JENKINTOWN BOROUGH PLANNING COMMISSION
Tuesday August 19, 2025 - 6:30 p.m.
Virtual ZOOM Meeting
APPROVED MINUTES

Meeting attendees from JBPC: Jon McCandlish, Peter Van Do, Eric Horowitz, Allison Shertzer, Rob Ghormoz. Lucinda Bartley, Phil Zimmerman

Also attending on Zoom: George Locke (Jenkintown Borough Manager and Zoning Officer), Claire Warner (Montgomery County Planning Commission), Maureen Lucak, Joanne Bruno, David Ballard, Jean Thompson among others from the public on Zoom and livestreamed on Facebook.

Names may be referred to by initials in the following meeting summary.

Call to Order Meeting was called to order at 6:30 pm.

Public Comment: Borough Council member David Ballard had seen an early draft of the JBPC July minutes and requested clarification on whether the Planning Commission had taken on initiatives regarding the mix of businesses in town and traffic impacts on local streets. JM responded these were not Planning Commission initiatives. The business mix topic was raised by a borough council member in a public comment. The traffic topic was raised by a resident and discussed only in the context of a specific land use application during Public Comments. JM clarified that such topics have been reviewed only when relevant to planning applications and are currently being independently investigated by the Commission.

Reports/Actions

- JBPC Meeting Minutes Approval – Secretary, Eric Horowitz

A concern was raised regarding potential misinterpretation of the July draft minutes. Specific language was identified which had already been revised. The Commission discussed whether to Include detailed discussion summaries, or limit minutes to decisions and recommendations. Members agreed on the importance of maintaining clarity and accuracy and avoiding confusion about the Commission's role by ensuring that public comment is not misrepresented as official Planning Commission actions.

The June minutes were approved. JM (PV). The July minutes were tabled for further potential revision and clarification.

New Business / Business for Discussion
No new business was presented.

Ongoing Business
- DCED – Main Street Matters Program Grant Opportunity

The borough decided not to submit an application for the Main Street grant due to the short 30-day application window. There was also a County Grant opportunity being reviewed for open spaces. There was some discussion on Grant Opportunities. Claire Warner clarified that while a recent grant opportunity was missed, other grants remain available. Additional funding avenues may exist through DCED or similar entities. Emphasis was placed on preparing for future grant cycles and building

internal capacity for managing such projects. The Jenkintown Borough Planning Commission agreed to move this topic to the New Business section of the next month's agenda to further explore grant opportunities.

- • Jenkintown 2035 Comprehensive Plan Implementation

The chair JM noted inactivity on this topic and reopened the invitation to members to take leadership roles on specific implementation measures. Categories identified were Zoning Design Standards, Historic Resources, Walkability Enhancements, Bicycle and pedestrian safety, and Street trees.

JM wants to create a point person system for each implementation measure to ensure accountability and progress.

Peter began the discussion focusing on the different topics. PV volunteered to focus on sub categories of historic resources and street tree inventory. Other guidelines would fall under zoning and where we could do research. He recommended we work with George and Claire and the Council to prioritize what to work on. PV made a brief presentation on Lower Merion's way of addressing historic properties. He also showed examples from Mount Holly, PA of heritage signs and physical markers in historic districts. Peter recommended referring to peer municipalities for best practices.

