

**City of Cape May
Shade Tree Commission
Auditorium/Live Stream
Meeting Minutes of
Tuesday, June 10, 2025
2:00 pm**

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Schatz 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 Schatz led the meeting in the Pledge of Allegiance.

ATTENDANCE

Chairman Schatz, Vice Chairman Ator, Commissioner York, Commissioner Werner, Commissioner Preminger, Commissioner Seeland, Commissioner Goldstein, Councilman Meier, DPW Rep. McCloskey, City Landscaper Ron Menear

ABSENT MEMBERS

Commissioner Sick – Excused
Commissioner Perez-Excused

GUESTS

Veronica Town – External Affairs Manager – Atlantic Electric
Joe Griebau – Senior Vegetation Program Manager – Atlantic City Electric
Paul Dietrich – City Manager
Bill Holzworth – Code Enforcement
Roger Midkiff – 1024 Idaho Ave. – Appeal
Dave Schultz – Architect for 1040 New York Ave. – Appeal
Keith & Kim Reisen – 205 Howard St. – Appeal

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Ator **motioned, seconded** by Commissioner York to **approve** the minutes of May 13th with **one correction**.

Commissioner York – **Abstain**
All in favor.

Chairman Schatz recognized **Veronica Town and Joe Griebau of Atlantic City Electric**.

The representatives from ACE were attending the meeting to discuss their current street tree trimming program and some of the concerns of the commission members.

Vice Chairman Ator addressed multiple locations where there were aggressive pruning techniques.

Mr. Griebau reported that his crew noted that there was a private contractor performing work in the city at the same time.

There were multiple questions about the frequency of pruning, street trees interfering with power lines and the limitations of ACE pruning across private property.

Ms. Town stated that if there are any questions or concerns in the future to please feel free to reach out to her.

Mr. Griebau said that he would look at the locations that Vice Chairman Ator had mentioned and would get back to him with what he observed.

Columbia Ave

Councilman Meier informed the Commission that a tree on Columbia Ave. had been removed without a Tree Permit. Code Enforcement discovered that the spot where the tree was removed had been covered with a flowerpot apparently to conceal the removal.

The State approved tree evaluation after calculation values this removed tree at \$8,478.00. Code Enforcement will use this information to give notice to the property owner.

Vice Chairman Ator noted that if we were to establish a Tree Bank these fines could be deposited into this fund. Commissioner York questioned how to establish a Tree Bank. Councilman Meier said that if the Commission directs him to establish, he will go to the attorney, and then to Council to write the Tree Bank into the ordinance.

1024 Idaho – Roger Midkiff – Appeal

Chairman Schatz recognized Mr. Midkiff of 1024 Idaho Ave. Mr. Midkiff stated that he did not want to lose the tree that he had applied to remove. He stated that the tree had been poorly pruned previously and had 4 spikes growing out as a result. There is now rot and deterioration, affecting some of the spikes.

Commissioner Seeland had recommended that this application be denied. It was decided that additional commission members look at the tree as well as the City Landscaper, and the commission will revisit this at the next meeting in July.

1040 New York Ave. – Dave Schultz – Appeal

Chairman Schatz recognized Mr. Schultz, the architect for the property owner at 1040 New York Ave. Mr. Schultz provided the commission members with handouts for the appeal. The property was purchased about a year ago and the owner wished to build a family home. The tree in question is a mulberry and located at the back of the property.

Mickey Riggins of Arbor Care has provided a report recommending removal and it is included in the handouts with the site plan.

Mr. Schultz told the commission that the owner of the property loves trees and plans to keep all the trees except the mulberry and has a robust plan to plant additional trees.

Vice Chairman Ator reported that more concerning to him are the 2 pine trees at the front of the property. One is completely dead, and it is affecting the 2nd.

Commissioner Seeland stated that he had spoken to Mr. Schultz when he visited the property by phone. At that time Mr. Schultz had indicated that the tree was not in direct conflict with the plans. Mr. Schultz replied that there is a plan for a garage that would be located close to the tree and the tree is beginning to lean in that direction. He added that the tree has serious health issues.

Vice Chairman Ator **motioned, seconded** by Commissioner York, to table this appeal until next month's meeting so that other Commissioners can look at this tree.

Chairman Schatz – **Yes**

Commissioner York – **Yes**

Commissioner Seeland – **Yes**

Commissioner Goldstein - **Yes**

Vice Chairman Ator – **Yes**

Commissioner Preminger – **Yes**

Commissioner Werner – **Yes**

205 Howard St. – Keith & Kim Reisen – Appeal

Mr. & Mrs. Reisin represents Marilyn Aquino, Mrs. Reisen's mother owner of 205 Howard St. The Reisen's live at 207 Howard St. and are next door to the applicant.

