



TOWN OF HAMDEN, CONNECTICUT

Tree Commission Minutes

Regular Meeting

5:30 PM, September 15, 2026

Hamden Government
Center
2nd Floor Conference
Room
2750 Dixwell Avenue
Hamden, CT 06518
Tel: (203) 287-7070
Fax: (203) 287-7075

[Click to View Agenda](#)

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chair Commissioner Dr. M. Montgomery at 5:32 PM.

2. ATTENDANCE

The Clerk called the roll, and the following members were present:

Commissioner Dr. Michael Montgomery, Chair
Commissioner Susan L. Neitlich
Commissioner Diane E. Hoffman
Commissioner Dr. Nathan Havill
Commissioner Kyle Dougherty

Also in attendance were Christopher Rhone, Tree Warden; Joseph Colello, Director of Public Works; and Briana J. Belton-Robinson, Boards and Commissions Clerk.

Roll Call Summary: Present, Voting: 5; Present, Not Voting: 0; Absent: 0; Excused: 0.

3. APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES

1. Regular Meeting of August 18, 2026

The Commission reviewed the minutes of the August 18, 2026 Regular Meeting.

Chair Dr. M. Montgomery discussed the supplemental materials included with the meeting materials, including photographs, correspondence, and links to videos submitted by residents. He noted that this method made supporting information the Commission received available to commissioners and the public.

The following corrections were identified:

- “New Haven Alliance for Trees” was corrected to “Hamden Alliance for Trees” in the Friends of the Library Audio-Podcast: Participation subsection under Old Business.
“...all residents of Swathmore Street.” was corrected to “...all residents of Swarthmore Street.” in the Attendance section.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the August 18, 2026 meeting minutes as amended. The motion passed.

4. PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no members of the public present in person or participating virtually. No public comments were received.

5. CORRESPONDENCE

Chairman Dr. M. Montgomery reported that the Commission had received a significant amount of correspondence since the previous meeting, including three tree requests and approximately nine emails concerning tree safety issues.

Chairman Dr. M. Montgomery noted that several of the tree-safety emails had been sent to the Commission without copying the Tree Warden. He forwarded those matters to the Tree Warden and expressed concern that residents may not have a clear understanding of how to report tree-related safety issues directly to the appropriate Town department. The Commission brought the issue to Town officials for review.

The Commission also received correspondence from a resident who wished to withdraw from the Trees for Communities program. Chair Dr. M. Montgomery discussed the importance of being sensitive to residents' individual circumstances when following up on tree requests.

Commissioner K. Dougherty reported that he had contacted Gail Cameron regarding a potential tree-related presentation for the Hamden Land Conservation Trust. A Saturday in October was being considered, with October 17 or October 24 discussed as possible dates. Commissioner Dougherty will follow up regarding scheduling.

6. EXECUTIVE SESSION

(if recommended by the town attorney)

No Executive Session was held.

7. REPORTS

1. Tree Warden Report

Tree Warden Christopher Rhone reported that United Illuminating's recent circuit work was substantially complete.

Tree Warden C. Rhone reported that he met with a Lewis Tree representative about proposed capital tree work between Hamden High School and the adjacent shopping plaza. The area contains a significant number of Tree-of-Heaven ('*Ailanthus altissima*') trees near electrical infrastructure. The trees appear to be primarily on private property, and the utility will need to coordinate with the property owner. Any work involving town trees will require appropriate authorization.

Tree Warden C. Rhone also reported on several recent tree removals and pruning

activities throughout Town, including the removal of declining or dead sugar maples and other hazardous trees. He discussed several service requests involving dead limbs, storm damage, branches affecting utility service lines, and branches extending toward residences.

The Commission discussed a large oak requiring additional inspection due to a substantially hollow leader. Tree Warden C. Rhone stated that the hazardous leader would be addressed and that the remainder of the tree would be inspected to determine whether additional action is necessary.

The Commission discussed the need for additional arboricultural assistance. Chairman Dr. M. Montgomery reported that he had begun compiling a list of Connecticut-licensed arborists in Hamden and surrounding communities. Commissioner S. Hoffman agreed to continue compiling the list. The Commission discussed using the list to help identify potential candidates for the Town's consulting arborist position.

Mr. Rhone was thanked for removing a Tree-of-Heaven from a tree grate. Commissioners noted the association between Tree-of-Heaven and spotted lanternflies.

8. OLD BUSINESS

1. Friends of the Library Audio-Podcast

The Commission reported that the Friends of the Library audio podcast had been posted to the Hamden Public Library website. The podcast includes information concerning trees and related topics.

A link to the completed podcast will be provided to the Clerk for inclusion with the meeting materials/minutes.

