



TOWN OF HAMDEN, CONNECTICUT

Tree Commission Minutes

Regular Meeting

5:30 PM, October 20, 2026

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

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1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Commissioner Dr. M. Montgomery at 5:33 PM.

2. ATTENDANCE

The Clerk called the roll, and the following members:

Present

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

Also in attendance: 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 September 15th, 2026

Chairman Dr. M. Montgomery requested that approval of the September 15, 2026 Regular Meeting Minutes be postponed until later in the meeting to allow the Commission to proceed with its scheduled business.

The Commission subsequently reviewed the September 15, 2026 meeting minutes.

The following correction was identified:

- Under Reports – Tree Warden Report, the reference to Commissioner Hoffman as “S. Hoffman” was corrected to “D. Hoffman.”

Chairman Dr. M. Montgomery also requested clarification regarding the spelling of

Earth Tones Native Plant Nursery. The committee confirmed that the name was recorded correctly and required no revision.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the September 15, 2026, Regular Meeting Minutes as amended. The motion passed unanimously.

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4. PUBLIC COMMENT

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

5. CORRESPONDENCE

There will be a brief summary of the correspondence submitted between the last correspondence update and this one. This includes but is not limited to any correspondence with council members that members wish to submit for the record. It can also include written communication to the council from the administration, community members, etc.

Chairman Dr. M. Montgomery reported that correspondence received since the previous meeting primarily concerned matters within the Tree Warden's responsibilities.

No additional correspondence requiring Commission action was presented.

6. EXECUTIVE SESSION

(if recommended by the town attorney)

No Executive Session was held.

7. REPORTS

1. Tree Warden Report (e.g., Removals, Postings, Permits)

Chairman Dr. M. Montgomery presented an update on behalf of Tree Warden Christopher Rhone.

Chairman Dr. M. Montgomery reported that two trees located at 27 Barrett Street were the subject of a scheduled tree hearing on October 28, 2026, at noon. One tree was proposed for pruning, while the other was proposed for removal.

Chairman Dr. M. Montgomery also reported that fall tree planting had begun after trees were delivered the previous Thursday. As of the meeting, 11 trees had been planted, with additional planting anticipated throughout the remainder of the week.

The Commission discussed several planting-related challenges, including changes in resident preferences, restrictions associated with planting locations, and the need to identify alternative sites for trees that could not be planted as originally planned.

The Commission also discussed the importance of watering newly planted trees.

Chairman Dr. M. Montgomery said he would follow up with property owners on watering responsibilities and monitor soil moisture.

2. On-Call Arborist RFP

Chairman Dr. M. Montgomery reported that the Town initially received one inquiry regarding the On-Call Arborist Request for Proposals (RFP). Following the inquiry, it was decided to extend the submission deadline by one week, establishing a new deadline of October 27, 2026, at noon.

The RFP was advertised through the State of Connecticut's procurement website.

Commissioner D. Hoffman inquired whether the Connecticut Tree Protective Association was aware of the posting and suggested notifying the organization to increase awareness among qualified arborists and encourage additional submissions.

The Commission discussed the procurement process and the responsibilities of the Town's Purchasing Agent. Chairman Dr. M. Montgomery explained that only the Purchasing Agent would know how many bids were received before the deadline.

The bids would be publicly opened on October 27, 2026, at noon, at which time the submitted bid amounts would be read aloud.

Commissioners expressed interest in increasing awareness of the opportunity while maintaining an open and equitable bidding process.

8. OLD BUSINESS

1. Tree for Communities Grant

Chairman Dr. M. Montgomery updated the board on the Trees for Communities Grant and ongoing efforts to expand tree planting throughout Hamden.

Chairman Dr. M. Montgomery reported that 47 trees were planned for fall planting, exceeding his initial target of 46 trees. Commissioners also discussed the trees previously planted at the Keefe Community Center and progress toward the broader annual planting goal of about 60 trees.

Chairman Dr. M. Montgomery noted that some trees purchased for the program were smaller than expected, saving costs and leaving grant funds available for additional purchases.

The Commission discussed the administrative and financial responsibilities associated with implementing the grant.

