

New Jersey Shade Tree and Community Forestry Assistance Act 2009 Annual Accomplishment Report for Bernards Township

Community Forestry Program Administration:

Our Shade Tree Commission (STC) consists of seven volunteer Member positions, two Alternates, a DPW Liaison, a Secretary and a Township Committee Liaison. There has been no turnover with members from the STC during 2009. This past year was the first year two alternates were utilized on the STC. The extra resources assisted with achieving the goals of the STC as outlined in the Community Forestry Plan.

Currently, the STC and the Department of Public Works (DPW) maintains the responsibility for tree resources in Bernards Township.

Training and Professional Development

The two Alternates on the STC attended the CORE Training seminar at the N.J. Shade Tree Federation's Annual Meeting in Cherry Hill this past October. All of the commissioners have been CORE trained. Two Commissioners attended a Winter Tree Identification Class, conducted by Dave Welch, a CTE, at the Great Swamp in January. Four DPW staff members attended a Rutgers Pesticide Training class and received four CEU's each for that class. The STC has achieved the required CEU for 2009.

Public Education/Awareness/Outreach:

The STC was engaged in various awareness programs in 2009. The Town's annual Charter Day this May gave us the opportunity to market the STC through an awareness booth. We were able to distribute seedlings, walking tour maps of 20 tree species in Town and informational flyers. We also conducted a how-to clinic on proper tree mulching techniques. Names of residents and street locations of potential tree hazards and replanting requests were also obtained.

The annual Arbor Day ceremony was conducted by the ST Commissioners on April 25, 2009. The site selected for 2009 was the property at Town Hall. A 14ft tall disease-resistant American Liberty Elm, a bronze plaque and a poem by Thomas Paine were all received as part of a grant package from the Elm Research Institute for a Liberty Tree Memorial. Information on the ceremony was submitted and printed on-line in a local newspaper.

The STC assisted with the planting selection for approximately eight trees at Ridge High School. Working with the Ridge High School Administration, the STC recommended various shade trees and locations for the back of the building as well as enhancing the entrance to the front of the building. Maintenance of the newly planted trees will be conducted by the student body and/or by the staff.

A representative from the STC also participated in various meetings during 2009 on planning for the "250th Birthday Celebration" for the Town in 2010. It was agreed to donate and plant an American Liberty Elm, in a newly acquired open space park (Son's of Liberty Farm) as part of the Celebration events.

The STC also worked with the Bernard's Township Green Team in supplying information and setting goals to assist in the quest to become a NJ Sustainable Town.

Statement of Tree Budget:

The 2009 Budget was set at \$14,400, which is lower than prior year but excludes planting costs. The STC will be utilizing the Developer Tree Replacement fund for planting costs. Results from outside consultants with the plantings have not been favorable. Plantings for 2009 have been completed by DPW saving money, better coordination and providing better results in tree survival. In-kind services are estimated at \$15,400. No significant changes or problems are anticipated in the budget this year.

Plan Implementation:

The renewal of the Community Forestry Management Plan for 2008-2012 was approved by the State of New Jersey.

The STC continued identifying tree hazards throughout the community. Working hand-in-hand with DPW and Somerset County, several trees hazards were removed.

A sub-committee was created to review existing tree ordinances in Town. The sub-committee was waiting the outcome of the Jackson Township case regarding builders funding for replacement trees. The State Supreme Court ruled in favor of Jackson but the sub-committee did not have time to review or propose changes to current ordinances. This sub-committee will be formed again in 2010 to complete the task.

A STC representative was appointed as an Alternate to the Town Planning Board Commission late last year. The Planning Board has also adopted the Bernards Township Community Forestry Management Plan within the five-year Town Master Plan. Input from the STC was welcomed.

A STC representative is now part of the Tree Protection Committee in Town. This Committee examines/approves any requests for take-downs when permits are required.

Windshield surveys by STC volunteers and DPW staff continued in 2009. Tree hazards and new tree planting locations were identified.

A tree inventory listing of the past three to four years of plantings was developed by a Shade Tree Commissioner this year. This will be the beginning of an inventory planting list, with future plantings being added each year.

Communications between STC, DPW and Somerset County tree crews continue to be strong during 2009. Improved methods of tree hazard notifications via email and joint meetings assisted in this area. The STC webpage on the Township's website continues to be enhanced for better communication with residents.

Approximately 50 replacement trees were planted by DPW as recommended by the STC this year. Take downs were handled by DPW or an outside tree service.

Bernards Township was also approved for Tree City USA certification. The renewal application has been submitted.

Community Stewardship Incentive Program

A Business Stimulus Fund Application was submitted to the State of NJ for \$7,400. A tree maintenance proposal was submitted in November, to assist with the cost of maintaining the overgrown trees located in the heavily populated downtown area. Results of the application will be known in January 2010.

Bernards Township was awarded a grant from the Elm Research Institute for a Liberty Tree Memorial. Proceeds from this grant was used for the Arbor Day Celebration event.

Bernards Township was also approached by the State on NJ to conduct a Gypsy Moth Survey at no cost to the Town back in July. On December 22, 2009, results of that survey were received by the Town. It was concluded no infestation exists in Bernards Township.