

**Ridgefield Tree Committee
Minutes
May 13, 2024
6:30 p.m.**

**This is a Summary of the Activities of the Committee
and not a verbatim transcript**

In attendance: Tree Warden, Steve Lavatori; Tom McManus; Chair; Ryan Bossis; Robert Roth; Paul Shotton; Kitsey Snow; Anthony Lewis Tufariello; and Eileen White.

The Meeting was called to Order at: 6:35 p.m. by the Chair.

Report of the Tree Warden

Mr. Lavatori reported that with the fiscal year-end approaching, his budget is tight (only 20% remaining) and still constrained by needed removals. He will continue to work with Bartlett Tree Experts to help alleviate the risk of Beech Leaf Disease (BLD) to the seven Beech trees in Ballard Park.

Meeting Packet

The Chair distributed an 11-page meeting packet to members and the Tree Warden, including a copy of the agenda, his proposed edited versions of minutes to 3 prior meetings (March 4, April 2, and April 27) and several additional exhibits to be utilized later in the meeting.

Approval of Tree Minutes from Prior Meetings

The Committee discussed the procedure for approving the three prior Meeting Minutes. Mr. Roth stated he would not be able to approve revised meeting minutes without reviewing the changes made; other members agreed.

Approval of March 4, 2024, April 2, 2024 and April 27, 2024 Minutes:

UPON motion duly made (Roth), seconded (Bossis), and carried, it was RESOLVED that consideration of the Minutes of the meetings of March 2024 and the two Meetings of April 2024 be tabled until the June 3, 2024 Meeting. Vote: Yes-4, No-1, Abstentions-2.

Finances

The Chair reported that there have been no changes to the Committee finances. There has been no response from the Ridgefield Thrift Shop regarding the grant application submitted by Kitsey in January; some other organizations have already been notified of their grants.

The Chair asked members to remain on the lookout for grant opportunities.

Public Engagement

The Chair referred to page 7 of the meeting packet that contained the message he has distributed in the past via social media (e.g. Facebook groups focused on local news and events) concerning the risks of dead Ash trees around Town.

Each member should be on the lookout for trees in Town that could pose a danger, aware of how to make a report, and able to help the public recognize and report dangerous trees.

- 1) If trees pose a danger to utility lines, poles etc.: Call Eversource Vegetation Management at (844) 275-3302.
- 2) If trees pose a danger to safe passage along State Highways: Contact the State Department of Transportation at (860) 594-2560; DOT.CustomerCare@ct.gov; or (best option) <https://customercare.dot.ct.gov/> (scroll down to make a report).
- 3) If trees pose a danger to safety or passage along Town roads or public places, Contact the Tree Warden at TreeWarden@RidgefieldCT.gov or (203) 431-2358.

Projects

The Chair referred to pages 8-9 of the meeting packet that listed 22 proposed planting locations along Main Street that had been submitted to the State Dept of Transportation for approval.

The Tree Warden said that, realistically, the goal could be to plant 8-10 new trees, before Memorial Day.

Ms. Snow suggested two more locations to be added: a) in front of 599 Main Street and b) in front of 607 Main Street. Mr. McManus and Ms. Snow discussed trees near St. Stephen's Church. Mr. McManus related a conversation with Rector Alltopp, who expressed a preference for no additional trees to be planted along the State Right-of-Way in front of the Church property, and that she would take up any recommendations with her Outdoor Committee. Ms. Snow acknowledged that she is a member of that committee and would work with them to identify desired plantings.

Mr. Bossis and Ms. Snow suggested there was room for another tree on the south side of the central walkway (in addition to the new planting already planned to occupy a spot equidistant from the walkway as the existing tree immediately north of the walkway). Mr. McManus agreed that there were two spots open a little further south, but there were recently cut stumps occupying those locations.

Publications

The Chair reviewed the Trees in Ballard Park map, and asked Members to review it carefully for accuracy now that leaves are visible, so that more copies can be made available to the public.

Mr. McManus noted that the maps were available at the Reception Desk at Town Hall and wondered whether some could be left in a protected place inside the Park Gazebo. Mr. Roth suggested a QR Code instead would be a better solution to inhibit vandalism and prevent waste. Mr. McManus agreed and recalled that he had seen a QR code sign at a public garden in Stamford that the committee could investigate.

Seven Members for Seven Sectors

Referring to page 10 of the meeting packet, the Chair referred members to the Town maps (published by MAIL-A-MAP®) that he had distributed to each member at the April 27 meeting in Ballard Park.

Each map had been marked with a unique Section Number (between #1 and #7, inclusive, for the seven members of the Committee), each section comprising a contiguous area of roughly 5 square miles of the 35 square miles of the Town of Ridgefield.

Mr. McManus also displayed a board with an opened copy of the map, each of the 7 areas outlined and labeled #1 through #7.

Beginning at the Southwest corner of the Town near Vista, and continuing clockwise toward Ridgebury and then southward toward Branchville, the assigned sections are:

1: Tony; 2: Paul; 3: Kitsey; 4: Tom; 5: Ryan; 6: Bob; 7: Eileen

Mr. McManus asked each Member to captain the assigned Section for all of the responsibilities of the Committee to the Town (including, but not limited to identifying and reporting Notable, Hazardous or Diseased Trees), and documenting areas where the Committee might publish additional “Tree Walks” (modeled after the Ballard Park Tree brochure) that interested residents can use to view the natural beauty—and increase their knowledge and appreciation—of the trees.

The Chair referred to page 11 of the packet (a table displaying the identification and geographic locations of six specific trees viewable on the paved path encircling the Parks & Recreation Center north of Copps Hill Rd and west of Danbury Rd. He asked each Member to collect such information regarding the interesting and notable (or dangerous/diseased) trees in their Sections.

Mr. McManus again offered to swap his own Section (#4) with any other member; he noted that a swap of Sections between Members had already occurred (between Ryan and Bob) when the maps were distributed on April 27.

For any member who has misplaced a map, new maps are available at Town Hall and page 10 of the packet (describing the extent of each area) can be used to recreate any or all of the sections.

Other Business

Mr. Shotton observed that—especially for street trees of certain species planted near sidewalks, etc.—that the planting of male trees would be preferred (as opposed to female trees). The Tree Warden acknowledged the suggestion and will incorporate this distinction in the selection of trees to be planted.

Ms. Snow informed the Committee that a memorial tree planted on the East Ridge Middle School campus is in need of replacement; the Tree Warden said he was aware of this, and a new tree will be planted before the school re-opens in the Fall.

The Committee discussed monitoring past Recreation Center plantings.

Mr. Roth informed the Committee that the installation of the park bench dedicated to the memory of former Tree Warden John Pinchbeck had been delayed by the reconstruction project of the bandstand at Ballard Park and that it would be delivered soon.

Adjournment

UPON motion duly made (Shotton), seconded (Roth), and carried, it was RESOLVED that the Meeting adjourn at 7:35 P.M. Vote: Yes-7, No-0.

The Next Meeting is to be an in-person meeting at 6:30 p.m. on Monday, June 3, 2024.

Respectfully submitted,

Tom McManus, Chair

Town of Ridgefield Tree Committee