Commissioners noted that, unlike some municipalities, including New Britain, Hamden does not have an independent fiduciary organization responsible for administering its tree planting program. As a result, the Commission must coordinate directly with Town departments on procurement, payments, contractors, and other grant-related activities.

The Commission also discussed continued public outreach. Residents participating in the program received informational handouts concerning tree planting and related responsibilities.

2. Fall Planting

The Commission discussed ongoing fall planting activities, volunteer coordination, equipment needs, contractor availability, and potential planting locations.

Chairman Dr. M. Montgomery reported that several locations required additional coordination due to property restrictions, changes in resident preferences, and the size of trees being delivered.

Housing Authority Planting

The Commission discussed arranging assistance with planting trees at the Hamden Housing Authority.

Two red maple trees were planned for the property, with the possibility of adding a third tree, a Showtime crabapple.

Commissioners noted that the red maples had root balls weighing approximately 400 pounds each and that approximately eight volunteers would be needed to move and plant the trees safely.

The Commission discussed the possibility of hiring a registered arborist or contractor to complete the planting.

Chairman Dr. M. Montgomery reported that contractors generally charge approximately \$500 per tree for planting services.

Commissioner S. Neitlich noted that contracting for three properties at approximately \$500 per tree would result in an estimated expenditure of \$1,500, remaining below the applicable purchasing threshold.

Chairman Dr. M. Montgomery indicated that approximately \$2,000 was available within his spending authorization.

The Commission discussed identifying a contractor already registered as a Town vendor to simplify the procurement process.

Volunteer Planting Schedule

The Commission discussed several potential planting dates, including October 24–25 and October 31–November 1, for residents and volunteers assisting with plantings on private property.

A volunteer planting event was tentatively scheduled for Sunday, November 1, 2026, at 10:00 AM, subject to volunteer availability and weather conditions.

The Commission discussed establishing an alternate date in the event of rain.

Commissioner S. Neitlich agreed to inquire about volunteer availability through the Whitneyville group.

Commissioner K. Dougherty stated that he would reach out to his networks in New Haven to identify additional volunteers.

Public Works was expected to deliver and position trees at the designated locations on the Friday preceding the planting event.

Additional Planting Locations

The Commission discussed several residential planting locations requiring coordination, including:

63 Barrett Street

47 Homeland Street, where the resident indicated that he would complete the planting independently

North Lane

Other residential and institutional properties identified through the program

The Commission also discussed a proposed planting location associated with a law firm and additional locations where property access or resident preferences required clarification.

Approximately nine trees were discussed in connection with one of the planned planting locations.

The Commission reviewed options for relocating trees that could no longer be planted at their originally designated sites.

Showtime Crab-apple and Redbud Trees

The Commission discussed the availability of Showtime crab-apple and redbud trees.

Commissioner S. Neitlich suggested that the available Showtime crabapple might be suitable for planting at Darius Boyce's residence.

Chairman Dr. M. Montgomery asked Commissioner S. Neitlich to contact the family to determine whether they would be interested in receiving the tree.

The Commission also discussed alternative locations for trees that could not be accommodated at their originally designated planting sites.

Planting Supplies and Equipment

Chairman Dr. M. Montgomery reported that the Commission had established a

standing order with Paradise Nurseries for mulch required under the Trees for Communities Grant.

The Commission also discussed purchasing approximately 60 preformed tree guards from A.M. Leonard Horticultural Tool & Supply, at an estimated cost of \$7 per guard.

The Commission did not order additional tree watering bags for the winter season.

Commissioners discussed the importance of protecting newly planted trees and coordinating watering responsibilities with participating residents.

3. DEEP Tour on October 5th

Commissioner S. Neitlich summarized the October 5, 2026 tour with representatives from the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP).

The tour highlighted urban forestry initiatives and tree planting projects in New Haven and Hamden.

Commissioner S. Neitlich reported that the group visited Criscuolo Park in New Haven, where about five volunteers participated in the tour.

Representatives from the Urban Resources Initiative (URI) discussed community-based urban forestry efforts, including volunteer participation, tree planting, and long-term maintenance.

