



West Chester

Tree Commission

MEETING MINUTES

Meeting of Wednesday, February 4, 2026

Attendance:

Tree Commission (TC) Members: Chip Horne, Chris Pugliese, Jeff Beitel, Jamie Paxson, Anna Sechrist, Dale Frens

Consulting Borough Arborist (Borough Arborist): John Hosbach

Representing the Borough of West Chester: Sean Metrick, Borough Manager

Chip Horne, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. in Room 232, Borough Hall.

A. Minutes of the January 7, 2026 meeting were approved. The motion was made by Chip Horne, seconded by Jeff Beitel, and approved unanimously (hereinafter, "Horne/Beitel").

B. Additional Items Requested by Members and Guests

1. Evaluation of heritage American Beech tree at 234 E. Biddle Street: Pursuant to Paragraph 102.6.A of the Tree Ordinance, Jordan Norley, property owner, has obtained the consultation services of Bartlett Tree Experts and the former and current Borough Arborist in the mitigation of the declining health of the tree. Based on the extent of cinder fungus rot in the root system, crown reduction, and public and property safety due to the number of targets surrounding the tree, John Hosbach recommends removal of the tree. The Tree Commission unanimously supported this recommendation.
2. 319 W. Marshall Street: Sugar Maple in severe decline. Jerry McCormick, representing the owner of the property, his mother, stated that the tree is in severe decline and requires removal. Based on the Tree Assessment and recommendation of the Borough Arborist, the TC unanimously approved condemnation of the tree and replacement with a suitable shade tree (Beitel/Horne).

C. Tree Commission Vacancy

Chip Horne reported that 3 candidates will be interviewing for the position at the February Borough Council meeting.

D. White Ash Tree Management Plan

Subsequent to John Hosbach's letter reports for Hoopes Park and Everhart Park, Chip Horne and Chris Pugliese met with Will Williams and Sean Metrick to discuss the reports along with

other tree program topics. The Borough concurred with the recommendations of the Borough Arborist's reports, which include the removal of 39 trees in Hoopes Park and 8 in Everhart Park within 3-5 months, and the remaining 31 trees in Hoopes Park and 3 in Everhart Park within 2 years. It is not clear where funding for these removals will be found, but Sean Metrick confirmed that the funds required for the year 2026 cannot be taken entirely from the Tree Budget, although the number of trees planned to be planted in 2026 will be reduced from 200 to 150.

Will Williams has asked John Hosbach to prepare bid specifications for the 2026 removal of the 47 trees in the two parks. Based on those specifications the projects will be competitively bid and Borough Council will be asked to approve the low bid.

E. Tree Condemnations

1. A note about nomenclature: Following John Hosbach's usage in his reports, large trees previously called "canopy trees" will be referred to as "Shade Trees" and previously called small "understory trees" will be referred to as "Ornamental Trees."
2. The following trees were reviewed for condemnation:
 - a. 7 E. Virginia Avenue: 2 American sycamore trees that were condemned at the July 2025 meeting of the Tree Commission and asked to be reexamined at the owner's request. Based on the Borough Arborist's recommendations, in particular the extent of decay found throughout the main stem, the Tree Commission (TC) unanimously re-confirmed the condemnation of the two trees (Beitel/Sechrist). (Note: The hollows in the trunks of these trees, a common trait of American sycamores, is not the cause of their determination to be structurally poor.)
 - b. 245 E. Chestnut Street: 2 ornamental cherry trees that were condemned at the November 2025 meeting of the TC and asked to be reexamined at the owner's request. Based on the Borough Arborist's recommendations, the TC unanimously approved condemnation of the "painted" tree and pruning of the second tree (removal of the limb growing toward the front façade of the house) (Sechrist/Pugliese).
 - c. 624 N. Walnut Street: Northern red oak topped by PECO. The Borough Arborist's Tree Assessment indicates that because of the severe topping of the main trunk of the tree, the open top of the trunk has introduced rain and subsequent decay into the main stem and heavily unbalanced major branch, rendering the tree structurally unsound. Based on the recommendation of the Borough Arborist, the TC unanimously approved condemnation of the tree and replacement with a suitable ornamental tree (Sechrist/Horne).
 - d. 507 N. High Street: Review of sugar maple and honey locust trees. Property owner requested inspection of two trees, a sugar maple and honey locust. The Borough Arborist's Tree Assessment recommends removal of the sugar maple because of root

