



Minutes of
The Shade Tree
Committee
15 September 2020

The ZOOM meeting was called to order at 16:35 by Chair Lucia Gates, and attended by, in alphabetical order: Mike Chesson, Kayta Gajdos, Eva Hoffman, DeNee Reiton Skipper and Tom Walsh; Guests include Pam Callahan, Peggy Crown and Emily Peterson.

The Select Board Chairman, Roy Epstein, and Lucia had spoken about the size of The Shade Tree Committee, which has the largest [eight] membership of all town committees. We do have a large, diverse group of many specialists, which include arborists, landscape architects, gardeners, and tree lovers. We also lost three members last year for various reasons. Both Chairs, Roy and Lucia determined, and the committee agreed, that seven was the ideal number of members, and that number will avoid a tied vote.

Laura so moved that we have seven members and Kayta seconded the motion. However, it was determined that the seven number will be reached by attrition, and not the active active removal of a member.

It was also noted by both Chairs that our charge, or purpose has not be updated since 1983. Many things are out of date, including that Belmont had a tree farm back then. This no longer exists and we will work on a new charge for the Select Board to review.

40 WALNUT STREET TREE: A Greenspire Linden tree of forty years is at that site and the absentee owner wants to remove it to build out the property in that direction. A petition to protest the removal of the tree was circulated to save the tree and it garnered 200 signatures. A Tree Hearing ensued and the Tree Hearing Law demands that if there is an objection to the removal of a tree, the case will go before the Select Board.

Tom gave an impromptu presentation of the history of the Greenspire Linden. It was developed by Princeton to require lower maintenance than the Little Leaf Linden. It was planted extensively starting in 1974, and about 50–60 trees were planted each year in Belmont. The Little Leaf Linden is a “droopy” tree, and it has co-dominant or multiple stems which are susceptible to breakage in storms. The Greenspire does not suffer from this as a young tree, but as it matures, it reverts to type of the Little Leaf and develops multiple stems. The town has lost some of these Greenspire trees in recent storms. All trees are prone to breakage during storms, particularly if left unpruned.

If this particular Linden on Walnut Street comes down, the Committee would like to exercise approval of the developer’s plans on where to plant more trees on that property. The area lacks curbing and depending on the new trees’ location, it could invite people to park on the roots of these small trees and crush them. Laura urged us to follow our protocol regarding this project, but did not elucidate on that protocol. Tom says that the construction on the site will very likely result in the eventual death of the tree regardless of any protective measures taken.

GROVE STREET PARK: The London Plane trees in the park, all of which had died, were replaced and are doing fine, so far.

THE RUTH IPPEN TREE WALK: Likewise, the newly planted trees there are doing fine, so far.

BELMONT LIBRARY: The Garden Club planted a Japanese Maple opposite the book return box.

TREE WARDEN’S REPORT: there is no plan as yet to plant trees for the coming year. Asplundh’s budget for tree maintenance and removal has not been reduced. The 20 trees at the Butler school and a large Ash at Grove Street Park were treated against the Emerald Ash Borer, but about 450 trees around town have not been treated.

The meeting adjourned at 17:35. The next meeting is planned for 19 October 2020.

Minutes respectfully submitted by DeNee Reiton Skipper
Minutes approved,

Lucia Gates