

Tree Board Minutes
February 19, 2026
Town Hall, RM 201, 4:30 PM

In attendance: James McLoughlin, Dick Stein, Ed Picard, Ben Sykas, Sarah Adair. Also, Keith Wilberg from the Department of Public Works. Absent: Nathaniel Martin.

Approval of minutes: Ed motioned to approve the minutes from January. James seconded the motion. All approved minutes.

Ben gave the Tree Warden report: a Beech, Oak and Cedar came down at 51 Lyons Plain Rd. Property owners wanted to remove trees in the town right of way for a new driveway layout and hornbeam hedge. Ben informed the owners that the trees were in the town right of way and could not be removed. Preserved is a Mockernut and White Oak.

Clarence Hayes called into the meeting to inform members that he is willing to meet with anyone interested in putting forth an ordinance to the RTM limiting tree cutting on private property.

Ben also showed a sign promoting a more walkable and rideable Westport, a movement that would be a threat to trees alongside Westport roads should that movement gain more traction.

Keith Wilberg, from the Department of Public Works and engineer gave a presentation on the future plan to add a sidewalk to Easton Rd from the intersection of Weston Rd and 136 all the way up to Coleytown School. The Department of Public Works has approval for money to spend on the design of a 5' sidewalk added to the Southbound side of Easton Road. To be ADA compliant, the sidewalk must be 5' wide for the entire addition except where it goes under the Merritt Parkway, where it will be 4' wide. Keith estimates a total of 15 mature (100+ yr old)

trees will need to be removed in order to install the sidewalk but until a survey is completed, they won't know the total number of trees.

James asked if the sidewalk could be put on the other side of the road. Keith pointed out that the 2' sidewalk is already on the Southbound side (although it's covered up and unwalkable in many areas) and that power lines are on the other side and to get them moved would mean negotiating with Eversource for years in order to get the side walk put in and he did not know how much the extra costs that would include in the building of the sidewalk.

James and Dick questioned if the sidewalk could be placed behind the trees along the roadside. Keith pointed out that the sidewalk would have to go into private property at that point and in his experience, private property owners did not want to give an easement to the town for sidewalks. Ben pointed out that in some places the degree of rise of the sidewalk would be higher than ADA compliant due to the uneven roadside.

Ben had reached out to the DOT arborist to get an understanding of the permitting process to remove the stumps currently along the roadside and remove the trees. He was informed the permitting process should not be too difficult.

James asked if different materials could be used for the sidewalk besides asphalt for the walkway and white extruded concrete curbing but Keith said no.

Keith stated that restoration of trees along the sidewalk would be a part of the project and would involve suggestions and input from the tree board and members of the public. They would be open to smaller flowering trees or other suggestions that would be good roadside trees.

Keith showed photos from Google maps on a big screen to point out the larger, older trees that would be removed. He also had larger

printed out maps of the encompassed properties involved, prepared by Tighe & Bond.

Keith also informed the Tree Board that when he was recently over in Japan, he signed up to receive off shoots from trees that survived that atomic bomb and if approved by the town, Westport could plant them with a plaque noting their unique origin.

The Tree Board thanked Keith for his time and resources put into his presentation.

Sarah informed the board that she left a message with Native to request information on Arbor Day tubelings. She believes when Barbara gets back she will let us know our options.

Sarah then updated the Board on where the Fincher memorial stands. It is currently waiting for the Parks and Rec Advisory Board and the Parks and Rec Commission to hold their next meeting to approve it. The Garden Club was also going to vote on funding at their April meeting.

Sarah also filled the members in on the RTM Environmental Committee previous meeting, when Clarence Hayes offered to bring a suggested ordinance to the full RTM on the limits of the right of private property owners to cut down trees on their property. Sarah said if any members were interested in joining with Clarence or being involved in the creation of such an ordinance to email her and she will keep them updated on meetings involving the issue. She also stated she felt the state laws allowed the narrow crafting of some type of town control but the language used would be important.

Ben stated that Stamford's ordinance was vetoed by the mayor and is now in a redrafting phase. He also stated that the CT state Tree Warden statutes forbids Tree Warden from going on to private property and a town can't draft an ordinance that overrides that

prohibition. The title Town Forrester is most likely being employed by New Haven and Stamford in their ordinance to sidestep this issue. Sarah stated she didn't think the town funding bodies would be in the mood to create another full time employee position to manage and fulfill such a role. She did think there would be some support for such an ordinance depending on its limits, given that the past year members of the public have come forward at Tree Board meetings to request the planting of more trees down by the beach and to ask if there was a way to protect mature trees on their property after they pass on or sell their property.

The highlighted tree for March on the website is the Mockernut Tree.

All agreed to adjourn.