

made. A letter was sent to the local newspaper from the STC protesting the procedure of these happenings. Along these same lines, the Washington Street Mall is managed by the Mall Business Owners and when trees are planted or removed, these decisions do not go through the STC.

The City received a large grant for a park on Lafayette Street next to Cape May Elementary School. Work on this started in late 2015 or 2016. Some street trees were replaced. The park will be a mostly passive, strolling, nature oriented park, not disturbing the existing flora already there. The rest of the park has playground equipment, and will have bocce courts and other sports related areas. Again, the STC was not included in any of the decision making.

Tree Removals

2011 – 29

2012 – 35

2013 – 50 (Hurricane Sandy)

2014 – 24

2015 – 35 (Hurricane Joaquin)

Total 173

New Trees Planted

2011 – 22

2012 – 14

2013 – 16

2014 – 19

2015 – 18

Total 89

In November 2016 Election, the Mayor and former Council person were voted out and new representatives will be coming in. The City Manager is retiring at the end of this year. We expect a warm working relationship to continue.

As you can see from our report, more and more trees are being removed for the reason to satisfy our insurance obligations to remove (hazardous) and declining, aging trees. Preserving our “urban canopy” is of great concern to us and Cape May citizens. This is a large part of the charm of Cape May. We strive to replace these trees on a regular basis. The lifespan of the Sycamores is coming to an end and we anticipate replacing them with a variety of species. We understand there must be a plan to do this on an annual or semi-annual schedule to assure continual growth. With this plan, we hope to increase our budget with an amount to assure moneys to allow us to plant trees on a steady, regular basis.

We will continue our Hazard Tree Assessment throughout the city. There are seven Districts in the city and each Commissioner has a District, we are short one now, though. Two Commissioners will work together doing a street by street evaluation of the street trees: species, age (if possible), condition, and other information we can glean from the inspection. We can, at this time, distribute information about caring for the tree or trees to the homeowner. These are our goals for the next five years. With this information put in the computer, it will allow us to regulate our tree replacements and our tree trimming schedule.

We continue to receive Subdivision Plans from the Planning Board. The STC approves or approves with conditions for additions or new construction. We inspect each site for existing trees and have the power not to “rubber stamp” every application. Our recommendation is read at the Planning Board level.

Relation to the City of Cape May’s Municipal Master Plan and Open Space Plan

The goals of this Community Forestry Management Plan are consistent with the goals of the Master Plan and are designed to maximize the aesthetic and physical benefits of the environment to the community. . At the present time the city does not have a separate open space plan. The original master plan was approved in 1978 and updated and revised in 1984, 1988, 1994, 2002 and 2009. The goals and objectives of the Community Forestry Management Plan are consistent in both the intent of the goals and in the specific outcome of the objectives in the master plan. Some of the pertinent areas of similarity are described below.

A primary goal of the master plan is to preserve the unique charm and character of the City of Cape May and to maintain a high quality of life for the permanent residents as well as seasonal visitors. Tree protection, tree planting and reference to the Community Forestry Management Plan are included in the Land Use Element under the Shade Trees section.

Traffic patterns and improvements to traffic flow are addressed in the Traffic and Parking Element. A concern related to the London plane trees that lean partially into the street was described in the section about Lafayette Street and Washington Street. The recommendation for reducing traffic problems on these two streets is to make both streets one-way only.

City parks are discussed in the Community Facilities and Recreation Element. No recommendations were made that directly included trees or the removal of trees.

Amendments to this Community Forestry Management Plan

This Plan is based on objectives and conditions that were valid at the time it was developed. However, the city recognizes that conditions and needs may change over time and that this Plan may become outdated. Therefore, this Plan may be amended according to the following procedure.

1. Community Forestry Management Plan amendments shall be coordinated by the Shade Tree Commissioners.
2. Amendments may be requested by any of the participating groups within the Shade Tree Management Program. Formal, written requests shall be made to Shade Tree Commission and include justification for the changes.
3. The Board of Shade Tree Commission shall notify all other participants of the proposed amendments and justification for their review and set a deadline for receiving comments.
4. Each participating group shall forward its comments to the Shade Tree Commission.
5. If the Shade Tree Commission finds that the requested changes are justified, it shall draft changes and approve them in accordance with its authority as a Commission under State Statute 40: 64 1 – 14.
6. The revised and/or updated Community Forestry Management Plan shall be submitted to the Mayor and Council for approval.
7. The revised and/or updated Community Forestry Management Plan shall then be submitted to the New Jersey Community Forestry Council for approval in accordance with the New Jersey Shade Tree and Community Forestry Assistance Act.

