

West Reading Shade Tree Commission
Monday, May 4, 2026, 6pm

Draft Minutes

Attendance: Vicki Graff, Lynne Burns, Jean Witmer, Kerry Grassley

Visitor: Elizabeth Kaufmann

Absent: Michael Hayes, Zac Shaver

1. Call to Order: Called to order at 6pm.
2. Public Comment: Elizabeth Kaufmann came to the meeting to learn more about the committee and ask about replanting a tree on the 100 block of South 7th Ave.
3. Approval of Minutes from April 2026: Motion by Lynne Burns, Second by Jean Witmer. Approved.
4. Old Business
 - a. Tree Watchlist - Jean requested two trees near 4th and Pine be reviewed.
 - b. Tree Inventory - Review of the plan to complete the tree removal on Playground Drive, then once that expenditure is reimbursed, finish the borough tree inventory.
 - c. Tree Planting - Bertolet will help with tree recommendation to make sure the trees don't take over the sidewalks; new planting will need to be done in September. The weather this spring has been very dry and not ideal for planting.
 - d. Tree Trimming - Looking at Lakeview, Wayne after the reimbursement.
5. New Business
 - a. Final Review of Shade Tree Letter to Oak Terrace Residents
 - i. What if everyone chooses the same tree? Not a concern, no entire blocks need to be replanted, the trees will be spread out.
 - ii. Are we sure we will cover the cost to replace and maintain the trees? Yes, this is already happening in the borough.
 - iii. Motion to approve the letter: Motion by Lynne Burns, Second by Jean Witmer. Approved.
 - b. Next steps:
 - i. Email and snail mail to residents on one block where trees have been removed.
 - ii. Start with Oak Terrace.
 - iii. Deadline for home owners to reply: within 3 weeks of receipt

- iv. We request that they be mailed from Borough. Kerry will develop a list of addresses, list of tree recommendations. The letters should include a self addressed stamped envelope to make it easy for home owners to reply.
 - v. If a person does not want a tree now, borough should ask the next house (recommendation to tag a note to water bill)
6. Adjournment at 6:22pm: Motion by Lynne Burns, Second by Jean Witmer. Approved.

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.**
- 4. I appreciate the value of trees in our community, but I don't want one on my property.**

The Borough will replace and maintain the tree at no cost to you. 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**