

Montpelier Tree Board Meeting Minutes for Thursday, February 19, 2026

In Attendance: Sarah, John S., Linda, Joseph, Nancy, Steve, Owen, Shawn, Max, John A (recorder)

Acknowledgement of the land we are on and those who came before

We made our acknowledgement of the Abenaki people.

Approval of January 8, 2026 minutes

The January 8, 2026 minutes were approved with no changes.

Comments from the public

Sarah's son Max was present but chose not to comment. No other members of the public were present.

Parks and Trees Activities

Joseph reported that the **Ice on Fire** celebration went off beautifully without a hitch and included some great performances.

Park Activity currently revolving around trail grooming and snowmobile maintenance. Most of staff has been on vacation as of late so Alec and Joseph have been extra busy. Staffing changes: Leila has left her position in administration support and AmeriCorps member Marek Zajac will be taking that position at Parks. Joseph has also been working with UVM on the design of the East State Street tree wells sampling ports and soil composition.

The Home Farm Way property has been purchased to return it to the floodplain. Alec has proposed that some of it be used as a parking in including some to be fenced and used for dogs.

The house at 127 Elm has been demolished and that location may become a park.

The plans for the Country Club property are expected to be released on February 20th. Tree Board members are asked to review those plans and have comments ready for our next meeting on March 5, 2026

Parks has applied for a \$50,000 grant to continue work on the multi-use trail in Hubbard Park.

The Capitol Budget includes \$50,000 for planting trees downtown.

Parks and the Tree Board expect to be involved in public outreach should the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation (Agency of Natural Resources) be successful in getting approval for the Emerald Ash Borer biocontrol experiment in the Montpelier area.

Dead trees north of the pump track (Cummings Street area) will be replaced in the Spring.

Carolyn “Carrie” Pike is a Forest Regeneration Specialist and Geneticist with the USDA Forest Service in Vermont. Her research deals with tree resistance breeding and climate change adaptation. Joseph attended one of her talks recently describing how trees of the same species from various geographical locations can be compared at a single locations (common garden) to see which do the best. It is not always the tree most native to the location.

John S solicited Joseph’s help in pruning fruit trees along the bike path from the MHS track to the highway overpass. Joseph agreed to provide training on fruit tree pruning for members of the Tree Board and volunteers interested. Stay tuned for the date of the training.

Linda mentioned that the newly elected Parks Commissioners will be deciding their work plans at the next meeting. She will attend to request that they work on a plan for the Summer Street Park.

Update on Tree City

Steve reported that the application for Tree City USA was submitted well before the deadline and is pending State approval which is expected.

Treasurer’s Report

John S reported that the current proposed City Budget contains an appropriation of \$2,500 for the Tree Board.

East State Street Design/Construction – Tree Board Letter to City Council on Priorities

Concerning the trees in areas where DPW is working that may be impacted by construction activities, Sarah will draft a letter for the City Council stating that the Tree Board will put up fencing to protect vulnerable trees and will replace any casualties.

Downtown Businesses Communications

Nancy had visited the downtown businesses and provided each with a letter written from the perspective of downtown trees requesting the business’s help in caring for and nurturing those trees.

Cemetery Planting Update and 2026 Plans

John S reported that Patrick Healy is working with the City Finance staff to create a mechanism for any donations from the public related to tree plantings be held in perpetuity. He and Nancy had met with Jason Kass, Chair of the Cemetery Commission, who is an arborist and is very enthusiastic about creating a Cemetery Arboretum. This could be an additional motivation for donations. A Level One arboretum has 25 species of trees which would be doable. Joseph finished the inventory of trees in the Cemetery and identified future planting locations. He was of the opinion that the core of the arboretum could be located at the central lower part of the Cemetery which is vacant of trees at present. John S will provide a link to information about arboretums for the minutes.

<https://arbnet.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/Tool-Kit-Cemetery-Arboretum-11-18-2025.pdf>

Several of the Tree Board members were familiar with arboretums in other states such as the Mount Auburn Cemetery (MA) and a major arboretum in Cambridge, MA.

2026 Spring Planting Locations

Sarah drafted a letter for Tree Board members to give to homeowners regarding our planting trees on their property. John S commented that the letter needs to be revised to state that the trees may be planted in the Right-Of-Way or on their property depending on conditions. Sarah will revise and send the letter to members. She requested that we all identify potential planting locations by the April meeting.

In addition to other City locations, trees will need to be planted in a wedge of land bounded by Elm Street to Gould Hill, the North Branch River, and East State Street. This will fulfill requirements of a grant which the Parks Department received.

Two locations mentioned during the meeting were at the corner of Terrace and Jordan (43 Terrace) as well as a house behind the Middle School (3 Franklin). John A stated he will follow up on the former.

Calendar of Events:

Arbor Day Foundation Webinar on Tree Protection Ordinances on March 12, 11 a.m. – 12 p.m. Free.

VT Woodlands Conference April 11 8-4pm @ VT State University, Randolph. The cost is \$55. The Tree Board will cover the cost for members attending.

Other Business

John S reported that the Kellogg Hubbard Library may build some structures on the School Street side for kids to play on. The Norway Maples will not be disturbed. Air spading to help the tree roots was discussed.

The subject of a Stormwater Utility was discussed. Other municipalities have funded utilities of this kind with a tax on impervious surfaces. The idea of a Montpelier Stormwater Utility is still “on the burner” because stormwater infrastructure has no funding mechanism unlike water and sewer infrastructure.

The idea of planting more willows was discussed briefly as was color enhancement of yellow and red ochre dogwoods by pruning back 1/3rd

Matt in the City Planning Department is interested in promoting local tree species as well as fruit trees for food resilience. There may be some funding available in the future.

Homework

- (1) Review Country Club Project proposals. Comments due at March 5th meeting.

<https://www.montpelier-vt.org/1296/Country-Club-Road-Site-Property-Developm>

- (2) Identify Neighborhood Planting Locations
- (3) Distribute Planting Letters to Homeowners

Next meeting: March 5, 2026 5:30-6:30pm in City Hall