4. COMMUNITY FORESTRY PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

Structure of the Shade Tree Commission and Municipal Administration

The management of the community forest and the administration of the community forestry program is a cooperative effort between the mayor, council, city manager, public works, planning, emergency management, city solicitor, Shade Tree Commission, Historic Preservation Committee and the residents of the City of Cape May.

A new development in the administration of the municipal government has been the new role of the City Manager in the day-to-day administration of city.

Structure and Responsibilities of the Shade Tree Commission

The Cape May Shade Tree Commission is responsible for all decisions that affect the planting, maintenance, and removal of trees on city controlled property in the city of Cape May. Only in emergency situations and utility maintenance is the authority for tree related decisions given to other branches of the municipal government. The Shade Tree Commission is also responsible for community education, awareness and outreach as it relates to trees.

The commission structure and responsibilities are still consistent with the structure outlined in the original Community Forestry Management Plan (2001-2005). The Commission Chairperson is the primary contact person and is responsible for the administration of the Commission. The city is divided into seven separate districts. Each member of the commission is appointed for a five-year term by the mayor and is assigned a specific city district or area that is their particular area of concern. Each Commissioner is responsible for a district and is empowered to make most decisions in their districts. Any decisions regarding tree removals or major alterations to the community forest are made during the commission meeting.

The Shade Tree Commission has a committee structure. Some of the recent or current committees are the sidewalk committee, tree planting committee, records committee, administrative committee, tree maintenance committee, and memorial trees committee.

The Shade Tree Commission acts on the behalf of the City of Cape May regarding issues related to trees within the city. Some sections have special maintenance agreements. The trees in Rotary Park are maintained by a separate public/private group and the trees in Lafayette park and the Washington Street Mall are the responsibility of a contractor and the Planning Department. The increase in the community's concern for the preservation of the trees in the city has been reflected in new ordinances related to the protection of community trees and an increase in the Shade Tree Commission's responsibility.

The interaction between the Shade Tree Commission and the other municipal entities on tree related issues requires a constant exchange of communication and correspondence. Since the actual implementation of construction or development projects are performed by other departments and municipal entities, the Shade Tree Commission must work interactively on any of the issues pertaining to the trees in Cape May.

The current Shade Tree Commission members are: Jay Schatz (chairperson), Sue Wichterman, George Ator, Barbara Preminger, Herb Pharo, Kyle Kulkowitz, Thomas Keene (Alternate #1), and Carol York (Alternate #2). Fiore Mannella is the Public Works employee representative. Shaine Meier is the City Council Liason. Nancy Mohan is the Commission secretary.

The current Shade Tree Commission goals are to:

- Improve the interactive relationship between the Shade Tree Commission and all of the other municipal bodies so that the Shade Tree Commission is involved in all tree related decisions.
- Improve the relationship between the Shade Tree Commission and Public Works.

Interactive Relationship with the Mayor and Council Pertaining to the Community Forest

The Mayor of Cape May City and the Council are committed to maintaining the community forest to the extent that public safety and budgetary constraints allow. The City Council is responsible for appointing members to the Shade Tree Commission. The Mayor and Council are responsible for approval of ordinances and policies and approval of the budget.

The Shade Tree Commission has been working closely with the City Council on several issues and changes to city ordinances related to trees within the community. The City Council approved a grant application for repairing sidewalks around street trees and gave the Shade Tree Commission the authority and responsibility to oversee most of the project. The City Council has approved several new ordinances that increase or redefine the Shade Tree Commission's responsibility in maintaining and protecting the trees in Cape May. The Mayor or City Manager has emergency powers when public safety is a concern.

Interactive Relationship with the City Manager Pertaining to the Community Forest

A new development in the administration of the municipal government has been the new role of the City Manager. The City Manager is responsible for the day-to-day administration of city. The City Manager is involved in many of the issues related to trees that come to the Shade Tree Commission and in many of the determinations made in regard to trees within the city. The City Manager serves as a link between all of the municipal entities within the City.

The Shade Tree Commission has a good working relationship with the City Manager and strives to maintain an open line of communication. An objective in the upcoming years is to maintain and improve the exchange of information regarding tree related decisions that need to be made in a timely manner.