collar decay, stem girdling, and crown decline. The Tree Assessment recommends clean pruning of the honey locust. Based on the Borough Arborist's recommendations, the TC unanimously approved 1) condemnation of the sugar maple and replacement with a suitable shade tree; and 2) pruning of the honey locust (Sechrist/Pugliese).

- e. 107 S. Walnut Street: Red maple in healthy condition. The property owner has been cited by the Borough for the uneven brick sidewalk at the base of tree, caused by surface tree roots lifting the grade and paving. The Borough Arborist noted that the tree is in healthy condition. The TC unanimously recommended denial of the condemnation request and recommended that the owner reset the brick paving over an adjusted setting bed to accommodate the elevation of the roots.

3. Condemned Tree Report

- a. Two trees were condemned in November, and no trees were removed during the month, for a net total of 22 condemned trees not removed.
- b. Status of Tree Condemnation Second-Notice Letter: Currently no follow-up letters are mailed to property owners who fail to remove condemned street trees within 60 days of condemnation, which is a tree ordinance requirement. Will Williams and the Tree Commission are working on a new second-notice condemnation letter, to be mailed to all property owners who have not removed a tree in 60 or more days from the condemnation date. After issuance of the 60-day letter and further non-compliance, the Borough Staff responsible for property citations will issue citations to those property owners. The plan is to begin mailing second-notice letters later in February.

F. 2026 Tree Planting

- 1. Three bids for 2026 tree planting were received by the Borough through the bidding platform, PennBID. The TC in a 5-1 vote recommended rejection of all bids for 2026 tree planting as non-responsive.
- 2. The Tree Commission has put together a detailed plan to plant 104 trees this spring. The locations have been selected by the Tree Commission and the tree species have been selected by John Hosbach. John selected a total of 37 different tree species to plant. All are on the approved list of street tree species. John stated that his goal is to introduce more diversity in tree species to promote more resilience. If a requested tree species cannot be sourced the tree contractor will consult with John Hosbach to determine an acceptable substitute.
- 3. Currently the bid specifications list three local nurseries from which all trees must be sourced. The Tree Commission will likely increase the number of acceptable tree-sourcing nurseries and broaden the radius of how many miles from West Chester nurseries may be located

G. Summer Intern:

Will Williams is still pursuing DPW funding for this position. A job description is required by March 1 to advertise the position.

H. Emeral Ash Borer treatment of Blue Ash Tree in Marshall Square Park:

After discussion, the TC approved by a 4-2 vote the continued alternate-year pesticide treatment of the State Champion blue ash tree in Marshall Square Park (Frens/AS).

I. Status of Electronic Tree Work Request Form

Will Williams is preparing a new electronic form on the West-Chester.com website to be used by property owners to request tree work. The form will request that a photo of the impacted tree be submitted so that the scope of work may often be assessed without a site visit. Once operational, tree work request forms submitted on the website will automatically be emailed to Will Williams and John Hosbach.

J. 12 New Tree Wells in the Business District

The Business Improvement District (BID) and the Tree Commission have undertaken a joint project to create new tree wells in the business district. At locations selected by the TC and the BID, twelve 4 feet by 4 feet tree wells will be created by cutting the existing concrete or brick sidewalks. All Seasons Landscaping will be contracted to create the wells at the price of \$260 per well for a total price of \$3,120. The BID has agreed to pay for this and has sent a letter of intent to Will Williams so stating. The project will be done coincident with the spring tree planting.

K. Next Meeting: 6:00 p.m. on Wednesday, March 4, 2026, Room 232, Borough Hall.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:08 pm.

Minutes prepared by Dale H. Frens, Secretary