

URBAN FORESTRY COMMISSION

Minutes of February 26, 2025

IN PERSON MEETING

Room 208 Municipal Building

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Steven Cronkite, Chairperson
David Meyering
Pat Ludwig
Carl Lecce
Bob Grimm
Michael Maier

ALSO PRESENT:

Rick Romano, Sidewalk and Construction
Inspector and Deputy Tree Warden
Brian Gartner, Acting Deputy Dir. of PW (via
WebEx)

ROLL CALL

Steven Cronkite called the meeting to order at 4:30 pm, in room 208 of City Hall. The roll was called, and the quorum was determined.

REVIEW OF MEETING MINUTES HELD JANUARY 22nd, 2026

Minutes approved by unanimity as issued, with no objections.

OLD BUSINESS

- a. **Tree Warden Report:** Rick listed the work that J&J has done since last month and described it. Rick asked everyone to please let him know before April if they see any significant tree pruning/removal work needed, so he can include it on J&J's next bid work list.
- b. **Public Works Report:** No update.
- c. **Urban Forestry Account Balance:** \$4,764.90
- d. **General Fund Tree Account:** \$52,880.24. Steve mentioned that most or all the funds had been already assigned so he asked Rohan to please find additional money for additional tree planting once the first 29 trees on Main Street and elsewhere have been planted. Steve has asked Rohan to confirm whether separate POs are needed to use donated money, or if the donated money went into the general tree fund.
- e. **Downtown Business District tree pit project:** The last 19 trees will be planted in spring.
- f. **Other Proposed Planting Locations:** 10 other non-Main Street locations are already staked and ready for planting after Main Street is completed.
In a conversation with Steve, Bobby has suggested instead of the city planting trees in city property and having to maintain them, knocking on doors and asking property owners if they are willing to take care of a tree that the city would plant on their property. This could reduce the City's workload. On the other hand, the trees are more effective if they shade the roads and sidewalks, additionally, sometimes there is not enough room in the front yard of the houses.
- g. **Status of previous outreach tasks:** Steve will contact Bobby Russo and Brian Gartner to determine next steps.
- h. **Arboretum Labels:** There was a discussion of what information should be on the labels.

They should include common name, scientific name, planted in memory of (if appropriate), a QR code linking to the GIS map, an accession # which will include the planting year, and an acknowledgement of the Rockfall Foundation for funding the labels. Possibly include the tree location #, which has been useful in the past. (Note that the GIS mapping also uses the location number for data entry, so it is important.)

Jane gave Steve some archives from the Arboretum, some notes and emails for trees planted in the last couple of decades, so he may be able to confirm additional planting dates and dedications.

- i. Potential Volunteer Tree Inventory Demonstration Project.** With this project we can inventory perhaps 50 or 100 trees to show DEEP that we can handle this so we might get a larger grant when it becomes available. Mike, Pat, Chris Donnelly and Steve will set up a strategy meeting and anyone interested is welcome.
- j. Zelkova at Green Street parking lot:** Steve coordinated with Christine Marques to confirm that Bobbye conveyed to her the Commission's recommendation and request for compensatory trees and or funds. Christine responded that she would like Rick's concurrence on Steve's calculations that called for nine (9), 2.5"-d.b.h. trees or the same value (\$4,500) of smaller trees and shrubs, for replacement plantings on site to the extent possible, and if there's not enough room then elsewhere in the same North End area. Jane and Chris told Steve that, in the past, that compensation numbers are computed based on the diameter of the tree. Steve will forward his computations to Rick for his review.
- k. Tree City USA designation.** Steve got an email today from the Arbor Day Foundation saying that they are reviewing the application, which was already approved by the State.
- l. Arbor Day 2026 planning.** There are 3 honorees identified for that day, Guy Russo (Gabe's father) who was someone very community spirited and director of water and sewer for several years, Krishna Winston, and Tony Marino.
- m. Potential Tree Care/Pruning Demonstration:** Pat noted that there is a similar event in Old Saybrook, Pat assisted in the past and she can envision something similar in Middletown, but she needs support with the logistic of it, she will discuss with the Parks and Rec Department. An event like this can make people more aware and interested in the trees and their care.
- n. America 250 (Semi-quincentennial) tree:** No updates.

NEW BUSINESS

- a. Removal of invasives around Sycamore in Frank S. Marszalek Park (Middlefield Street):** Ricky stated that a Spider Lift will be needed to be able to reach the taller vines because the tree is a little bit back, but this is not going to be done any time soon because of the ground. Mike is teaching a class about invasive plants. Steve asked Mike if Mike would consider leading a talk and discussion on invasives at the Russell Library; he was open to the idea.

OTHER & CORRESPONDENCE

- a. Prayer Flags in the arboretum:** Steve asked for input on the flags which are looking worn. The flags were put on the memorial tree for Stephan Allison's wife. It was agreed Steve will talk with Stephan Allison and ask him if it can be a little bit lower on the tree or reinstalled.

- b. Urban Tree Symposium:** Originally scheduled March 27th but postponed to April 17th. For that reason they may reopen the registration for more people to attend, Steve asked to this commission to let him know if they would like to attend.

PUBLIC COMMENT (none)

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made and seconded to adjourn the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 5:35 pm.