Interactive Relationship with the Construction Department Pertaining to the Community Forest

The Construction Department is responsible for issuing construction permits and inspecting building sites. On projects that involve tree removal or construction near trees the Construction Department interacts with the Shade Tree Commission.

The process of protecting tree during construction is improving. The goal for the Shade Tree Commission is to become more proactive in the protection process and become more involved in the initial planning stages of construction projects. The process may require the Shade Tree Commission to become involved in the construction permit approval process and work very interactively with the Construction Department and the Zoning Officer. This would allow the Shade Tree Commission to get notification and make recommendations for site and plan review.

Interactive Relationship with the Planning Department Pertaining to the Community Forest

The planning department is responsible for reviewing and approving landscape plans that include trees and development projects that include construction near street trees. The Shade Tree Commission reviews all of the plans and makes recommendations on tree preservation.

Several major projects are currently being planned in Cape May that include trees. The mall in the center of the historic district may be redeveloped and several streets have been repaved. The Shade Tree Commission has had some involvement in these projects and the future goal is to be involved more often and sooner in the planning stages of the process. The Shade Tree Commission intends to improve the method of reviewing plans in a timely manner and make reports of the recommendations on the projects.

Interactive Relationship with the Public Works Department Pertaining to the Community Forest

The Public Works Department is responsible for minor pruning that can be performed from the ground and for emergency cleanup of storm damaged trees. An employee from the Public Works Department has been assigned with the responsibility of responding to small pruning jobs for the Shade Tree Commission. The Public Works employee representative has also been assigned a permanent position on the Shade Tree Commission.

The Shade Tree Commission has been using employees to perform an increasing amount of pruning on city trees. Pruning for clearance and low limbs can be performed from the ground. An objective in the upcoming pruning cycle will be to have many of the young trees pruned for proper development. The Shade Tree Commission can have this pruning performed by a municipal employee at a lower cost than the cost of having the same work performed by an outside contractor. Employees from Public Works can perform this pruning if they receive the proper training through the Shade Tree Commission and the support from the Public Works Department.

The amount of time needed for Public Works employees to perform tree maintenance will increase as the Shade Tree Commission reduces the amount of tree maintenance performed by outside contractors. This process will save the City of Cape May money by reducing the expenses of contracted work but it will increase the expenses and budget requirements of the Public Works Department. In an effort to evaluate the actual cost and savings of the in-house performance of the young tree pruning, tree planting, and pruning for clearance, it may be necessary to have the public Works Department assign specific employees to perform this work for a specified number of hours per week under the direction of the Shade Tree Commission. The actual cost for this work can then be compared the estimated cost of the work if it were performed by an outside contractor. This increase in man-hours of work by Public Works employees in performing tree maintenance should also be considered an additional expense to the Shade Tree Commission that is performed by the Public Works Department. Creating or modifying a budget line-item on the budgets of both the Shade Tree Commission and the Public Works Department for Public Works Tree Maintenance could provide a balance between the costs and the expenses between them.

Interactive Relationship with the City Solicitor Pertaining to the Community Forest

The city solicitor is responsible for all legal aspects of the community. The solicitor reviews any new tree ordinances for the Shade Tree Commission and is instrumental in developing new regulations related to maintaining and protecting trees in Cape May.

Interactive Relationship with the Emergency Management Coordinator Pertaining to the Community Forest

The emergency management coordinator is responsible for the implementation of the Tree Care Disaster Plan during any Emergency periods and for the coordination of all emergency services related to trees during an emergency period. The coordinator advises residents of dangerous situations, oversee evacuation routes, and responds to requests during emergencies.

The City of Cape May has a high population of very large over mature London plane trees throughout the historic district and along the emergency access routes within the city. Recent natural disasters along the southern coastlines have proven the need for an updated Emergency Management Plan. The Shade Tree Commission will need to review the current plans to advise on the complications caused by multiple large tree failures in a severe storm and solutions that can be implemented in a catastrophic situation.

Interactive Relationship with the Residents of the City of Cape May

The residents of the community are the primary benefactors of all that is done to maintain a healthy community forest. The residents should notify the Shade Tree Commission or the Public Works Department of any trees that are becoming hazardous, declining or have been injured. Residents or property owners may be required to water new plantings on the street in front of their property.

The Shade Tree Commission provides information to the residents on tree related topics such as planting trees that benefit migratory birds, proper pruning techniques and avoiding topping, mulching, sidewalk repair, and similar tree care information.