



Pittsburgh Shade Tree Commission
September 19, 2024
Minutes

Kristen Spirl	X	Lisa Ceoffe	X	Angie Martinez	X	Nazin Bagherynejad	X
James Stitt	X	Dr. Brian Wolyniak	X	Zinna Scott	X		
Guest: Michael Kelley	X	Guest: Zachary Spodek	X	Guest: Susan McGrane	X		

Introductions:

Old Business:

Lisa begins with discussion about Meeting with Mayor Gainey in October. She is working on criteria for Chair tasks and will get those to everyone.

Lisa provides update on DCNR Grant for Equity Neighborhoods. The staff person was approved, but grant is for only 14 more months. Some applications were received, but none had qualifications needed. Some applicants were from out of state, but by the time they would start the job, the grant may be for only 12 more months. Position was tweaked for new position that will be for 5 years. Candidate needs some Forestry background and must be able to communicate effectively and be familiar with federal and technical guidelines.

Angie offers to post the position if needed.

Zinna says we need to bring up at Mayor’s meeting that that when we have grants, time is limited.

New Business:

Approval of August Meeting Minutes: Kristen motions to approve.

James Seconds. Motion Passed.

Nazin provides update on South Shore Riverfront project. It needs some engineering calculations. Discusses process and costs. Lisa says she is trying to get partners for this project.

Lisa discusses Street Tree Inventory project. AI-equipped cars have been going around neighborhoods. They’re going up and down streets.

Michael explains that there’s a camera on top of the cars. They started in the East End and should be wrapping up by mid-October.

Angie comments that DOMI worked with a street contractor to capture street imagery (Street Smart).

Lisa suggests STC invite DOMI to a meeting in the Spring to compare street inventory to Tree Inventory.

James inquires about the cutoff from edge of street for street trees and what's the Q/A, Q/C process for it?

Michael responds it is 12.5 feet back from the curb (laser scan). He will overlay with our inventory and if it looks like anything is missing, he will provide feedback to contractor doing tree inventory.

James asks if inventory includes City steps. Lisa answers no, steps are not included. Also, that Pittsburgh is the first city in the Country with this Tree Inventory, so we're the pilot city.

James asks what the timeline is for tree inventory. Michael responds it is a 2- month scan. Previous inventory on a scale like this took 9 months. We asked them to do hybrid inventory. We have to have a way to make this pivot. When this is done, we are going to have every tree over 12.5" with that data from AI. Michael will make interface that allows us to connect and sync for our needs. Going forward, we will be able to have more real time usable analog.

James discusses Allegheny County Clean Air Project Fund. There is \$5 million unused. Provides details of project including stormwater management (up to \$2 million). Application deadline is 9/27/24. Also included is \$50,000 grant for trees. Kristen asks if STC can cover cost of trees.

Angie inquires what Forestry does for trails. Lisa says Forestry partners with Tree Pittsburgh and other organizations. Forestry can provide mulch, etc., but prefers to have partners take care of trees.

Angie states DOMI is working on Three Rivers Heritage Maintenance Plan which will have conditions assessment of trees on canopy trail.

Kristen asks about zoning change – did they put anything about trees in it?

Angie mentions that zoning is coming through with changes. How do we get public realm improvements? Lisa responds we have old code revisions and are having conversation with them. Kristen says it should be in Streetdrive. Zach (Spodek) may have it.

Lisa says one big issue is environmental standards and landscape requirements doesn't sync. We want to make sure that happens.

Dr. Wolyniak asks if we will have a pre-meeting before the meeting with Mayor Gainey. Lisa responds yes, we will at some point.

Dr. Wolyniak brings up that the Nov. 21 STC meeting is the same day as Partners in Community Forestry Conference and may pose a scheduling conflict. Lisa states that she and Michael are not going to the Conference, so we should be ok.

Lisa brings forward two proposals for discussion:

1. Friends of Neill Loghouse

There is a landscape plan attached to it. They're asking if STC can start planting trees around house. Tree Pittsburgh started planting. They also started road trees. Photos are passed around to Committee members. There will be close to 100 trees, various species. They have volunteer contractor who will plant. Cost \$6,000 for trees at building and \$11,000 for driveway. Cost to purchase trees is \$16,400. Total funding is \$17,400.

Dr. Wolyniak asks if there are any issues with deer. Lisa states the area is fenced and irrigated.

Angie asks do we have any standards on how we evaluate these? Lisa confirms we do.

James inquires is Neill Loghouse open to the public. Lisa answers yes.

