



New Jersey Community Forestry Council
Meeting Minutes
In-Person and Virtual Meeting, FREC
September 14, 2023; 10:00 AM

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

Members Present: Bill Brash, Kristin Ace, Dr. Jason Grabosky, Pam Zipse, Dr. Matthew Olsen, Joseph Greipp, Barry Emens, Dr. Melanie McDermott & Neil Blitz.

Excused: Steve Chisholm, Lisa Simms, Mark Beamish & Vinh Lang.

Absent: Carl Bowles & Lori Jenssen.

NJ Forest Service Staff Present: State Forester Todd Wyckoff, Policy, Supervising Forester Michael Hart, Technical & Operational Advisor Terri Slack, Program Specialist Trainee Rachael Vannatta, Grants Administrator Patricia Shapella and Forestry Assistant Sherry Dudas. Quorum was met upon completion of roll call.

Approval of Meeting Minutes for 5/11/2023 Meeting

The vote was unanimous to approve the minutes.

State Forester’s Report

State Forester Todd Wyckoff began his report by welcoming new member Dr. Matthew Olsen who is a professor at Stockton University. The CMR review by the US Forest Service of the NJ Forestry Service went well and a final report which is going to have some recommendations is expected. Brian McDonald and Levon Bigelow attended the Urban and Community Forestry Regional coordinators meeting in Annapolis, MD. Mr. Wyckoff will be attending the National Association of State Foresters meeting in Baton Rouge, LA next week, where he is a member of the Forest Health and Science Committee. He has also expanded his involvement to include the Urban and Community Forestry Committee. The Urban and Community Forestry (“UCF”) program announced stewardship grants for tree inventories on June 23rd for the communities that participate in the program and the deadline for applications was August 25th. The program had funding to fund approximately 50 grants and 15 applications were received. The hope is that the reviews conclude so the awards can be announced prior to the NJ Shade Tree Federation Conference in October. A discussion ensued regarding the gap in the number of projects there was funding for and the number of applications submitted.

Regarding the revised Guidelines, Rutgers University hosted a recent meeting for consulting foresters, community forestry consultants and others which was productive and staff will be further refining the Guidelines based on this feedback. Mr. Wyckoff believes we are on target for rolling out the Guidelines by the end of the year. Both the NJ League of Municipalities and the NJ Shade Tree Federation are having Guideline presentations at their annual conferences this year.

Regarding the \$11.25 million US Forest Service grant awarded to NJ, staff is in the process of getting the state's RFP approved by the US Forest Service as well as NJ Forest Service personnel. Mr. Wyckoff referred members to their packet, where staff's draft OBC ranking system spreadsheet was included, indicating the 55 potential communities that may be eligible to be awardees of the grant monies. This list was submitted by NJ Forest Service as part of its RFP when applying for the federal funding, so communities can no longer be added to the list. Staff needs to get the RFP out in December, so awards are made quickly and projects can begin in 2024.

Chairman's Report

Mr. Brash reported that discounted registrations for the NJ Shade Tree Federation Conference in late October expires October 2nd, and he encouraged those who haven't registered to do so. The staff and the five CFC members who attended the consultants meeting did a great job. Mr. Brash also asked that on December's agenda an item be placed for discussion of the stewardship grant's low application rate.

New Business:

Fiscal Report

Pat Shapella provided the fiscal report, which reflected a total of \$1,000,438. in uncommitted funds in the 2023 Shade Tree License Plate Fiscal Account (ending June 30, 2023). The 2024 Shade Tree License Plate Fiscal Account (ending August 31, 2023) has a balance of \$1,961,161.

Program Report

Mr. Bigelow provided the Program report. The number of Community Forestry Management Plans ("CFMPs") has increased by 1 for a total of 254. There are 11 CFMPs that are awaiting amendments. With respect to the Accreditation status of communities, there are 171 accredited municipalities and counties and the number of missing AARs typically was floating around the 20 to 30 range is now down to 11, in large part due to the efforts of Rachael Vannatta. There are 2 open Green Communities grants and 55 stewardship grants open (which include years 2018-2023).

Legislative Issues

Ms. Slack provided a report in the packet. Discussion ensued regarding legislation addressing invasive species.

Subcommittee Reports

- Community Forestry Management Plan Review

Ms. Zipse reported that this subcommittee now includes Dr. Matthew Olsen, Kristin Ace & Dr. Melanie McDermott and that it has been really exciting for her to work with new members on this subcommittee.

- Community Forestry Management Plan Guidelines

Mr. Wyckoff updated the Committee as to the Guidelines' status in his report; the timeline is being met to get input via the NJ Shade Tree Federation as well as the NJ League of Municipalities conferences.

- No Net Loss

Mr. Hart provided the update which was also in members' packets. Two projects are under review.

- Awards

Mr. McDonald provided the update. No nominations were received for the Program Achievement Award and two nominations were received for the J. Sterling Morton Award. Staff has a recommendation for that award which was forwarded to the member of the Awards Committee. The award will be bestowed at the NJ Shade Tree Federation Conference.

Unfinished Business

None.

New Business

None.

Public Comment: None.

Dr. Grabosky introduced a guest of the meeting, Dr. Allyson Salisbury, who is a new faculty member at Rutgers, teaching urban forestry and assorted classes. Ms. Zipse announced that the NJ Shade Tree Federation Conference will be October 26 & 27, 2023 in Cherry Hill, NJ and the pre-registration closes on October 2nd. Municipal tree ordinances are on the agenda, as is CORE training and the Guidelines.

Mr. Brash adjourned the meeting at 12:07pm.