

DRAFT Minutes
Ridgefield Tree Committee
May 13, 2025
6:33 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, Don Hulnick, Kitsey Snow (6:35 pm), Absent: Bob Roth. Excused: Ryan Bossis.

Approval of Minutes of Past Meetings

Mr. McManus referred to the minutes of the meeting of the Committee on April 8 that had been provided to the members in advance of the meeting.

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

Motion passed: 5-0.

Report of Tree Warden

Mr. Lavatori spoke of a large tree that had fallen on CT-102 Branchville Road, interrupting utility services and forcing rush hour traffic to detour via Old Branchville Rd. Resident had only recently reported concern with tree that fell; it would help if more residents understand who has responsibility for dealing with hazardous trees (Eversource if wires/equipment at risk; CT-DOT for passage on State Highways; Tree Warden for Town roads and other Town properties), AND how to CONTACT these agencies (N.B. [reporting hazardous trees in ridgefield.pdf](https://www.ridgefieldct.gov/tree-committee) is available on the Tree Committee page <https://www.ridgefieldct.gov/tree-committee> on the Town website.

Mr. Hulnick reported that a previous storm had caused a major leader to break off a Maple tree at the CT-102 & Old Branchville intersection, and that brush had been removed but logs sawn into sections were still lying near the damaged tree. Mr. Lavatori explained the process whereby the initial response of a tree crew is to clear the highway of any obstruction to safe passage, and it is not unusual for debris to be left on shoulder for another crew to retrieve at a later date.

Mr. Lavatori inquired about what would be the best time of year for tree crew with vehicles to enter the meadow on the west side of North Salem Road across from Ridgebury Road (south of the High School), because there are a number of tall Ash trees that need to be removed. Ms. Snow suggested he contact Barb Hartman of the Caudatowa Garden Club, who coordinates the mowing of that meadow with the Parks & Recreation Department.

Reporting Dangerous Trees

Mr. McManus reminded the Committee of the importance of members becoming familiar with the various means of reporting hazardous trees as documented on the Committee website; a simple "heads' up" notification (that the report had been made) to the Tree Warden and members would be useful and appreciated.

Town Budget Capital Item for Tree Planting in Town Cemeteries

The Chair reported that the \$25k capital item in the F2026 Town Budget (for the Tree Committee to plant trees in Town cemeteries) was approved at the Town Meeting on May 5. As Town property, the Tree Warden has care and control, and Mr. Lavatori has agreed to assist with the selection of species and locations to maximize the value of the expenditures and the expected lifespan of the trees. It is anticipated that active cemeteries (Mapleshade and Ridgebury) would receive a handful of new long-lived trees, and that Olde Town and Branchville

would see the replacement of some of the numerous ancient trees that had been removed over the past 5-10 years. Thirsty trees will be a particular benefit to Ridgebury Cemetery.

Ballard Green Chestnut trees

Mr. McManus mentioned that he had received an email suggesting “rumblings” that some residents complained about nuts falling from several Chinese Chestnut trees onto walkways in Ballard Green were considered an inconvenience. Mr. McManus asked Mr. Lavatori whether it might be necessary to communicate with the Housing Authority to prevent a decision to remove trees without first seeking the advice and permission of the Tree Warden. Members generally agreed that various steps could be taken to ameliorate the problem of the nuts and that attending to this seasonal issue would be a perfect opportunity for High School volunteers and/or Scouts to volunteer for sidewalk clearing duty, especially during nut-dropping season.

Finances

Members should remain aware of and pursue grant opportunities for the Committee to raise funds. The Chair asked whether some member(s) would monitor and apply for grants.

Helpful free App to locate trees using Geo-Coordinates

To capture the location of notable trees, the Chair suggested that members download the “Altimeter” app, and to set the “Format” to decimal degrees (e.g. 41.259829, -73.515463). Then save a screen shot and email that to yourself with some information in the subject line.

Day Trip to Bronx

Mr. McManus suggested that the Committee try to select a date for a day trip to the Bronx where attendees could visit the Botanical Garden and/or Woodlawn Cemetery. UPON motion duly made (Dow), seconded (Shotton), and carried, it was RESOLVED that the committee attempt to set a date for such a trip. Motion passed: 4-0.

Gingko tree on Main Street wounded in accident involving two BMW’s

Mr. McManus explained a situation where an accident significant enough to require a police report resulted in damage to a healthy street tree and the Tree Warden was not notified. He feels that any accident significant enough to warrant a police report should include mention of obvious damage to trees and communicated to the Tree Warden.

Forestry management plan revision

Mr. McManus reminded members that he had circulated two versions (via email) 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. He asked whether members had comments or suggestions, especially with regard to 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 tree contractors working on town property. Mr. Bossis had requested a copy of the document in Word format which Mr. McManus provided. Nothing has been received thus far.

Adjournment

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

Respectfully submitted,
Tom McManus, Chair