

West Reading Shade Tree Commission

Minutes

Monday, April 6, 2026, 6pm

Attendance: Vicki Graff, Jean Witmer, Lynn Burns, Mike Hayes, Kerry Grassley

Patrick Kaag

Absent: Zac Shaver

1. Call to Order: 6:00p.m.
2. Public Comment:
 - a. Patrick Kaag on behalf of borough council; Revitalization Foundation is looking for feedback on an idea: art installation of a fence around a tree on the Avenue with locks and keys.
 - i. Concern/Questions: Will it become too many locks and become ugly? What is the impact of the chemicals in locks and fencing on the trees and soil? How will it be constructed for stability, out of a pathway, etc.
 - ii. Alternative suggestions: use the tree by the pool? Set up in Delaney Circle or the Elementar playground?
 - iii. The Committee respectfully requests that the project does not include trees.
3. Approval of Minutes from May 2025: Move to approve by Jean, second by Lynne. Motion carried.
4. Old Business
 - a. Tree Watchlist
 - i. 400 block of Chestnut St.
 - ii. 200 block of S 2nd Ave.
 - iii. 421 Sycamore
 - iv. Parkside Drive N / Museum Rd.
 - v. Playground Drive
 - vi. 100 block of 3rd Ave. - certified letters have been sent to homeowners regarding tree that needs to come down, but there has been no response; will work with Chad / codes
 - b. Tree Inventory
 - i. Tree removal on Playground Drive, related to grant - we have to front the costs, then will get reimbursed from the grant.
 - ii. Will finish tree inventory after that, which will help with trimming and general maintenance.
 - c. Tree Planting
 - d. Tree Trimming
 - i. Up to date
5. New Business
 - a. Shade Tree Letter to Oak Terrace Residents

- i. Oak Terrace does not have a planting strip. 100+ year old trees are coming down, and need to be replaced, but it's on private property. The borough is willing to pay for the trees and installation. Public Works will deliver letters as they remove trees.
 - 1. Do we need to include a "no tree" option? Yes, Jean will add.
 - 2. We would like legal to review the letter and plan before it is sent out.
 - ii. Other streets will need the same approach: Linden, Sunset, Sycamore
6. Adjournment: 6:35 pm
- a. Motion by Lynne Burns, second by Mike Hayes. Motion carried.

Months ago, the Committee discussed removing trees on Oak Terrace, where there is no planting strip, and the original oaks were planted on residential properties. Several trees have had to be removed, and some replaced. As trees on this block grow on private property, we can't force replacement. Jean had asked at that time if we might send a letter to the homeowners where trees have not been replaced, and encourage their participation. First draft of that letter was considered at the 3/2/26 Shade Tree Commission's meeting, where Jean was asked to include more benefits of trees in general, and a no-cost statement. We agreed we would give this letter to residents when any borough tree is removed in the future.

To our neighbor at _____ :

When many of our West Reading homes were built in the 1920's, the community plans didn't stop with the homes. The founders created a legacy of communal beauty when they planted the trees that have graced our streets for generations to come.

Those trees are vital to our community's health. Other than lending their beauty throughout the seasons, did you know trees:

- Remove large quantities of pollution from the air.
- Reduce global warming by removing carbon dioxide from the air and releasing oxygen into the atmosphere.
- Save us in cooling and heating costs by shading in summer, and acting as wind-breaks in the winter.
- Reduce threat of flooding by directing rainwater into the soil = less storm water run-off.
- Increase the appeal and value of our homes and places of business when mature trees are present.

The Shade Tree Commission of West Reading is entrusted with maintaining our tree inventory. We partner with Bartlett Tree Experts, who among other things, advise us on the type of trees suitable to replace those we have lost to age or disease.

It's always sad to lose one of our 100+ year old trees, but that did occur at your property within the past year or so. The prevailing thought now is to plant different types of trees along our streets, so damage due to disease or insect infestation doesn't destroy all same-species trees at once. The Arborist has recommended the following options as a replacement:

1. (Common name and basic description: height, canopy, fall leaf color, what it drops)
- 2.
- 3.

The Borough will replace the tree at no cost to you. If you would like to choose, please mark your selection above, and return this letter to the Shade Tree Commission in the enclosed self addressed, stamped envelope before

_____.

Thank you for taking part in keeping West Reading green and healthy for future generations, Shade Tree Commission.