

Longmeadow Tree Committee

Meeting Minutes

Thursday September 23, 2021

Remote Meeting

The Tree Committee meeting was held remotely via Zoom. The meeting opened at 6:05 PM. The following members were present: Dave Marinelli, Steve Steiner, Kathy Kucab, Mark Tolosky, and Patrick Carnahan. Also present were Longmeadow Residents Lou Kornet and Bill Seefeld.

The meeting was opened by following the approved “script” for conducting remote meeting which included a review of Open Meeting Law.

Public comments: Lou Kornet expressed his support of Tree City USA designation and was looking into ways to expand tree knowledge via public education. Lou has offered his support. Bill Seefeld mentioned that he reviewed DRC best practices document and supported the recommendation provided in that document.

Tree Warden Report and Old Business:

Status of Tree Warden hiring – No word yet regarding hiring a Tree Warden. Possibly in 2022.

Route 5 to Converse Street revisions - Town is preparing responses to the 25% plan but nothing specific regarding which trees were being slated for removal.

Annual windshield survey - No word on annual windshield survey going through or not. Waiting for hiring of a Tree Warden.

Fall planting - Residents have been submitting requests but there are currently no plans to plant trees this fall.

Tree inventory – Trees are being removed but are not being removed from inventory. Dave does not regularly get tree removal invoices.

Select Board participation - Select Board Chair Marc Strange will serve as the Tree Committee liaison. The Tree Committee welcomes Select Board Chair Strange.

Patrick reported back his finding regarding a Town policy for replacement of street trees damaged due to motor vehicle accidents. According to Patrick the Town does not have a specific policy regarding replacement of street trees damaged by motor vehicle accidents. Street trees would be treated like any other damaged infrastructure whereby the motor vehicle operator’s insurance company would be billed for damaged tree(s). However, an accident report identifying tree damage would be helpful and this is not always included. Also, not all damage is pursued by the Town equally. This is due to lack of personnel for review of damage report and follow-up filing with insurance company. This appears to be a Tree Warden function. This item will be held until a Tree Warden is approved.

Best practices for tree protection during construction – Patrick reported back on findings regarding best practices for care of street trees during construction and/or road jobs. Review of Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) document titled, “Protecting Trees During Construction and Road” was reviewed. This document provided some best practice guidelines for care of trees during construction projects. These best practices (whatever Town wants to include in contract) should be included in an initial Request for Responses (RFR) prior to contracts issued and awarded. Also, Town should be seeking “Best Value” and not just lowest bid, with best value being defined in the boiler plate RFR. All work should only be awarded to bonded and insured companies so that the Town maintains control of project. Discussion followed. Lack of a Tree Warden makes implementation of tree care best practices difficult. Tree Committee made a motion to move the item forward to the Select Board. A vote was taken and it was unanimous. Dave will send results to Select Board member Mr. Strange.

The purpose of the Tree Committee is to promote a healthy and sustainable community forest by planting and maintaining quality trees and providing education and advocacy to the public on the benefits of trees.

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New Business: Tree City USA application due. Dave and Kathy will be working on the application.

Minutes were read aloud, corrected as needed and unanimously approved

Next meeting date – The Next meeting of the Tree Committee will on October 28 at 6:00 pm.

Recorded by Patrick Carnahan

PROTECTING TREES DURING CONSTRUCTION AND ROAD

Community trees are a vital public utility

Trees are an important part of a community's infrastructure that can be damaged during municipal construction and maintenance activities, leading to hazardous conditions and increased costs. Tree wardens and public works staff can work together to protect trees and minimize costs to the community.

Roadside community trees are a vital public utility.

Just as roads perform a necessary transportation function, wires conduct electricity, and pipes move water, roadside trees provide a host of community benefits. Community trees help reduce stormwater flows and mitigate flooding, filter the air, reduce heating and cooling costs, contribute to property values, add to community character, and beautify the landscape — strengthening the social and economic vitality of our towns and cities.



Community trees are under the control of the tree warden.

Under Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 87:

- All trees within the public way or on the boundaries thereof are defined as public shade trees.
- The tree warden is responsible for the care, control, protection, and maintenance of all public shade trees, and shall enforce the provisions of law for protecting these trees.
- The tree warden may make regulations for the care and preservation of public shade trees and establish fines.
- No other person may plant, trim, cut, or remove a public shade tree without permission of the tree warden. *This includes the cutting of roots during construction.*
- **No person, including the tree warden, may remove any healthy tree, greater than one-and-one-half inches in diameter, without a public hearing.**

The importance of roots and bark

Roots and bark are two vital organs for trees. Roots take up water, oxygen, nutrients, and provide stability. Bark transports water, food, and nutrients to the rest of the tree. If these are damaged, a tree will decline and may die.

- Most tree roots are in the top two feet of soil.
- A large portion of absorbing roots are outside the "dripline" of the tree.
- The inner bark serves as part of the vascular system for the tree.
- Roots are rarely observed under existing paved roads.

Some suggested guidelines for protecting trees

Prior to construction or road improvement activities:

- Be involved early. The tree warden should have a process for being informed of upcoming construction activities early in the planning stages.
- The tree warden and public works staff should meet on site to discuss the type of work to be completed and collaboratively develop strategies for protecting desirable trees and groupings of trees.



Protect roots:

- Ideally, steps should be taken to protect the “critical root zones” of desirable trees.
- The radius of the “critical root zone” is determined by multiplying the diameter of a tree in inches, by feet. In other words, a 10-inch diameter tree will have a 10-foot radius “critical root zone.” Do not just protect to the “dripline” of the tree.
- Roots are rarely observed to travel under existing paved roads.
- The “critical root zone” should be protected by placing hard fencing around the zone. Snow fencing is often moved.
- Within this protected zone, there should be no activity and no storage of vehicles, equipment, and supplies. These activities cause soil compaction.
- Avoid any kind of trenching or soil disturbance close to the trunk of the tree.
- It may not always make sense to protect the full “critical root zone,” especially for roadside trees. In these cases, the tree warden and highway staff should work together to establish a “zone of tree protection” that makes sense.

Protect the bark:

- If the “critical root zone” is protected, then the bark should be protected. However, sometimes bark still gets damaged during construction and maintenance activities.
- Work with staff and contractors to be sure everyone understands the importance of bark and the need to protect bark from nicks, scrapes, and gouges.
- Fences and well-defined tree protection zones can help protect bark.
- You may want to additionally mark or flag trees that could be in danger of injury from equipment, including trees that may be damaged during routine snow removal.

Protect against changes in grade:

- Changes in grade can be as damaging to tree roots as cutting, trenching, or soil compaction, and may eventually lead to tree decline and death.
- Make sure that the grade is not changed within the identified tree protection zone.
- You may want to inspect and restore changes in grade that result from normal road maintenance activities, such as snow removal and road re-grading.



Amherst

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

Fite, Kelby and E. Thomas Smiley. 2016. [Best Management Practices - Managing Trees During Construction](#). 2nd ed. ISA.

Penn State Extension. 2017. [A Guide to Preserving Trees in Development Projects](#).

Bureau of Forestry

Urban & Community Forestry Program

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