The group also visited a nearby elementary school, where students, faculty, and community partners helped redesign and landscape the school's entrance area to include trees and other plantings.

The tour continued down lower Dixwell Avenue, where a planting crew worked on an initiative involving about 127 trees.

Commissioner S. Neitlich discussed the extensive coordination and labor required to establish and maintain urban tree planting programs.

Commissioner D. Hoffman expressed surprise at the labor-intensive process of watering newly planted trees in New Haven.

Commissioner K. Dougherty explained that watering procedures vary by planting site, including whether a hose connection is available or a watering truck must be used.

DEEP representatives then traveled to Hamden to observe the Town's tree-planting initiatives, including trees planted near the Keefe Community Center.

Chairman Dr. M. Montgomery provided information regarding Hamden's program, while Commissioner S. Neitlich discussed community outreach and volunteer participation.

Commissioner S. Neitlich reported that the Hamden group received considerable praise for its efforts to establish and implement tree planting programs.

The Commission discussed the importance of continued collaboration with DEEP and other municipalities to strengthen Hamden's urban forestry initiatives.

4. WTHN Interview

The Commission discussed a recent WTNH News 8 segment highlighting Hamden's neighborhood tree planting program.

Commissioner S. Neitlich reported that the interview was arranged following a recommendation to a WTNH reporter interested in featuring positive community initiatives.

Chairman Dr. M. Montgomery and Commissioner S. Neitlich participated in the interview, which also featured a local resident and her son.

The segment highlighted tree planting efforts supported by the Trees for Communities program and previous Community Development Block Grant funding.

The report described portions of Hamden as a "tree desert," emphasizing the limited number of existing street trees and opportunities to expand the Town's tree canopy.

Chairman Dr. M. Montgomery reported that he identified about 45 vacant tree-planting locations in the neighborhood highlighted during the segment.

Commissioners thanked the news coverage and discussed its potential to raise public awareness and encourage residents to participate in future planting initiatives.

WTNH News 8: More Than 100 Trees Planted Through Hamden Neighborhood Program

<https://www.wtnh.com/news/connecticut/new-haven/more-than-100-trees-planted-through-hamden-neighborhood-program/>

5. Tree Inventory

Chairman Dr. M. Montgomery provided an update on the proposed tree inventory initiative.

The Commission discussed the State's interest in making tree inventory software available to the Town through a leasing arrangement.

The Commission also discussed the existing inventory system and the need to coordinate with Town personnel to determine how to collect and incorporate additional tree data.

Chairman Dr. M. Montgomery indicated that he would follow up with Les Welker regarding the inventory system and available software options.

The Commission discussed beginning its inventory work along Swarthmore Street, where mature pin oak trees have been the subject of ongoing concern.

Commissioner K. Dougherty was identified to assist with inventorying the trees along Swarthmore Street, including counting and measuring the trees.

Commissioners noted that some of the mature pin oaks could potentially qualify for inclusion in a notable tree inventory.

The Commission emphasized that the initial inventory would focus on documenting tree locations, species, and measurements rather than conducting formal tree risk assessments.

9. NEW BUSINESS

1. Swarthmore Street Pin Oak Trees

Chairman Dr. M. Montgomery reported that residents of Swarthmore Street had met with the Mayor regarding concerns about the mature pin oak trees located along the street.

Residents expressed a desire for the Town to take action to address their concerns.

The Commission discussed the importance of establishing an accurate inventory of the trees before determining appropriate management recommendations.

Commissioner K. Dougherty will assist with counting and measuring the trees along Swarthmore Street.

The Commission discussed documenting the number, size, and location of the trees to provide baseline information for further evaluation.

Commissioners also noted that one or more of the mature pin oaks might qualify for recognition as notable trees.

No formal action was taken.

2. Approval of 2027 Meeting Calendar

Chairman Dr. M. Montgomery presented the proposed 2027 Tree Commission meeting calendar.

The Commission discussed continuing its regular meeting schedule on the third Tuesday of each month at 5:30 PM in the 2nd Floor Conference Room of the Hamden Government Center.

