

Mountain Lakes Shade Tree Commission Meeting

February 12, 2026 - 7 PM

In Attendance: Sandy Batty, Dan Amato, Tony Forman, Roxanna Tavakkol, Briana Ostrosky, Mary Giordano, Chris Belli, Cath Mitchell (Via Zoom), Calvin Lee (Student Liaison)

January Minutes - Approved as written

Community Forestry Management Plan – Getting a grant to underwrite the plan has been somewhat of a challenge. One grant requirement is to be certified, and STC has to meet minimum requirements. One is our annual report, which is scheduled to be filed tomorrow (2/13/26).

STC has been granted extensions on doing a new Plan, and the current plan is over 10 years old. We submitted a grant application for the Plan, but DEP told STC that we must update our tree inventory to inform our Plan. We will amend our grant request to be for the Plan + Inventory for \$20,000, whereas we had applied for the Plan alone for \$5,000. STC will revise the Grant application and re-submit for the Plan + Inventory.

STC has received proposals from two consultants. The consultants would do an updated inventory, which will be more accurate and current. DEP wants all STCs statewide to standardize the inventory approach, so they can collect data at a state level. Currently, ML STC inventory is an old excel file and has a lot of gaps in the data. Consultants recommended getting the inventory on a software program. STC discussed if there is budget for annual subscriptions for tree inventory management. STC will ask one of the consultants to revise the proposal to include the inventory. DEP pointed to the CFMP guidelines document on its website to indicate what is needed for minimum inventory requirements.

Arbor Day Celebration / Date and Seedling Order - STC member Phyllis Deering is looking for help with Arbor Day. STC member Briana Ostrosky offered her assistance and to meet with the principal at Wildwood (Principal Higgins) to discuss event logistics. STC discussed feedback from the experience last year, mostly just last-minute changes that affected the overall quality of the event. STC discussed working with the Library in town as well - and the library expressed willingness to help with Arbor day. STC members Briana, Tony, Chris and Sandy committed to meeting with the Library next week to discuss options. STC discussed altering the timing of the Arbor Day event at the school to not occur during the school day to work around schedules/availability/impact to the school day.

Calvin discussed ways to help identify the trees in the parks across from the fire station - using a map to identify trees, using a leaf icon and providing details from there. Plaques on the trees is obviously a challenge, so STC will continue to discuss ways to develop

this, and may go to Frelinghuysen Arboretum to see how they identify the trees. STC discussed implementing QR codes to help with this.

Tree City Report - STC Phyllis has finished up the Tree City Report and will be submitting this week to the Arbor Day Foundation. Thank you, Phyllis!

CEUs - STC is required by DEP to have 8 CEU (Continuing Education Units) a year by at least 2 different members. Last year ML STC had over 25 CEUs because of the class that was hosted in Mountain Lakes. Just a reminder to review courses as the Borough will reimburse STC members for pursuing the credits.

Other Business - STC received notice from the Shade Tree Federation about membership dues. STC members have been added to get emails.

STC discussed a new inventory management timeline starting in May to help improve the turnaround time on the Prune and Remove list. If the STC does get the grant however, this could affect the need to do the annual summer tree walks.

Meeting concluded at 8:24 PM

Minutes taken by Dan Amato