Lisa asks if Committee is interested. Zinna asks what STC budget is. Lisa provides budget information -- approximately \$500,000 +. The Neill Loghouse project would come out of STC fund.

Kristen asks if STC gets funds from Western Pennsylvania Conservancy? Lisa responds yes, typically, but their current funding stream is not focused on parks.

James makes a motion that STC fund the Friends of Neill Loghouse for requested trees. STC provide the trees; they provide the planting.

Zinna seconds the motion.

Kristen mentions that if STC funds Friends of Neill Loghouse, this request for funds would be a good example to put on STC web site for other organizations looking for funding.

Dr. Wolyniak suggests request be modified to ask for a dollar amount. He is uneasy with just number of trees.

Michael suggests modifying motion to approve funds for 52 trees pending up to and not to exceed \$20,000.

Kristen moves to amend original motion.

Angie asks are we sure we know costs.

Kristen says why not fund \$18,000 and do them all?

Dr. Wolyniak suggests “up to \$20,000.”

Lisa asks for a motion.

Angie makes a motion.

Vote to pass the motion. Motion passed.

Lisa discusses second proposal:

2. PNC Park

STC has funded tree plantings around perimeter of PNC Park. Sports & Exhibition Authority (SEA) received \$1 million grant. We are concerned about trees. Tree grates need to be replaced. SEA is going to remove grates and replace. Cost is up to \$40,000 for STC to provide 64 new grates.

Kristen makes a motion to approve.

Zinna seconds the motion for discussion.

Dr. Wolyniak asks how trees will be protected.

Lisa says that will be included.

Angie asks are they going to be our grates to maintain?

Lisa confirms yes.

Kristen asks if this is in preparation for the NFL Draft that will be held in Pittsburgh in 2026?

Lisa responds yes. Agrees we need to make the City look nice. Proposes we discuss NFL Draft at a future meeting.

Angie asks if we need language on whose responsible for the grates, and suggests we say the grates are STC’s so we can maintain them.

Lisa asks for a motion.

Kristen seconds the motion.

Unanimous Vote to pass the motion. Motion passed.

Lisa does not vote.

Lisa starts discussion for upcoming meeting with Mayor Gainey on Oct. 15 and opens conversation on STC’s priorities and policies.

Zinna suggests sending list to Mayor's Office ahead of meeting. Lisa concurs.

Lisa outlines Mayor's Meeting Priorities:

1. Policy Status: Provide timeline and copy of policy sent. Asked for PSTC to create a policy to get behind. Interdepartmental communication improvements with DOMI on new projects
2. Tree Equity Investment Plan: YTD \$spent which includes Homewood: 70 prunes, 40 removals, tree planting investment. Revising grant to include more tree work, Position bogged down in OMB
3. PSTC Vacancies, folks submitting have not heard back one way or the other, some candidates have been placed on other boards. Some of our members are rolling off
4. PSTC Funds: Still not tracking system for deposits for PLI, no way of knowing available funds, spending and tracking system is needed
5. Comp Plan Kick Off: prioritizing trees and greenspace
6. PLI/Zoning/DOMI Coordination for plan review and sign off/permits
7. NFL Draft Tree removal/Can we negotiate canopy loss expected?

Angie proposes adding Chair position and issues we have been having with that.

Kristen suggests we include funds we have and how to manage.

James says include how we distribute our funds.

Angie recommends adding the issues we have with zoning and issue requirements. She offers to represent zoning issues.

Lisa suggests inviting Dr. Bey to a meeting and sets deadline of Oct. 8 for Committee to submit priority lists. She will put plans together.

Zinna advises two people put together talking points and a person pick what they want to present.

Lisa will put together an outline and policy year-to-date.

James asks how Forestry and STC fit into NFL draft.

Lisa says the NFL is proposing taking trees down – everything in front of Acrisure Stadium. Angie states that DOMI has a monthly meeting regarding NFL Draft. She can also include tree canopy in those meetings.

Lisa asks if she can be invited to next DOMI/NFL meeting. Angie confirms yes.

Lisa suggests including NFL Draft issue of taking down trees in Mayor's Meeting discussion.

Lisa mentions that Alcosan is starting a tunnel project in 2026 which could make the City look bad during the NFL Draft event.

Lisa will put together bullets for Mayor's meeting and gather information for packets. Timeline is as follows:

Oct. 1 – Lisa sends rough draft

Oct. 8 – Comments due back

Oct. 11 – Final version sent to Mayor's Office

Lisa asks if there are any other items for discussion.

Kristen makes a motion to adjourn.

Meeting adjourned at 10:28 am.