

DRAFT Minutes
Ridgefield Tree Committee
August 12, 2025
6:34 p.m.

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

In attendance:

Tree Warden: Steve Lavatori. Members: Tom McManus (Chair), Paul Shotton, Ian Dow, Bob Roth. On Phone: Kitsey Snow. Excused: Ryan Bossis. Absent: Don Hulnick.

Meeting Schedule

Mr. Dow reported that the Town website was displaying an incorrect start time (7:30pm) for the June Committee meeting (an error that may have been related to a recent website overhaul).

As agreed by the committee in January and posted on the Town website here (https://ridgefieldct.gov/boards_committees_commissions/tree_committee/index.php) ALL regular meetings of the Committee commence at 6:30 pm Eastern Time.

Approval of Minutes of Past Meetings

Mr. McManus referred to the minutes of the meeting of the Committee on June 10 that had been provided to the members in advance of the meeting.

UPON motion duly made (Dow), seconded (Snow), and carried, it was RESOLVED that these minutes were APPROVED.

Motion passed: 3-0-2 (Shotton and Roth abstaining).

Tree Planting Update

A Sweet Gum ("Slender Silhouette®") tree was planted at 378 Main St. independently of the Rotary Club partnership, replacing a struggling Red Maple planted five years ago (dedicated to a resident's mother). Mr. McManus purchased the tree at Planter's Choice and hasn't yet submitted a voucher for repayment for the tree and other community-related expenses.

Rotary Club indicated donations amounted to \$130k for the "Replanting Ridgefield" joint venture, with the bulk of that amount from a few donors. Approximately \$25k has been spent planting 16 trees in June.

There are more plant-able spots on Main Street (9 already approved, 17 more to be proposed see stakes) plus 2 on Catoonah, other "gateway" routes (e.g. Danbury Rd) and High Ridge, East Ridge, etc. Plan to move Serviceberry tree from front of 368 Main St (need shrub to replace) to front of 351 Main St.

A few locations near the East Ridge & Governor Street intersection were discussed.

Planting trees at schools is another possibility; PTA involvement needed to support this effort.

New Tree Planting & Dedication Request

A resident called to dedicate a tree for a friend's deceased father, a 35-year Stanford Police veteran, avid baseball fan, whose granddaughters play travel softball in Ridgefield. The request is to plant near the ball field at RHS; Steve is working with Parks & Rec to approve the location.

Largest Sugar Maple Tree on Main Street (possibly largest in the Town of Ridgefield)

Known to (and loved by) many as the "Gnome Tree," the Sugar Maple at 57 Main has significant decay and needs care in its waning years. The trunk is on CT-DOT right-of-way, but a good deal of the canopy hangs over private property. Some arborists might recommend removal. Thinning canopy, removing dead wood, replacing/installing several cables recommended at a minimum.

This approach wouldn't guarantee the tree's long-term survival; also, State approval is needed.

Town Website Update

The town's website was renovated. The structure is more organized; but the font size/style is difficult to read and previously existing links to favorite pages are inoperative. Old links do not work. Members should visit Tree Committee page to help reorganize and suggest updates and additional content.

Facebook Group

The Facebook group "Ridgefield, CT Trees" has about 280 members. There are daily posts, including those related to the Tree Committee. Information on reporting dangerous trees is available.

Update on Newly-Planted Chestnut Trees

The Connecticut Chestnut Foundation is involved in the project; these recently planted chestnut trees are tiny. The location was chosen due to wet conditions. There have been concerns about their proximity to the road. Changing the location was deemed too complicated.

Forestry Management Plan

Mr. Bossis requested access to a Word doc several months ago to review proposed revisions to the Forestry Management Plan. It was suggested that the Committee move forward on this project.

Connecticut Master Woodland Management Manager Program

Mr. Dow informed the Committee that he will be attending the Connecticut Master Woodland Management Manager program, involving 60 credit hours (30 virtual, 30 in-class) beginning soon. Time will be spent at the University of Connecticut forest.

Plaques Installed near Recently-Planted Trees

Representatives from the Rotary Club prefer plaques to be prominently displayed between the sidewalk edge and tree trunks; Mr. McManus expressed a preference for the plaques to be installed further from the sidewalk edge (so that the trunk is between the plaque and sidewalk. adamant that the plaques have to be right in front of the tree.

Tree Warden's Report

Tree removals continue. Bartlett Tree Experts have completed all scheduled treatments in the Ballard Park. As usual, calls from residents never cease; they merely slow down on occasion. Some trees at the golf course were marked for removal with yellow paint, apparently because they have large cankers.

Tree City and Growth Award Applications

Applications for renewing the Town's "Tree City" designation and related "Growth Award" are not due for several months, but required figures needed to start the applications are available.

250th Anniversary of Declaration of Independence & Battle of Ridgefield Approaching

Mr. McManus believes the Tree Committee become involved with the recognition of these important events, possibly by arranging/supporting an event that would relate the friction between the Colonists and the English Crown concerning trees (decades before the Stamp Act, Boston Tea Party and the Battle of Bunker Hill, where the "Pine Tree Flag" was carried by irate Colonists.

Adjournment

UPON motion duly made (Shotton), seconded (Dow), and carried, it was RESOLVED that the meeting be adjourned at 7:45 p.m. Motion passed: 4-0.

Respectfully submitted,
Tom McManus, Chair