Historic Resources The discussion looked at revisiting past historic resource inventories and GIS data developed by the borough. Claire and others confirmed that a full inventory of downtown historic facades was completed, including GIS mapping. JM had worked on this and made presentations to the borough council. A Google Map of 92 historically designated properties exists. A previous proposal to designate the Old York Road corridor as a historic district was discussed: The corridor contains a high concentration of existing designated properties. A formal district was perceived as possibly enhancing design control and preservation, while balancing with development needs. JM would like JBPC to consider revisiting the 2018–2019 presentation materials. JM cited the number one reason people had for moving to Jenkintown were the neighborhood character. JM described current Historic Designation as falling in three tiers: Landmark, Historic, and Contributing. Designation as a Historic Resource in Jenkintown within the borough code does not restrict redevelopment or improvements, It only requires review before demolition of designated structures by borough council. It does not have anything to do with changing a door color or boxed planters or prescribing design, it only focuses on demolition. The 2018-2019 proposal for a historic district was only along the commercial corridor but it did not move forward partly because of the 2020 pandemic. It did not include any residential areas. Jon will locate past resources (GIS links, inventory data) and share with the group. PV suggested preparing an inventory of other properties such as residential only for informational and analytical purposes. The recent discovery that many were Trumbauer influenced adds to the spirit of pride and culture mentioned in the comprehensive plan. EH cited benefits of being listed in a National Park Service historic district to owners such as tax credits for commercial development, zoning flexibility for residential areas, and enhanced community pride and economic value. Claire noted that regulations on setback and height and number of properties could be zoning incentives to encourage the preservation of historic buildings without having the properties themselves being in a NPS historic district. Allison raised concerns about the perception that historic districts have allegedly been used in other municipalities to block housing density and increase development costs. JM noted the reason for investigating in 2018-19 was the borough council asked the planning commission to revisit the historical inventory which had gone ten years without being updated. The conversation was more in the context of putting all the different methods of preservation on the table for discussion and conversation with the borough council. JBPC agreed further coordination with Borough Council is necessary before deeper volunteer time and borough financial investment. JM would like to see continued focus on what PV mentioned regarding preparing a historic inventory which does not delve into zoning or committees or historic review boards. Jon said he will locate past resources (GIS links, inventory data) and share with the group. A link to a map inventorying Jenkintown historic properties was supplied by Phil Zimmerman https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/viewer?mid=1Un4ioeV3LQxy1WLn-wnfcdia7MJ8w-tI&ll=40.0948305985213%2C-75.12469374688243&z=18

Street Trees: PV continued with a discussion on launching or updating a street tree inventory, similar to the historic inventory project. Noted that most street trees in the borough are on private property, limiting municipal control. Shade Tree Commission has had limited capacity but does maintain a small budget annually to provide trees to residents. Lucinda and Peter expressed interest in furthering this initiative, including researching native species and inventory systems. They recognized infrastructure constraints (e.g. utility wires, limited right-of-way) as barriers to large canopy trees. Claire to share resources and best practices for inventory creation and tree planting. She noted DCNR has a good resource for creating a tree inventory and can send more information later. CW referenced a link at https://padcnr.treekeepersoftware.com The Shade Tree Commission to be updated and involved as capacity allows.

Walkability and Wayfinding Initiatives: Peter suggested researching WalkWorks for walkability assessments and tools to aid the Walkability Audit & Wayfinding Plan. PV encouraged the Planning Commission to gather more data and research on pedestrian-friendly enhancements. The existing sub-committee which focuses on Bike and Pedestrian Safety blends into this topic. Eric will send an invitation to Planning Commission members interested in meeting to work on recommendations.

Zoning Code Updates: Peter emphasized the importance of beginning the zoning code update process as a priority. It was agreed that zoning updates would support and integrate other initiatives, such as historic preservation and walkability.

- Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission (PHMC) - Historical marker program. No update.
- Bike and Pedestrian Safety (Sub-Committee update)

This committee will have an invitation sent to JBPC members to meet next month.

- Approved Plant List – No update

- On and off-street parking inventory being conducted by Borough Engineer (precursor to parking study). No update.

- Town Center Street Parking and Traffic Study - West Avenue (No update)

- 181-141 Off-Premises Signs Ordinance (Tabled – ongoing discussion)

Other Business

Design Review Board Update

PZ provided an update on the Design Review Board meeting held the previous evening. The board reviewed the project at 459-471 York Road, which was in front of the JBPC last month, with no major design changes. Planning Commission recommendations were reiterated. A draft recommendation letter will be prepared and shared with the JB Planning Commission.

Adjournment Motion to adjourn made and seconded. JM (PZ). Next meeting is scheduled for the third Tuesday of September.

DCNR has a good resource for creating a tree inventory. I can send more information in an email later: https://padcnr.treekeepersoftware.com/index.cfm?deviceWidth=1280

https://www.mass.gov/doc/tree-inventories-and-surveys-fact-sheet/download#:~:text=The%20key%20to%20understanding%20your,within%20a%20defined%20geographic%20area.

WHAT IS A TREE INVENTORY?

dcr Massachusetts

The key to understanding your urban and community forest

A **tree inventory** is a record of location and characteristics of individual trees and, sometimes, characteristics of their environs, within a defined geographic area. For municipalities, tree inventories typically include street trees and trees in parks or other municipally owned properties. Conducting a tree inventory is the first step to developing a comprehensive urban forest management program.

There are three main types of inventories: sample, partial, and complete.

- A **sample inventory** is conducted on a random sample of street segments, blocks, road miles, or area to provide an estimate for the urban forest. Typically, the sample is 3-10%. The sample can also be stratified.

