

DRAFT Minutes
Ridgefield Tree Committee
February 11, 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); Paul Shotton; Robert Roth; Don Hulnick; Kitsey Snow (6:43).

Absent: Ryan Bossis.

Tree Warden: Steve Lavatori

Approval of Minutes of Past Meetings

Mr. McManus referred to the minutes of the meeting of the Committee on January 14 that had been provided to the members in advance of the meeting. He noted a typographical error (duplicated word "member" in the note about the Ballard Park Arboretum application) would be corrected. Mr. Hulnick noted that he had not seen the email with the minutes; he was provided with a copy as posted on the Town website.

UPON motion duly made (Shotton), seconded (McManus), and carried, it was RESOLVED that these minutes were APPROVED. Vote: Yes-2, No-0, Abstain-2 (Hulnick, Roth).

Next Meeting Scheduled

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

Finances

Mr. McManus informed the Committee that there were no receipts or expenditures to note. Ridgefield Rotary has raised a substantial sum and is interested in planting new trees primarily in the Downtown area and Gateway routes (a somewhat broader area than the Main Street focus of the 2023 contributors).

Spring Circular for Residents: Raising Awareness of Tree Problems

Mr. Shotton reminded the Committee of the draft bulletin he had prepared for town residents about several tree problems to be looking out for, and other seasonal advice intended for the widest possible circulation. He requested some assistance to convert his ideas into something more "marketable;" Mr. McManus encouraged members to assist Mr. Shotton.

Kudos for Committee Website and Opportunity to Connect with Engaged Youth

Mr. McManus read an email received by Mr. Lavatori from a chapter of the Student Conservation Association (SCA) in Newport (state TBD), complimenting the Tree Committee website. Several members thought a local chapter of SCA may be a useful framework for engaging with younger residents enthusiastic about environmental sustainability and preservation.

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

Mr. McManus again requested members to develop ideas to attract Town residents to Ballard Park in late April. He mentioned a visit to Ballard Park last year with Ms. Snow to observe the lack of any shade on the playground in the southwest corner of the park; several trees in the area had been removed in the past year. Even if the Committee were to plant a new shade tree at the southeast corner of the playground, it would be years before the new tree could provide meaningful shade. Mr. McManus asked members to brainstorm ideas as to tree species to plant, and how to (perhaps artificially, via a sun shade sail and posts; apparently some manufacturers offer these products as large as 20' x 30') provide some shade for a number of years until the tree might provide sufficient natural shade.

Forestry management plan revision

Mr. McManus had circulated two versions (via email to members) of the Town of Ridgefield Forestry Management Plan; the original as most recently updated in 2003, and a partially updated version on which he had been working. A significant portion of the document needs little work other than formatting (e.g. inserting the latest version of the Town Tree Ordinance).

The parts of the document that would benefit from members' attention (according to Mr. McManus) are the referenced resources in the original document (e.g. Bibliography pp 17-18; Relevant Websites and Contact Information page 26). These notes will be of continued interest and assistance to residents, members of the Committee, and perhaps even tree contractors.

Mr. Hulnick observed that one of the books listed in the Bibliography section (Bassuk: Urban Trees) was not available in the Ridgefield Library or the library network when he inquired and appears to be out of print. Mr. McManus agreed and requested that information and suggestions be provided in list form to facilitate the editing process.

Applying for Arboretum Level I Designation for Ballard Park

Mr. Hulnick circulated a rough draft application for accreditation of Ballard Park as a Level I arboretum by ArbNet (part of the Morton organization). Mr. McManus suggested that the Lounsbury House grounds may not have a sufficient number of species to qualify independently, but the additional species on Main Street connecting the two properties could eventually result in a "Ballard-Lounsbury Arboretum." Ms. Snow observed that accredited arboreta need not be contiguous to qualify, and pointed to the Greenwich Town Arboretum as an example of a single arboretum comprising 6 separate locations. As the Committee has previously discussed other locations around town that would potentially qualify (e.g. Richardson Park, Ridgebury Cemetery, etc.), this approach would be worth considering.

Planting a tree for the Caudatowa Garden Club

Mr. McManus met with Melenie Rose of the Caudatowa Garden Club, who would like to plant an Oak tree on the north side of the main entrance 90 East Ridge Rd (near the Governor St. intersection and uphill from the Playhouse sign). Ms. Rose has some specific requests about species, etc.; Ms. Snow offered to connect with Ms. Rose to develop an action plan.

Tree Committee membership

Ms. Snow mentioned that an acquaintance is interested in attending a meeting and may consider joining the Committee. Mr. McManus observed that all Town meetings are open to the public and the Committee is always interested in volunteers to assist with its activities. He informed the Committee that a new member is being considered for appointment by the Select Board.

Project to remove invasive plants near Parks & Recreation HQ

Ms. Snow mentioned that she and Mr. Bossis had spoken with the Tree Warden, Parks & Rec Department, and the Inland Wetlands Agent regarding a "long-term" project to remove invasive bushes, vines, etc. on the north side of the Parks & Recreation HQ property near the Ridgefield Brook. Ms. Snow indicated that former Committee member Cheryl Cook is also involved; Mr. McManus reminded members that encouraging visitors to appreciate the trees (via a map and/or more labels) would enhance the Committee's standing in the community.

Adjournment

UPON motion duly made (Shotton), seconded (Roth), and carried, it was RESOLVED that the meeting be adjourned at 8:07 P.M. Vote: Yes-6, No-0.

Respectfully submitted,
Tom McManus, Chair