Mr. Reisen explained that a large tree branch had broken off back in March, from the tree and landed on the deck breaking the railing and a cast aluminum picnic table. They have trimmed the tree back and the tree is still leafing. They think the poplar is at the end of its lifespan and are concerned that the tree may eventually fall. He added that the tree is located between two historic homes and their preservation. It is also the question of the safety of the people that walk between these two homes.

Ron Menear, City Landscaper, stated that he had done work on this tree in the past and at this point he feels the tree is in its twilight years.

Commissioner Werner, who also visited the site, said that he felt the ivy growing up the tree should be removed, that it needed some pruning and that he would hate to see the tree removed at this time. He suggested that the tree should be looked at again next year and if it's on an obvious trail of decline it could then be a different situation.

It was agreed that Mrs. Reisen would forward photos that were taken when the branch fell.

Commissioner Preminger stated that this tree was in her district and her viewpoint was originally to remove the tree. She asked Mr. Menear if he thought that the height and location of the tree was a hazard. Mr. Menear stated that it was on the decline but recommends reducing the top by 30% and remove the ivy.

Commissioner Ator **motioned, seconded** by Commissioner York, to table this appeal until the next meeting.

Chairman Schatz – **Yes**

Commissioner York - **Yes**

Commissioner Seeland - **Yes**

Commissioner Goldstein – **Yes**

Vice Chairman Ator – **Yes**

Commissioner Preminger – **No**

Commissioner Werner – **Yes**

717 Washington St. Appeal (motion & vote from May 13th meeting)

Commissioner Ator **motioned, seconded** by Commissioner York to **approve** the removal of the tree at 717 Washington St.

Chairman Schatz- **Yes**
Commissioner York - **No**
Commissioner Seeland - **Yes**
Commissioner Goldstein – **Yes**

Vice Chairman Ator - **Abstain**
Commissioner Preminger- **Yes**
Commissioner Werner – **No**

Consent Agenda

STREET TREE REMOVAL REQUESTS

Applications to be removed:

#5- 633 Hughes St.- removed by Commissioner York

#6- 1000 New York Ave. – removed by Commissioner Seeland

#3 – 1209 Maryland Ave. – scratched from agenda

Vice Chairman Ator **motioned, seconded** by Commissioner York **to approve** Street Tree Removal **Applications #s 1,2,4 and 7 through 10.**

Chairman Schatz - **Yes**
Commissioner York - **Yes**
Commissioner Seeland - **Yes**
Commissioner Goldstein - **Yes**

Vice Chairman Ator – **Yes**
Commissioner Preminger – **Yes**
Commissioner Werner – **Yes**

Vice Chairman Ator **motioned, seconded** by Commissioner York to **approve** application #5, **633 Hughes St.**

Commissioner York stated that she looked at the tree and there is one dead limb, and the tree is leaning. There is a hole in the tree, but it seems stable. Her suggestion is that the dead limb be removed.

Commissioner Preminger disagreed. She thinks the tree is leaning and is half of a tree, rotten and should be removed.

Vice Chairman Ator suggested to reduce the canopy of this tree and to plant another tree nearby so that if it does falter, we will have a replacement tree in place.

Chairman Schatz - **No**
Commissioner York - **No**
Commissioner Seeland - **No**
Commissioner Goldsten – **No**

Vice Chairman Ator - **No**
Commissioner Preminger – **Yes**
Commissioner Werner – **No**

Vice Chairman Ator **motioned, seconded** by Commissioner York to **approve** application #6, **1000 New York Ave.**

Commissioner Seeland said he inspected this tree and acknowledges Mr. McCloskey's expertise, but he thinks the tree should remain but be pruned.

Vice Chairman Ator stated that he felt the tree is stable and has some new growth.

Commissioner York thinks that the Cedars on Madison Ave. are beautiful trees, and we should do everything we can to keep them. They are landmark trees.

Mr. McCloskey said he didn't disagree but when Cedar's get snow on them in the winter, they are a hazard because they stick out further than they should. The branch in question was hit and that was the reason for the call to DPW. The tree does not look healthy to him. He also stated that a nearby neighbor has volunteered to replace the tree.

Chairman Schatz - **Yes**

Commissioner York - **No**

Commissioner Seeland - **No**

Commissioner Goldstein - **No**

Vice Chairman Ator - **No**

Commissioner Preminger - **Yes**

Commissioner Werner - **No**

Vice Chairman Ator then gave several examples of Cedar trees that have been planted across the city, and they are doing very well including the beach front.

Consent Agenda

TREE REMOVAL PERMIT APPLICATIONS

Applications to be removed:

#12 – 1023 Washington St.

