

City of Cape May
Shade Tree Commission
Auditorium/Live Stream Meeting Minutes of
Wednesday, May 13, 2025
5:00 pm

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Ator called the meeting to order and announced compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act of 1975, that adequate notice of this meeting has been provided.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chairman Ator led the meeting in the Pledge of Allegiance.

ATTENDANCE

Chairman Ator, Vice Chairman Werner, Commissioner Sick, Commissioner Drake, Commissioner Goldstein.

ABSENT MEMBERS

Commissioner York

GUESTS

Chris Gillin-Schwartz, Esq., Deputy City Manager Justin Riggs

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Drake motioned, seconded by Chairman Ator to approve the minutes of April 8, 2026.

Chairman Ator – Yes

Commissioner Goldstein – Yes

Commissioner Sick - Yes

Vice Chairman Werner - Abstain

Commissioner Drake – Abstain

City Solicitor Chris Gillin-Schwartz presented changes and modifications to the City's Tree Ordinance. He explained these changes are due to ongoing issues that the City is dealing with. The changes will set up unlawful pruning or cutting of a regulated tree. This is also for evasion of the tree removal permitting requirement.

Vice Chairman Werner motioned, seconded by Commissioner Sick to approve the Shade Tree Resolution for the changes to the Ordinance

Chairman Ator – Yes

Commissioner Goldstein – Yes

Commissioner Sick - Yes

Vice Chairman Werner - Yes

Commissioner Drake – Yes

Street Tree Removal Requests

1001 Maryland Avenue

Chairman Ator stated that this tree has been overly pruned and is in bad shape. He believed it should be removed and put a substantial size tree in its place.

Commissioner Sick motioned, seconded by Commissioner Drake to approve the removal of the tree and replant a tree in its place

Chairman Ator – Yes

Commissioner Goldstein – Yes

Commissioner Sick - Yes

Vice Chairman Werner - No

Commissioner Drake – Yes

Residential Tree Removal Requests

21 Patterson Avenue

Owner, Amy Walker, and professional engineer, Brian Murphy, presented the application to remove trees at 21 Patterson Avenue. Ms. Walker explained that she had been experiencing significant flooding in the backyard when there was significant rainfall. Mr. Murphy explained that they are proposing to put 50 feet of pipe and a trench to help. Chairman Ator questioned whether the drain could be placed on the other side of the yard. The applicants stated they would not be able to. Ms. Walker did state she would like to plant new trees and possibly contribute to the Tree Bank.

Vice Chairman Werner motioned, seconded by Commissioner Drake to conditionally approve the proposal submitted upon submission of a landscaping plan that incorporates the number of trees that may not conform to the two for one but would include a contribution to the Tree Bank

Chairman Ator – Yes

Commissioner Goldstein – Yes

Commissioner Sick - Yes

Vice Chairman Werner - Yes

Commissioner Drake – Yes

1100 Missouri Avenue

Owner Bob Gorgone appeared to propose the removal of six Japanese black pine trees in his yard. He stated that two of the trees had storm damage and would like to remove the additional four trees. These trees are in the backyard and are not visible from the street. He stated that the trees do grow rapidly and have caused damage. Chairman Ator stated that he would like Commissioner York to weight in at the next meeting, as it was her district.

Vice Chairman Werner motioned, seconded by Commissioner Drake to remove the two storm damaged trees in the center and table the application to the June meeting

Chairman Ator – Yes

Commissioner Goldstein – Yes

Commissioner Sick - Yes

Vice Chairman Werner - Yes

Commissioner Drake – Yes

1221 Vermont Avenue

Chairman Ator stated he looked at this tree and recommended approval and a refund of the \$75 fee as the tree was damaged in the storm.

Vice Chairman Werner motioned, seconded by Commissioner Drake to the tree to be taken down without the permit fee and refund the cost of \$75.00

Chairman Ator – Yes

Commissioner Goldstein – Yes

Commissioner Sick - Yes

Vice Chairman Werner - Yes
Commissioner Drake – Yes

1301 Maryland Avenue

Vice Chairman Werner stated that the applicant would like to take down all the trees. The application stated that the honey locust tree was dead, but it is vibrant looking. Vice Chairman Werner recommended denying the removal and recommend that the vines be removed.

Vice Chairman Werner motioned, seconded by Commissioner Drake to deny the removal of the four trees and recommended the removal of ivy that are covering the trees.

Chairman Ator – Yes
Commissioner Goldstein – Yes
Commissioner Sick - Yes
Vice Chairman Werner - Yes
Commissioner Drake – Yes

659 Lafayette Street

Commissioner Sick stated that there was going to be construction at the home and the trees are going to be severely compromised. The only issue she had was that there was not a landscape plan for the property with what is being planted.

Commissioner Sick motioned, seconded by Commissioner Drake to approve the removal of the trees pending a landscape plan that will tell what the new trees and their species will be.

Chairman Ator – Yes
Commissioner Goldstein – Yes
Commissioner Sick - Yes
Vice Chairman Werner - Yes
Commissioner Drake – Yes

830 Washington Street

Chairman Ator said that he visited this property. It was a multi-trunk holly tree in the front where the building is going to be demolished, a silver maple, and a mulberry tree in the corner. It would be in the way of the demolition.

Vice Chairman Werner motioned, seconded by Commissioner Drake to approve the removal of the trees pending a submission of a landscaping plan with the types of trees

Chairman Ator – Yes

Commissioner Goldstein – Yes

Commissioner Sick - Yes

Vice Chairman Werner - Yes

Commissioner Drake – Yes

504 Jefferson Street

Chairman Ator stated that this was a silver maple in the rear yard that has been pruned. It was his opinion that he does not believe the tree is in imminent danger of falling.

Vice Chairman Werner motioned, seconded by Commissioner Drake to deny the application pending further information

Chairman Ator – Yes

Commissioner Goldstein – Yes

Commissioner Sick - Yes

Vice Chairman Werner - Yes

Commissioner Drake – Yes

New Business

Discussion was had about the Open House event being held by the City on May 20th at the Convention Center from 5 until 7pm.

It was also discussed to have better communication with the residents of the City about the Shade Tree Commission and the rules.

Commissioner Sick motioned, seconded by Commissioner Drake to adjourn.

All in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Lauren Emerick

Cape May City

Shade Tree Commission Secretary