

# SHADE TREE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES



Date: January 8, 2024

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, Glen Valentine, Mike Santoro, Jay Marcotte – Shade Tree Committee Members

Jean Devine, Sarah Wang - Guests

## MEETING MINUTES

The meeting was called to order at 5:03 pm and a quorum was in attendance. The minutes from the December 18, 2023 meeting were reviewed and approved.

## TREE WARDEN REPORT

1. Jay and Mike will be attending a two-day tree warden conference.
2. Tonight at the Selectmen's meeting Mike will be sworn in as co-tree warden.
3. Mike and Jay discussed the conversations they have had with the current company hired to help Belmont with tree maintenance, Asplundh. They will also be a candidate for the tree planting contract in the up-coming year. Mike has shown the draft of our preferred tree list and Asplundh was open to following the list. Asplundh would also source the trees they plant.

## PREFERRED TREE LIST

The meeting was spent reviewing in detail the proposed preferred tree lists in the spreadsheet format as well the PDF version.

4. The draft spreadsheet has three tabs - one of all recommended trees, a second that lists trees appropriate as street trees, and a third listing citations. Review of the content of these lists will precede the review of format.
5. Glen asked the committee to consider five tree species that the Davies report identified as least represented in Belmont, comprising less than 2% of the current plantings. These are tulip, hackberry, swamp white oak, black tupelo, and sweetgum. Jay is in

favor of increasing the number of these under-represented species, however the sweetgum fruit are a nuisance and he would prefer avoiding its use especially as a street tree. The tupelo (*nyssa sylvatica*) is said to like wet conditions but Cambridge uses it as a street tree and Glen has found it to be hardy and adaptable.

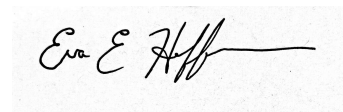
6. The spreadsheet tab listing preferred street trees was reviewed by the group first. Eva has drafted the list and written in bold text trees noted by Doug Tallamy (author of *Nature's Best Hope* among others) as keystone plants or plants that provide habitat for native insects and animals.
7. During the line by line review of the street tree list the following species were determined to be removed: silver maple and sugar maple because Belmont urban forest is mostly maple trees; sourwood; pagoda dogwood.
8. Trees determined to be added to the street tree list include: black tupelo; Kentucky coffeetree; yellowwood; hornbeam; hop hornbeam; and consider beach plum trees which Watertown has planted.
9. The honey locust is a tall tree and should be recategorized as such.
10. A few nursery sources for native trees were mentioned. Sarah said the NH Forestry Program sells black cherry trees. Glen mentioned Elhannon in upstate NY where nursery-sized native trees are grown.
11. Discussion of various messy trees touched on sweet gum as well as shagbark hickory, Kentucky coffeetree, honey locust, and plain trees. The sweet gum creates the most issues. The other species produce fruit or shed bark but are not as problematic and should remain on the list of preferred trees.
12. Jay stated that birch trees were not appropriate street trees because they bend over under heavy snow and ice and can remain bent and become obstructions. Lucia mentioned a grove of (6) birch trees near her house that support each other and do not exhibit this bending.
13. Discussion of the Bradford pear trees along Concord Ave touched on the original donation of the flowering trees, the removal of some of them over time, and how to replace them. Jay suggested planting redbuds instead which was well received by the group.
14. Trees prone to current diseases include Eastern hemlock and American beech should be kept off the preferred tree list. A separate tab listing trees that are not included and providing information about why they kept off the list would be useful both for those using the lists and for the committee to record the decision-making behind the removal.
15. The PDF that Adam has created was briefly reviewed. This list was created using the tall trees only as an example of how an easy-to-read list could be configured. Similar tables would be created for the medium and short trees.
16. Lucia suggested that this type of list could be given out to residents who are pulling a building permit.
17. Adding a column that indicates the size of the species would be useful.

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Next meeting: Monday, February 12, 2024 at 5:00 pm on Zoom

The meeting was adjourned at 6:31 pm.

Submitted by Michelle Oishi



Signed by Chair Eva Hoffman