

DRAFT

Shepherdstown Tree Commission draft minutes
Thursday, December 11, 2025 at 6 PM Town Hall

Members present: Linus Bicker, Robin McGrorty, Charlotte Baker-Shenk
Absent: James Dillon

Visitors: Jim Auxer, Laura Carter, Terry Hadley

1. Linus called the meeting to order at 6:09 PM.

2. Approval of November 13, 2025 minutes. Approved unanimously.

3. Public comments.

Laura and Terry asked about plans for long-delayed planting of Sage Place tree wells in 2026. Terry has been doing the weeding, which has been a huge task. Mulch from the town has helped a lot.

Commissioners responded that plans are to order in January the recommended *Carex woodii* for all wells, to be planted densely, as designed by James Dillon.

Laura and Terry also asked about the observed lowering levels of soil and possible erosion problems in some tree wells.

Action: Robin will check on each of these concerns and questions. Will ask James Dillon and Jamie to also look at each tree well.

Secondarily, Linus will engage Public Works on any needed remedial work. (Note: there was a specific ratio of mixed topsoil, coarse sand, and aged compost prescribed for the tree wells.)

Laura also requested observation of the maple tree in Sage Circle to see if it needs attention.

Action: Tree Commission will assess and make any recommendations.

4. Unfinished Business.

a. Review pending tree actions.

Town Hall Sugar Maple— Linus will soon complete plans for the half moon structure.

Bistro tree well — Robin reported that the tree center is 5 feet from the lowest steps, 2.5 feet from sidewalk. Commission decided that moving it such a small distance would not achieve meaningful benefit. Site will be prepared for planting an Okami Cherry.

207 W. German— dead tree: Viking not yet removed.

207 S. King— tree branch; Viking done.

108E. New— done

German and Duke— Ecological Services bid had been approved. Work completed except for the lilac. That work will be completed in the spring.

Action: **Linus** will notify town hall that the work was completed.

335 W. German— stump grinding not yet done; Linus talked with Viking, who said they would complete it next week.

W. High Street overlooking baseball field— Linus talked with Shepherd University Provost who was agreeable to the general concept and would like to have additional discussion with University staff regarding the proposal that we plant 15 small multi-stem trees in the town's right away to improve the viewscape for residents. (see November minutes)

Action: **Linus** will talk with town council and public works about these plantings.

213 W. German: Complex issue related to water intrusion into residential property that stems from improper grading. Tree well would require significant work. Since this is a state road, will require coordination with the state.

Action: **Charlotte** will talk with Jamie to better understand his earlier assessment. Then ask Woody Coe to talk with the department of transportation.

220 W. German— add tree well in sidewalk/street/yard? (see Nov. minutes)

Action: **Charlotte** will talk with current owners about any parking space concerns, etc. Then talk with Woody about any state highway requirements concerning putting a tree in the street.

337 W. German— stump not yet ground.

299 E. German. — Cherry trees in decline. Tree Commission will determine whether to continue pruning efforts until tree death or replace now.

Action: **Robin** will talk with homeowner regarding preference.

403 E. High— waiting on Viking to do the work.

Action: Linus will follow up.

Stump grindings: Viking submitted their proposal, which has been approved. Work should be done before our next meeting.

b. Approved species list— Jamie and James will complete this by January.

c. FYI, 2026 tree planting

Action: Charlotte will cut and paste from prior minutes detailing which species for each location and submit for January meeting.

d. Arborscope

Renewal fee is \$2400. Tree Commission discussed whether we could authorize a contracted arborist separate from Bartlett to access the town Arborscope account and update the tree inventory.

Action: Linus will check with Bartlett over any proprietary or licensing concerns with 3rd party use of Arborscope.

e. Grant funding.

Linus reported that Viking will assess all street trees in the town's primary corridors and then submit a proposal about work needed to be done in the next 12 months. We can use that proposal for scope of work requested under the grant.

We may also request funding support for the Arborscope renewal fee.

Other funding possibilities

Mayor Gatz provided information about other grant opportunities for green infrastructure projects.

Chesapeake Bay Trust -forestry fund (3 different tracks). February 27 is due date.

Linus shared an email from Mayor Gatz, who had forwarded an email from Josephine Saikali —environmental program coordinator for region nine, eastern Panhandle — about the Chesapeake Bay Trust opportunities. Tree Commission discussed potential for using grant funds to develop a comprehensive planting plan and could it be done to also plant trees on Shepherd Univ in support of the County Tree Canopy Plan.

The mayor recommends contacting Sonja Shawley (304-876-5107) to find out appropriate Shepherd university contact person. Invite that person to our January meeting?

Action: Charlotte will make the call.

Mayor Gatz also recommends we connect with the new Grants Committee.

f. Jefferson County tree canopy plan.

Mayor Gatz has requested that we consider planting trees on the north side of Shepherd cemetery.

Action: **Linus** will ask the mayor about specific locations in the cemetery. Need small trees because of utility lines? (redbuds, dogwood, cherries) . Willows might aid stormwater management concerns.

Action: **Robin** will assess that area to see how much space is available between the graves and the wall.

Hurley Park—the mayor is also asking us to care for the Mill Street property along which will be created Hurley Park.

Action: **Linus** will ask Shawn Walker to make an assessment of existing trees and to mark all trees of value and to also potentially identify any invasive species.

Action: **Linus** will find out the exact borders of that new town property.

In addition to Hurley Park and the Shepherd cemetery, the mayor is also asking us to care for trees in the parks and the Entler side garden.

g. Proposed Christmas decorations on iconic crab apple—proposal is for lights around the trunk and balls hanging from the lower limbs. Commission members approved the decorations.

Action: **Linus** will coordinate with ecological services so as not to impede any scheduled pruning.

5. New Business .

Robin observed with concern a hanging limb at 109 W. Washington Street (tree #094).

Action: **Linus** will ask Viking to remove it.

Citizen inquiry (from Age-Friendly Committee) about uneven brickwork around trees that have led to several resident falls on German Street.

Action: **Linus** will coordinate through PWC and/or Public Works Dept to remove hazard bricks.

6. Adjourn at 7:30.