Please see the link to the podcast below:

[Hamden Public Library Podcast — BONUS EPISODE: Forest Bathing and The Hamden Canopy](#)

2. Whitneyville Library Shrub and Tree Renovation

Commissioner S. Neitlich reported that the next volunteer workday at the Whitneyville Branch Library was scheduled for Sunday, September 20, 2026, from 9:30 am to 12:00 pm.

About ten volunteers helped plan the project. A smaller planning group developed the garden design and selected plants, with support from individuals with native plant and Master Gardener experience.

The Friends of the Library provided funding for the project. The Commission purchased native plants from Earth Tones Native Plant Nursery. The Commission discussed obtaining mulch and compost needed to complete the planting area.

The project will include a variety of native plantings. The Commission also plans to plant a redbud tree as part of subsequent tree-planting work.

3. Trees for Communities Grant (Webpage, Fall Plans)

The Commission discussed the Trees for Communities Grant webpage and public outreach materials. Commissioners emphasized that residents should be able to easily find information describing the program and the tree request form online, especially since the webpage will be referenced in outreach materials and door hangers.

The Commission discussed plans for fall planting and the current list of requested trees. Chair Dr. M. Montgomery reported that the planting list had been developed through canvassing, resident requests, and site review.

The Commission discussed anticipated fall planting events, volunteer participation, tree delivery, equipment, watering responsibilities, and coordination with Public Works. The Commission also discussed the possibility of spring planting for certain locations and species where spring conditions may be more appropriate.

The Commission discussed purchasing equipment through grant funding to help move balled-and-burlapped trees.

Chair Dr. M. Montgomery also discussed compliance requirements associated with the grant and the need to maintain appropriate documentation for expenditures and activities.

4. Tree Inventory

Chairman Dr. M. Montgomery presented information concerning the Town's tree inventory and discussed the Commission's responsibility to help develop and maintain an inventory of public trees.

The Commission noted that the Town already has an inventory system containing tree information and that various records document approximately 600 trees planted since 2015. The Trees for Communities Grant also requires the GPS coordinates and health of grant-funded trees to be documented and monitored.

The Commission discussed working with Town staff to better understand the existing inventory system and determine how commissioners and volunteers could help collect and enter tree information.

Chair Dr. M. Montgomery stated that commissioners and volunteers could collect tree identification, location, species, diameter, and other objective information, while qualified arborists should assess tree health and risk.

The Commission expressed interest in recruiting additional volunteers to assist with the inventory project.

9. NEW BUSINESS

1. Swarthmore Street Pin Oak Trees

The Commission discussed the mature pin oak trees located along Swarthmore Street and recent tree failures in the area.

The Commission discussed the trees' age and size, limited growing space, sidewalk and curb conditions, soil saturation, and how these conditions may affect the trees' root systems.

The Commission agreed that Swarthmore Street would be an appropriate location to begin a focused inventory effort. The initial work would document the number, species, size, and location of trees rather than attempt to assess tree health.

Tree Warden C. Rhone stated that he intends to have an arborist conduct a risk assessment of the trees.

Chairman Dr. M. Montgomery proposed coordinating with Town staff regarding the existing inventory system and then organizing commissioners and volunteers to conduct field inventory work on Swarthmore Street.

The Commission discussed similar issues involving mature pin oaks in other areas of Town but agreed that Swarthmore Street would serve as the initial focus.

2. Approval of 2027 Meeting Calendar

The Commission discussed the requirement to approve its 2027 meeting calendar.

The Commission clarified that the calendar the Clerk previously distributed was its existing 2026 meeting schedule, not a proposed 2027 schedule.

The Clerk recommended that the Commission review and approve the 2027 calendar at its October meeting so that it can be completed before the applicable November deadline.

The Commission also discussed reserving the 2nd Floor Conference Room for its remaining 2026 meetings. It was reported that the September meeting had not appeared on the internal room schedule despite the Commission's established meeting schedule.

The Clerk agreed to follow up with the Town Clerk's Office to confirm that the 2nd Floor Conference Room is reserved for the Tree Commission on the third Tuesday of each month at 5:30 PM for the remainder of the year. Chair Montgomery also agreed to follow up with the Mayor's Office regarding the room scheduling process.

10. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Commission discussed its participation in the Brooksvale Fall Festival on September 26, 2026, from 11:00 am to 4:00 pm.

The Tree Commission will have a table at the event. Commissioner K. Dougherty will lead the Commission's participation, with the Trees for Communities program as a primary outreach focus.

11. ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Dr. M. Montgomery requested a motion to adjourn the meeting.

The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at approximately **7:25 pm**.

https://hamden.zoom.us/rec/share/sg1X-ikD18zJ36WVHziz9_2D1N1HRZ2lcs-Nkmsv37H-LNJoxb_mYMrIcDAwB-w.83Z_3TTSHJH8guoo?startTime=1789507484000