

CHECKLIST CONCERNING SHADE TREE COMMISSIONS, THE LAW & RELATED ITEMS

1. Adopt the basic enabling ordinance which creates the Shade Tree Commission
2. Adopt the supplemental ordinance which sets the regulations for shade trees in the community
3. Organizational Meeting & Annual Re-organizational Meetings
4. Notice & Publication to comply with NJ Open Public Meetings Act (Sunshine Law)
 - a. Annual publication of meeting dates – 2 newspaper(s) & posting on bulletin board(s)
Keep copy of notice to newspapers w/ records for at least 6 years.
 - b. Notice of Special Meetings
 - c. Emergency Meetings
 - d. Closed(Executive) Session/Meeting –
 - (1) Must do by resolution & must announce when minutes of this part of closed session/meeting will be made public.
 - (2) Minutes must reflect time you went into closed session & time when you came out of closed session
 - (3) Closed/Exec Session – only for certain matters. Example: litigation, personnel,
 - e. All meetings – begin with Statement of Compliance with Open Public Meetings Act
“This meeting is being held in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act, N.J.S.A. 10:4-6 et seq., notice of which was sent to The Record on _____,2020, and to the Jersey Journal on _____,2020; and posted on the Municipal Bulletin Board in the lobby of the _____ Municipal Building, etc.”

(include this statement in minutes of meeting)
 - f. Consult with Municipal Attorney to assure compliance with law
5. Election of Officers (Chairman, Vice Chairman, Treasurer, etc.)
6. Appointment of Secretary (need not be member of commission; this is a paid position) – preferably someone who is well organized, computer literate. This position is CRITICAL to having an efficiently operating shade tree commission.
7. Appoint/contract with a tree consultant (certified tree expert, arborist, etc)
8. Adoption of Rules of Procedure (example: Roberts Rule of Order, Revised)
9. Have an agenda prepared for each meeting (example below)
 - a. Read statement of Compliance with Sunshine Law*
 - b. Approval of Minutes of Prior Meeting(s)
 - c. Approval of Payment of bills
 - d. Authorization to make purchases/spend money
 - e. Correspondence
 - f. Hearing from public
 - g. Old Business
 - h. New Business
 - i. Adjournment
10. Keeping Minutes of Meetings – must be reasonably clear to any person who reads them; describe actions taken at meeting; include names of persons who made motions and votes, etc.
11. Coordination with Planning Board and Zoning Board (Board of Adjustment)
 - a. requirement for planting a certain number of trees for new projects
 - b. requirements for limiting disturbance of trees in new construction projects
 - c. limitation of types of tree species that can be planted
 - d) Ask Planning & Zoning Boards to send Shade Tree Comm. notices of applications to be heard by said boards; review applications-in advance of hearing
12. Coordination with Building Department – especially concerning sidewalks, new construction, building renovations, etc. Prepare hand-out form to be given to contractors to protect trees, etc.

13. Coordination with Public Utility Companies – Meet with their representatives
14. Coordination with Police Department – concerning tree-sign conflicts, tree planting, tree maintenance
15. Coordination with Dept of Public Works – tree planting, tree removal, public projects, etc.
16. Annual Report (December) to governing body & request for budget each year
 - a. wages/salaries of employees
 - b. expenses of commission members – training sessions, etc.
 - c. purchase/planting of trees, etc.
 - d. purchase of equipment, etc.
17. Set priorities
 - a. planting trees
 - b. maintaining trees
 - c. special projects
18. Respond to citizen/resident complaints and requests

You cannot please everyone all the time – but it is important to respond within a reasonable time and in a reasonable manner. If you cannot comply with their request, explain why. It is better to respond w/ bad news, than to not respond at all.
19. Maintain accurate records!!!!!!!!!!!!
 - a. Keep your records up to date and accurate at ALL TIME
 - b. Records of complaints/requests & your response (letters & actions taken)
 - c. Be aware of the NJ Open Public Records Act –almost all government records are now available with few exceptions(ex. Some police records, atty-client privilege, personal info (SS#s, unlisted telephone #s, etc). Some records(budgets, bills, vouchers, contracts) should be made available immediately. Other records – available w/in 7 business days. You may charge for copies. Non-compliance could subject you to civil penalties.
20. Attend training sessions
21. Spending Money and Making Purchases
 - a. Authorize by resolution
 - b. Spending/Purchasing of items of one type or for one project
 - (1) below \$2,625
 - (2) between \$2500 to \$17,500 – minimum of 2 quotes/estimates
 - (3) above \$17,500- bidding threshold
 - (4) If Municipality has a QPA –Qualified Purchasing Agent - expanded thresholds \$2625 expanded to \$6,600; \$17,500 expanded to \$44,000
 - (5) State contracts – bidding not required – even if over the above-stated thresholds
22. Adopt Community Forestry Plan
23. Annual Arbor Day programs
24. Continual and regular publicity for activities of shade tree commission, benefits of trees, etc.
25. Don't be afraid to plant BIG trees. You are operating a SHADE TREE commission; you are managing a community FORESTRY program; and you are managing an URBAN FOREST.
BUT - Use common sense.