

SHADE TREE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES



Date: December 18, 2023
Time 5:00 PM
Location Zoom

RECEIVED
TOWN CLERK
BELMONT, MA

DATE: February 15, 2024
TIME: 8:11 AM

Meeting called to order by: Eva Hoffman, Chairperson

ATTENDEES

Lucia Gates, DeNee Reiton Skipper, Eva Hoffman, Adam Howe, Michelle Oishi, Molly Aalyson, Vickie Amalfitano – Shade Tree Committee Members
Jean Devine, Sarah Wang - Guests

MEETING MINUTES

The meeting was called to order at 5:07 pm and a quorum was in attendance. The minutes from the November 27, 2023 meeting were reviewed and approved with the clarification on the Preferred Tree List to be separated into three distinct lists for large projects, street trees, and homeowners. The minutes were approved as amended.

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

1. The committee is still in need of a member to replace Michael Chesson. If anyone has suggestions or contacts who might be interested, please have them contact one of us.
2. Three of the newest members met Dec. 4 at Town Hall for an orientation with Eva and Lucia. Separate meeting minutes will be issued for that meeting.
3. As a result of the state-required Ethics Training session, a question has come up for the Town Clerk to determine whether our committee members are considered 'special' employees, a specific designation under the ethics guidelines.
4. Book titles were discussed at the orientation meeting including Doug Tallamy's Nature's Best Hope and a book by Peter del Tradici who works at the Arnold Arboretum. Glen had suggested Peter's book. Adam will find out the title and the author's full name. Members of the committee who are interested in forming a book group to read some of these titles include Eva, Lucia, Vicki, Sarah, Adam and Molly.
5. Molly will join an orientation meeting in January as she was unable to attend in Dec.

TREE WARDEN REPORT

6. Due to today's wind and rain storm, neither Jay nor Mike were able to attend today's meeting.
7. Adam Howe represented the Shade Tree Committee at this morning's party recognizing Mike's retirement.

TREE INVENTORY REPORT

8. Eva proposed the committee reading and discussing chapter/section by section the tree inventory report that was prepared at the beginning of 2023.
9. Sarah suggested linking the inventory to the Preferred Tree List. Discussion of the difficulty in finding the report on the Town website followed.
10. Eva suggested and several members agreed that the Shade Tree Committee webpage should be used for hosting committee documents including but not limited to the tree inventory and the preferred tree lists. Other committees make greater use of their respective webpages. This would be an opportunity to raise awareness and educate the public about trees. Eva suggested that the committee review the Shade Tree Committee webpage and have suggestions to update it at the next meeting.

PREFERRED TREE LIST

11. Lucia and Eva met with Jay and Mike to review the Preferred Tree List. They discussed each tree in the spreadsheet. Jay commented on which trees should or should not be included on the respective lists. As Tree Warden, Jay has the authority to issue the list. He will coordinate with both the Planning Department and the Town Administrator in overseeing the adherence to the list.
12. Discussion about the species of trees to be included on the list raised the issue of changing planting zone per the USDA because of the warming climate as well as the importance of diversifying the species for resilience of the overall tree population in Belmont.
13. Jean asked about the list of suppliers provided in the spreadsheet. She will send to Eva some additional sources for purchasing trees.
14. The format of a resident-friendly layout of the list was discussed. Adam suggested creating columns that could be checked off to help describe qualities of each species to aid residents in selecting the best tree for their property. Sarah asked if the list could be searchable by, for example, soil type or required sun. Adam and Sarah will assist Eva in formatting the list for residents. The goal is to create a printable version of the list.
15. Molly has written an introduction to the list for inclusion on the final version.
16. Further discussion of Jay and Mike's review was postponed until they are present.

ZONING BY-LAW

17. After attending the MBTA Communities meeting, Eva and Michelle thought that this would be an opportune time for the committee to make suggestions for amendments to the existing zoning and tree by-laws as the MBTA Community masterplan will be revising those by-laws. The idea of both protecting trees and requiring how they are planted would be assessed. Comparing neighboring town's by-laws with Belmont's would be useful. Michelle offered to look into this issue.

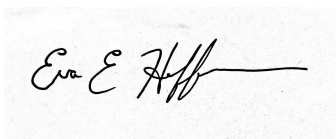
STATUS OF TOWN PROJECTS

18. Lucia reported on the Belmont Public Library project. Demolition is scheduled to begin shortly with initial construction slated to start in April. Lucia will ask someone from the BPL project to give a brief report of the site plans to the committee. Glen, as landscape architect for the project, would recuse himself from the presentation.
19. Adam reported the hockey rink has site plans on their webpage that show the existing trees and new plantings. The discussion raised the question about whether the library project would have similar diagrams, see item 18.
20. Clay Pit Pond was mentioned in today's The Voice specifically mentioning the High School Middle School in association with the Community Path. Eva will contact Bill Lovallo of the HS/MS project to learn more about whether any tree-related plans are involved.
21. Lucia and Eva attended Belmont Cemetery's master plan presentation. The presentation and an online survey for residents to take is on the Town website. Any future construction at the cemetery that includes tree planting cannot be funded by Community Development funds because trees are a line item in the Town Budget.
22. Eva advocated for Shade Tree members to become liaisons for the important tree-related projects around Belmont. Members should consider which project they might be able to connect with.

Next meeting: Monday, January 8, 2023 at 5:00 pm on Zoom

The meeting was adjourned at 6:24 pm.

Submitted by Michelle Oishi

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eva Hoffman", is written over a light gray rectangular background.

Signed by Chair Eva Hoffman