Chairman Dr. M. Montgomery moved to approve the proposed 2027 Tree Commission meeting calendar. Commissioner D. Hoffman seconded the motion.

The Clerk took the following vote:

Yes

Commissioner Dr. Michael Montgomery, Chair

Commissioner Susan L. Neitlich

Commissioner Diane E. Hoffman

Commissioner Dr. Nathan Havill

Commissioner Kyle Dougherty

No

The motion passed unanimously.

Vote Summary: Yes 5, No 0, Abstentions 0, Absent 0

10. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Hamden Land Conservation Trust Presentation

Commissioner K. Dougherty reported that he had confirmed arrangements with Gail Cameron and the Hamden Land Conservation Trust (HLCT) to present a program titled "Notable Trees of Hamden."

The presentation is scheduled for Thursday, November 12, 2026, at 7:00 PM, in the meeting space behind the Miller Memorial Library.

Commissioner K. Dougherty will deliver the presentation, which will explore the history of notable trees throughout Connecticut before focusing specifically on notable trees in Hamden.

The Commission discussed promoting the event to encourage public attendance.

Upcoming Educational Conferences

Commissioner D. Hoffman informed the Commission of two upcoming educational conferences and agreed to email informational flyers.

2026 SALT Conference – Connecticut College

Commissioner D. Hoffman announced that the 2026 SALT Conference would be held on Saturday, November 7, 2026, from 9:30 AM to 3:30 PM, at the Cummings Art Center at Connecticut College. Registration and a continental breakfast will begin at 8:30 AM.

The conference will focus on ecological and landscape design considerations for transition zones between cultivated landscapes and natural forested areas. We will emphasize the strategic use of native understory trees and shrubs to enhance landscape functionality, seasonal interest, and habitat for native pollinators and wildlife.

The conference will feature three educational sessions:

Edgy Ecology for the Formal Forest Fringe – Presented by Lea Johnson, Ph.D., Director of Conservation at Native Plant Trust. This session explores ecological principles for plant selection and landscape design, including edge effects, patch size, light dynamics, shrub ecology, bird dispersal, and woodland garden design.

Designing the Edge – Presented by Kate Cholakakis, Professor of Landscape Planning and Design at the Conway School of Landscape Design. This presentation will examine the opportunities and challenges associated with the transition between managed landscapes

and natural ecosystems, emphasizing ecological design strategies and approaches to creating more dynamic landscape environments.

Shrubs for the Forest Edge – Presented by Bryan Connolly, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Biology at Eastern Connecticut State University. This session highlights native shrubs and multi-stemmed woody plants for southern New England woodland gardens, including their horticultural characteristics, preferred growing conditions, ecological relationships, and available cultivars.

The full-day conference will include a continental breakfast, three presentations, lunch, a panel discussion, and an optional post-conference tour.

Registration is required, with a general admission fee of \$75 and a discounted rate of \$60 for current Connecticut College Arboretum and Wild Ones members. A limited number of sponsored or discounted registrations will be available to eligible students, nonprofit representatives, and emerging industry professionals.

Additional information, speaker biographies, and registration details are available through the [2026 SALT Conference website](#) and [Conference Registration](#).

Connecticut Association of Conservation and Inland Wetlands Commissions (CACIWC) – 2026 Annual Meeting

Commissioner D. Hoffman also announced the upcoming 2026 Annual Meeting of the Connecticut Association of Conservation and Inland Wetlands Commissions (CACIWC).

The annual meeting provides educational and networking opportunities for municipal conservation and inland wetlands commissioners, environmental professionals, and individuals involved in land conservation and natural resource management.

Commissioner D. Hoffman agreed to distribute informational flyers and registration details for both conferences to Commission members.

Additional information: [CACIWC 2026 Annual Meeting](#)

11. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Chairman Dr. M. Montgomery asked whether there were any objections to adjournment.

Hearing none, the meeting was adjourned at 6:37 PM.

<https://hamden.zoom.us/rec/share/8vVB0wCYysCulCVdzc1aIVzI-OhfWmP7yVoX6ZKk9o3H9ZQyo4CvkxRkak9voBg.r8SUvcJ4eKcROYNq?startTime=1792531725000>