

**APPROVED Minutes**  
**Ridgefield Tree Committee**  
**January 14, 2025**  
**6:35 p.m.**

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

In attendance:

Members: Tom McManus (Chair), Ryan Bossis, Paul Shotton; Don Hulnick, Kitsey Snow (on phone).

Absent: Tree Warden Steve Lavatori; Robert Roth; Anthony Tufariello (resigned)

**Approval of Minutes of Past Meetings**

Mr. McManus referred to the minutes of the meeting of the Committee on December 12 that had been provided to the members in advance of the meeting.

UPON motion duly made (Shotton), seconded (Bossis), and carried, it was RESOLVED that these minutes were APPROVED Vote: Yes-5, No-0.

**Next Meeting Scheduled**

Mr. McManus reminded the Committee of the next meeting at 6:30pm on February 11.

**Finances**

Mr. McManus informed the Committee that there were no changes in finances.

**Election of Officers**

Mr. Shotton nominated Mr. McManus to continue as Chair. No other nominations were made; Mr. McManus was re-elected 5-0.

Mr. McManus nominated Mr. Shotton as Vice-Chair. No other nominations were made; Mr. Shotton was elected 2-0.

There were no nominations for Secretary.

**Advising the Tree Warden**

Mr. Bossis shared his ideas for the proposed changes at 34 Halpin Lane (Town of Ridgefield property) to facilitate construction of an Alternative High School building.

Mr. McManus reviewed the suggestions, said that he agreed with most of them and that members could share their ideas as "advice" for the Tree Warden as described in Town Ordinance 329-4B (2) "The Tree Committee shall advise and consult the Tree Warden on any matter pertaining to this chapter and its enforcement."

A discussion ensued about the legal power and authority of the Tree Warden as designated in Town Ordinance 329-4A (1) which recognized the Tree Warden as having "all powers, duties and authorities ... as set out in ... C.G.S.23-59", which endows to the Tree Warden "care and control of all trees and shrubs ... within the limits of any public road or grounds" (except state highways).

Mr. McManus observed that members could attend meetings of town government as any other resident might — to share their ideas and recommendations (which would be evaluated based on content, including their experience and expertise) regarding any project, public or private.

### **Attaining Arboretum Level I Designation for Ballard Park**

Mr. Hulnick investigated the requirements for ArbNet (part of the Morton organization) to recognize Ballard Park as an arboretum. The criteria for Level I require 25 unique species plus a volunteer board, standards for which the Park and Committee would qualify. The map originally prepared by former Committee member Cheryl Cook (which has been updated several times in the past year) does not include the entire area of the park, but the Chair observed that the total number of species would not nearly approach the 100 required for Level II status, nor is there paid management in control. Thus, Level II is out of reach. A new version of the map could include more area; that remains an opportunity that the Committee can pursue independently of applying for inclusion on ArbNet's list of Level I arboreta. Another area being considered as an arboretum would be centered around the Ridgebury Cemetery.

Mr. Bossis moved, Mr. Shotton seconded, and it was RESOLVED that the application be prepared as soon as practicable for Ballard Park to attain accreditation as a Level I Arboretum by ArbNet. Motion passed: 5-0.

### **Retaining "Tree City" Status as Recognized by Arbor Day Foundation**

As discussed in prior meetings, the Town of Ridgefield (as one of only 20 of 169 Connecticut municipalities) had long been recognized as a Tree City by the Arbor Day Foundation. This recognition was not renewed on a timely basis beginning in 2020. A new application for 2025 recognition was completed in 4q2024 by the Chair. An important requirement to renew the award is an annual Arbor Day celebration which the Committee held on April 27, 2024.

Mr. McManus moved, Mr. Shotton seconded, and it was RESOLVED that the Tree Committee be responsible each year for preparing and submitting the application for the Town of Ridgefield to be recognized as a Tree City by the Arbor Day Foundation. This will involve annual celebrations of Arbor Day which falls on the last Friday of April. Motion passed: 5-0.

### **Brainstorming ideas for Arbor Day Celebration on April 26 (rain date April 27)**

The Chair requested members to develop ideas to attract Town residents to Ballard Park in late April. One idea: invite an arborist to demonstrate planting a new tree in the park.

### **Recognizing and Celebrating Notable Trees in Ridgefield**

As discussed in prior meetings, it has been many years since the Committee published a new version of "Notable Trees." Discussion continued as to how best to direct interested residents to locate, view and appreciate the wide variety of attractive and notable examples of numerous species of trees found throughout the town. A database of tree species, other key statistics and GPS locations could be combined with a mapping application to simplify the development of additional maps that could be more easily updated than paper booklets used previously.

### **Developing a Tree Map for the Paved Walkway around Parks & Recreation HQ**

The Chair reminded members of the popularity of the paved path that surrounds the Parks & Recreation property on Danbury Road. Some trees are labeled, and others are worthy of note. Given the extraordinary popularity of this path, a map with descriptions and explanations of trees would prove to be a worthwhile contribution by the Committee.

### **Adjournment**

UPON motion duly made (Shotton), seconded (Bossis), and carried, it was RESOLVED that the meeting be adjourned at 8:40 P.M. Vote: Yes-5, No-0.

Respectfully submitted,  
Tom McManus, Chair