

Draft Meeting Minutes

Montpelier Tree Board - Thursday, October 2, 2025 meeting 5:30-6:30PM (City Hall)

Attending: Steve Bailey, Sarah Hoffmeier, Owen Smart, Shawn White, Linda Young, Alec Ellsworth (Tree Warden), Joseph Ferris (City Arborist)

- Welcoming Newest Member
 - Owen Smart is our new youth Tree Board member - Welcome, Owen!
- Land Acknowledgement - learning Abenaki tree names (Shawn)
 - New tree name this month is senomozi - sugar maple
 - Previously learned tree names:
 - Abazi - tree
 - Maskwamozi - paper birch
 - Kokokhoakwa - balsam fir (literally “owl tree”)
 - Koa - white pine
- Approval of September 2025 minutes
 - Unanimously approved by those in attendance
- Comments from the public
 - No public present
- Parks and Trees activities in September (Alec & Joseph)
 - Wrapped up tree clearance work for the city’s various summer/fall paving projects
 - Removed a large beech tree at intersection of Jordan and Clarendon. This tree was badly damaged during the repeated water main repairs at this location. Owner requesting replacement with a red bud.
 - Tree cleanup at “country club” property as part of preparation for Turtle Island pre-school moving in there
 - AmeriCorps group is here!:
 - Helping wrap up FEMA projects (before Oct 31 deadline) - includes various bridge and walkway construction projects in the parks
 - Spread wood chips in nursery and mulched all nursery paths and trees
 - Also providing a lot of help with Enchanted Forest setup
 - Parks team working on fire plan for Enchanted Forest (if it’s too dry, they may have to cancel the event. hoping for rain!)
- Downtown Trees - Status and Strategy (Alec & Joseph)
 - Street trees are an important component of the City’s downtown plan. How can we help the City make progress towards that goal?
 - Current state of the downtown trees is poor and declining

- 12 downtown trees are dead or gone, and the 12 large remaining trees are mostly green ash which are being treated to prevent ash borer damage but which are likely to succumb eventually.
- Of the remaining trees which were already in place when an inventory was done in 2014, none are showing appreciable growth in the 11 years since.
- The most successful trees downtown right now are ash (which we fear have a limited lifespan) and/or trees with access to more green space to spread out in. Trees planted in the small (traditional) sidewalk wells seem to be struggling due to lack of water even when there is good soil in the well.
- The 5 trees planted with the Stockholm method are looking okay so far, though it's early to know for sure just how well they're doing
- Noted again that State Street between Elm and Main has been particularly challenging! There are currently only 2 living trees in this stretch. Three were just lost to construction this summer, but even before that this area has been historically difficult.
- What can we do to improve the situation?
 - We'd like to set up more Stockholm method spaces for trees, as resources (budget and time) permit. We hope that this method will promote survival and better growth by improving the tree's access to water as well as better soil.
 - We could also experiment with sylvia cells - these have shown demonstrable success in Burlington. However, the Stockholm Method is more flexible and easier to work around existing underground infrastructure, which often makes it a better fit in Montpelier.
 - Alec also noted that a NYC study showed that the most critical factor for tree growth remains protection! All of the proposed planting methods include iron guards (though even those are not always enough)
 - Question: What is a "normal" rate of growth for city trees?
 - State Street Specific: for this particular stretch, anything we do should bear in mind upcoming work on the rialto bridge expected to happen before the end of the decade. Some options include:
 - Do nothing - leave the existing tree wells empty. It doesn't look great, but it could be an opportunity to explain to people what challenges street trees face, and open up discussion about options and funding
 - Plant trees in the existing tree wells, knowing they won't survive, but at least there's something there.
 - Introduce trees in planters - would only work for smaller trees, and might have to be replaced every few years if trees outgrow the planters, but it could be a good short-term solution, and could potentially look really nice.
 - Shawn noted that the planters in front of the federal building were originally brought here by the city and could possibly be reclaimed for this purpose
- Budget season is coming up - what is reasonable to ask for investment in downtown trees?
 - Support for additional Stockholm Method plantings?
 - \$10k will pay for one Stockholm method planting (Over half the cost is guards/grates - ie the iron! Though sometimes these can be reused which lowers the cost)

- While survival of a tree planted via Stockholm Method is still not guaranteed, once we have made the investment in the infrastructure, it's there for future use even if we end up needing to replace the tree.
 - (Note that there is already funding in place for several Stockholm Method plantings in the E. State Street construction plan)
- Funding Sources
 - Parks & Trees usually gets funding from capital budget, but could also consider downtown improvement district for funding, or the new local options tax which is being generated primarily from downtown businesses.
- What does staff have the bandwidth to take on if funding is made available?
- Suggested asking for \$50K this year. Alec will keep us updated on how budget discussions evolve.
- Treasury Report (John S)
 - Postponed to next meeting when John will hopefully be back
- Volunteer Days
 - September
 - Had several good invasive removal days in Hubbard Park!
 - Also another good nursery work day
 - October
 - Looking to schedule plantings - somewhat weather dependent
 - Is it okay to plant when it's so dry? Noted that while there is a water conservation advisory, there is not a watering ban.
 - Sarah will help coordinate supply drop-off for any scheduled planting days
- Other Business
 - Noted that it's a big mast year for northern red oak acorns!
 - New t-shirts have arrived in various sizes and colors. Be sure to check in with Sarah if you want one.

Next meeting: November 6, 2025, 5:30-6:30 pm in City Hall