- A **partial inventory** is conducted on a specific non-random area. It may be a **geographic** area, such as a downtown. It may be a **phased** inventory where different areas are collected at different times, with the goal of each phase eventually comprising a complete inventory. A **survey** collects a few attributes over a large area, even the entire municipality. Surveys are often conducted by vehicle.

- A **complete inventory** includes all street trees, sometimes all park trees and trees on municipal properties, and often includes available planting locations and stumps.

Partial and complete inventories are often linked with work-order management systems. These may be integrated with a work-order management system the municipality uses for other infrastructure.

Why Conduct a Tree Inventory?

- Communicate the importance of a strong municipal forestry program
- Develop management and policy recommendations
- Understand the distribution of species in the urban forest
- Determine the overall condition of trees
- Identify vacant tree planting sites
- Quantify the dollar value and benefits of the urban forest
- Use as the foundation for a management plan

Any of these types of inventories may be updated on a periodic or a continuous basis. To be most effective, an inventory should be linked to a geographic information system (GIS) and be updated regularly. Inventories range in cost from a few thousand dollars to upwards of $40,000. The DCR Urban and Community Forestry Challenge Grant is available to help fund tree inventories. Major drivers of cost include the number of trees inventoried and the number of attributes collected. The attributes should tie to the goals for the inventory. At a minimum, attributes should include, tree location, species, size, and condition, but others may be useful as well, including tree risk rating, pests, maintenance needs, or site conditions.

https://youtu.be/kwwZDsyhhvA?feature=shared

Urban Tree Monitoring Part One: Getting Started

1.9K views · 4y ago · ...more

https://extension.psu.edu/conducting-a-community-tree-inventory

📰 **ARTICLES**

Conducting a Community Tree Inventory

Street and park tree inventories provide information for the planning, design, planting, maintenance, and removal of community trees.

https://blogs.cornell.edu/urbanhort/outreach/community-forestry/conducting-a-street-tree-inventory/

Urban Horticulture Institute

https://www.arbnet.org/arboretum-accreditation-program

RECOMMENDATION S1 (p 117-118):

RECOMMENDATION S1:

Protect and enhance Jenkintown's diverse and established tree canopy. Shade trees provide a wealth of benefits, including improving air quality, providing shade cooling, capturing and absorbing stormwater runoff, and enhancing the visual appearance of a street. Although the Borough has an extensive residential tree canopy, there are areas in the residential and commercial districts that could be improved with additional street trees.

Some front yards do not have much, if any, tree cover. Additional shade trees in these areas could benefit the property owner and the neighborhood overall. On the other hand, some front yard areas may be impractical for street trees because of overhead wires, limited yard space, or other environmental constraints.

Strategy S1a

Complete a street tree inventory. The street tree inventory will record important data about every street tree and tree on public property, including species, size (measured as diameter at breast height (dbh)), tree pit size, sidewalk width, observations of pest damage, and other maintenance recommendations or concerns such as overhead wire conflicts or sidewalk damage.

During the street tree inventory process, locations for new trees, such as empty tree pits, should be identified as priority locations for future planting projects. The tree pit or planting area size should be noted in order to better determine the most appropriate replacement tree species, or other planting material (such as perennial or evergreen, low-growing ground covers) if there is not sufficient room for a street tree.

Typically, street trees need 800-1,200 cubic feet of soil. Where tree planting areas are constrained, smaller trees could be planted or structural soils could be used underneath the adjacent sidewalk to allow for the preferred soil volume.

In general, smaller trees can be planted underneath utility wires and columnar trees are appropriate where there are shallow setbacks.

Where the landscape strip is too narrow for any tree planting; hardy, salt-resistant grasses and low-growing perennial ground covers are suitable.

Strategy S1b

Enhance the role and duties of the Shade Tree Commission. The Shade Tree Commission should provide guidance to property owners on the proper maintenance and planting of trees. Establish a yearly audit of the Borough's trees to identify the loss or addition of new trees. The Shade Tree Commission could also provide assistance to replace felled trees and encourage the planting of trees in areas of Jenkintown that currently lack trees.

The unique character and comfort of the Borough's residential streets is due in large part to the established shade tree canopy. The 1996 Open Space Plan emphasized the "forest neighborhood" character of the Borough's residential streets.

Strategy S1c

Continue to conduct outreach to residential and commercial property owners to encourage the planting of