

Pool construction reducing tree canopy

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West Cape May's Shade Tree Commission is asking Borough Commission to assess how many pools are being installed in the borough, Burke said. He said many pools have been installed in the past two years.

Shade Tree Commission secretary Susan Hoffman said two applications were received in June to remove three trees that were either damaged during previous construction of a pool or needed to be removed for the installation of a pool. Those trees included an 18-foot myrtle, a 35-foot magnolia and a 50-foot generational silver maple tree that was 4 feet in diameter, she said.

The Shade Tree Commission estimates 22 pools have been constructed in West Cape May in the last two to three years.

"Over the same period, we know that 26 trees were either removed or damaged during the construction of those pools," Hoffman said. "So, if you think about that over the next 10 years, we estimate that we could lose 130 trees from our tree canopy if the construction of pools continues at this rate."

Hoffman said the Shade Tree Commission asks property owners to replace trees removed during pool construction.

"But what is happening is that the footprint to replace the trees is decreasing because of the size of the houses that are going in and the number of swimming pools," she said.

During its last meeting, the Shade Tree Commission heard a request from a homeowner who wanted to remove five trees. Hoffman said when an arborist for the commission visited the site, he agreed that five trees could be removed but they needed to be replaced with five large trees.

She said there was no space on the property to place five trees that would be large when they mature.

Sabo asked if five replacement trees could be planted elsewhere in the borough.

Hoffman said a program is in place called the Tree Bank.

"If you don't have a place on your property, you would pay a certain fee and then the Shade Tree Commission would place the trees someplace else," she said.

Sabo said she was looking at both sides of the argument as far as the net gain and loss of trees in the borough. She asked if the borough was overall gaining or losing trees.

"We're at a net loss," Hoffman said.

Burke said birdwatching and ecotourism are important to West Cape May and would be negatively affected by the loss of the borough's tree canopy.

Hoffman said swimming pools also affect wildlife, groundwater, vegetation and permeable surfaces.

Borough Commissioner Dan Kurkowski asked why the Tree Bank was at a loss. Hoffman said when the Shade Tree Commission asks for replacement of a tree, some property owners do not follow their order.

"Last year, there were 80 trees removed and there were less than 80 trees required to replace them, but the Shade Tree Commission can't on our own go out and make sure that all of those trees have been planted," she said.

The Tree Bank is a new concept that is just getting off the ground, Hoffman said.

Sabo said "as built" surveys are being required for new construction, so when the survey is submitted to the zoning officer and construction office, it will confirm if the property owner complied

with the landscape plan.

Burke said there may be more trees in the Tree Bank than homeowners who want to plant the trees.

Sabo said she believes West Cape May has a different landscape than Cape May Point. She said the borough does not have to go "all or nothing" on the issue.

Borough solicitor Frank Corrado said other municipalities cover pools with a series of regulations, an alternative to a ban. He suggested input from the borough's Planning/Zoning Board.

Corrado said it took Cape May Point several years to enact a swimming pool ban.

During public comment, Shade Tree Commission treasurer Bill Oetinger said the commission is actively planting trees but new trees are not equal in size to the trees being

removed.

"We can stipulate a large tree replacement but that's a 40-foot tree being replaced by one 10-foot tree, so it is not one for one," he said.

Burke said it takes years for a replacement tree to grow to the size of a removed tree.

"It's going to be out of my lifetime, most likely,"

he said.

Oetinger suggested the borough's Environmental Commission weigh in on any decisions about swimming pool development. He said pump motors create a noise issue for neighbors.

"One of the great and unusual things about West Cape May is you can hear things blocks away," he

said.

Burke questioned how many new pools would be installed at rental properties that create a noise issue for neighbors when night parties take place poolside.

Letters will be sent to homeowners who have not complied with required tree planting during the last two years, Burke said.

West Cape May Zoning Officer Norm Roach said the borough is requiring "as built" surveys. Sabo said Roach would see a construction project at its beginning and end.

"We should take the least restrictive means to accomplish the sought end," Kurkowski said, noting he likes both trees and pools.

TIDES: July 20-27, 2022

DATE	HIGH		LOW	
	A.M.	P.M.	A.M.	P.M.
20	1:57	2:41	8:03	8:43
21	2:54	3:38	8:54	9:46
22	3:52	4:32	9:45	10:47
23	4:50	5:24	10:35	11:42
24	5:45	6:11	11:23	
25	6:35	6:55	12:33	12:09
26	7:21	7:37	1:18	12:53
27	8:04	8:16	1:59	1:35

MOON PHASES
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