for tree care

Kristin Ace picked up the discussion from December's meeting on ideas of how municipal employees working on municipal trees can be trained for proper tree care. Chair Brash added that he and Carl Bowles had spoken on this topic. Carl Bowles added that, as a former supervisor of public works departments, it is often very difficult to provide consistent training and education, as the roster of PW employees changes over time. Dr. McDermott added that she is feeling overwhelmed by the number of requests she is getting for her input on federal initiatives and if the forestry community needs core support for operational staff at both the federal and state levels. She would love to provide that input but is not aware currently of how to do that. Dr. Grabosky added that there are The Committee for the Advancement of Arboriculture and the New Jersey Board of Tree Experts, which are deployable resources in NJ. It may be useful to talk about creating specific DPW-type programming and then figure out the funding structure to provide scholarships to DPW for training.

Unfinished Business

Ms. Dudas updated Council as to the letter to the State Forester regarding UCF's budget. A discussion, led by Kristin Ace, ensued regarding DPW education/training and what the DEP and the Forestry Council do to support Shade Tree Commissions/Boards ("STCs") and what CFC's actual relationship is with them. How does Council support STCs which are a vital part of municipal government. Chair Brash stated that the state is not going to require the STCs to be their clients and that some municipalities are reluctant to form a STC but are amenable to working with a committee that have specific local ordinances driving what they do. The state will work with any entity from a municipality, not just STCs. Ms. Zipse pointed out, on behalf of the Shade Tree Federation ("STF"), that Council supports commissions and any other organizations through supporting the STF, which used to be called the Federation of Shade Tree Commissions. Its role is to support Shade Tree Commissions and other municipal tree-related organizations. It is an educational non-profit for these organizations. Chair Brash noted that the state has encouraged the creation of STCs and offered the carrot and the incentive of tort claim liability protections, which is offered exclusively to STCs. Mr. Wyckoff stated that the STC have these express protections, but that volunteers outside of the commissions have more of an onus on them to document that they are active and participating in urban and community forestry programs, so STCs are the Cadillac of tree volunteers, but it's the state's responsibility to educate municipalities with respect to the suite of options available to them. His primary concern is that municipal volunteers are organized and managing their shade trees somehow.

Ms. McDermott raised the point that DEP's new stormwater rules will require tree ordinances of municipalities. Model tree ordinances do exist; Ms. Zipse reported that the STF does have a publication entitled, "Laws of New Jersey Trees", a collection of state statutes and sample municipal ordinances. She will check in with Rich Wolowitz to see if municipal representatives are reaching out to the STF for assistance with tree ordinances and perhaps be proactive in getting the municipalities what the need. CORE training also provides model tree ordinance information.

The topic of Ms. Ace's letter to Helaine Barr regarding RGGI funding was discussed. Mr. Wyckoff stated that Ms. Barr's program works particularly well with the Forest Service. Ms. Ace shared the response letter she received from DEP's Tony Rho and a discussion by Council ensued. Mr. Wyckoff affirmed that DEP administration benefits from hearing from many voices regarding the importance of tree maintenance as well as tree establishment.

Chair Brash committed to mailing the letter regarding UCF funds to the State Forester. Mr. Blitz stated that the new stormwater regulations give 12 months for adopting a tree removal/tree replacement ordinance and he is assembling a new conference with Clean Communities Council and the Association of NJ Recyclers called Sustainability in Motion Conference (www.NJSustainabilityConference.com). Confirmed is DEP's Sean Moriarity as a speaker and most likely DEP's Commissioner Shawn LaTourette will be the keynote speaker. It

will be March 8-10, 2023. Ms. McDermott encouraged the Chair to write letters thanking retired and retiring Council members for their service. Ms. Zipse announced that the Shade Tree Federation Conference will be October 26 & 27, 2023 in Cherry Hill, NJ. The Chair encouraged Council members who are able to attend the March meeting in person at the FREC to do so.

Public Comment: None.

The Chairman adjourned the meeting at 12:00pm.