#15 - 17 S Broadway

#16 – 701 Beach Ave.

#17 – 720 Madison Ave.

Vice Chairman Ator **motioned, seconded** by Commissioner York to **approve** Tree Removal Permit **Application #s 11,13, & 14.**

Chairman Schatz - **Yes**

Commissioner York - **Yes**

Commissioner Seeland - **No**

Commissioner Goldstein - **Yes**

Vice Chairman Ator - **Yes**

Commissioner Preminger - **Yes**

Commissioner Werner - **Yes**

Vice Chairman Ator **motioned, seconded** by Commissioner York to **approve** the Tree Removal Permit Application for **1023 Washington St.**

Commissioners Ator and Werner both looked at this tree, a Purple Plum. Commissioner Ator says that the tree is a beautiful tree with a full canopy. Commissioner Werner added that it is a prime example of what the tree should look like.

Chairman Schatz - **No**
Commissioner York - **No**
Commissioner Seeland - **No**
Commissioner Goldstein - **No**

Vice Chairman Ator - **No**
Commissioner Preminger - **Yes**
Commissioner Werner - **No**

Vice Chairman Ator **motioned, seconded** by Commissioner York **to approve** the Tree Removal Permit Application for **17 S. Broadway**.

Vice Chairman Ator read the application aloud and showed the attached pictures to the Commission. The applicant feels the tree is messy with leaves dropping, not a shade tree. The pictures in the application show the trunk of the tree surrounded by debris. Vice Chairman Ator said the tree is a beautiful Holly tree and should not be removed.

Chairman Schatz - **No**
Commissioner York - **No**
Commissioner Seeland - **No**
Commissioner Goldstein - **No**

Vice Chairman Ator - **No**
Commissioner Preminger - **No**
Commissioner Werner - **No**

It was noted that Code Enforcement should contact the applicant about removing the debris around the base of the tree.

Vice Chairman Ator **motioned, seconded** by Commissioner York **to table and revisit next month** the Tree Removal Permit Application for **701 Beach Ave.** to allow a full Commission review.

Chairman Schatz - **Yes**
Commissioner York - **Yes**
Commissioner Seeland - **Yes**
Commissioner Goldstein - **Yes**

Vice Chairman Ator - **Yes**
Commissioner Preminger - **Yes**
Commissioner Werner - **Yes**

Vice Chairman Ator **motioned, seconded** by Commissioner York **to approve** the Tree removal Permit Application for **720 Madison Ave.**

Commissioner Werner stated that this is a fine example of Arborvitaes creating a backyard privacy screen. He suggests good pruning and recommends that the trees are retained.

Chairman Schatz - **No**
Commissioner York - **No**
Commissioner Seeland - **No**
Commissioner Goldstein - **No**

Vice Chairman Ator - **No**
Commissioner Preminger - **No**
Commissioner Werner - **No**

Old Business – Marc Fink – 1309 Maryland Ave.

Vice Chairman Ator **motioned, seconded** by Commissioner York to return the \$75.00 Tree Removal Permit Fee, paid in error, by **Marc Fink, 1309 Maryland Ave.**

Chairman Schatz - **Yes**
Commissioner York - **Yes**
Commissioner Seeland - **Yes**
Commissioner Goldstein - **Yes**

Vice Chairman Ator - **Yes**
Commissioner Preminger - **Yes**
Commissioner Werner - **Yes**

SUB-COMMITTEE REPORT

Commissioner Werner reported that the committee addressed the eradication of the lantern fly at their last meeting.

Councilman Meier stated that they have located a severe infestation of Tree of Heaven in Cape May in the 900 block of Washington, Lafayette and Queen Streets.

They have met with Mickey Riggins and the residents in this area. Many have small shoots of Tree of Heaven coming up in their yards. There is also the presence of lantern flies and their pupae which resemble small black ticks.

There is a 20K dollar grant to help deal with the issue. Mickey Riggins, who is certified in herbicides, will inject these trees with herbicide and a month later the city will take them down. There is no indication if the shoots that are coming up in the neighbors' yards are from seeds or the roots of the tree. There are 4 large trees and a good number of small trees along with 30-40 seedlings.

There will be a press release, and letters sent to neighboring properties informing residents that they are responsible for maintaining their backyards.

NEW BUSINESS

Commissioner Seeland reported that there are two cutouts on Decatur St. that are completely empty. One is at Della's, and one is on the south side of the Presbyterian Church. Vice Chairman Ator added that there is a dead tree located at the Presbyterian Church as well.

He also said that the Merchants Association had been responsible for the trees on the mall in the past. Suggesting we should draft a letter advising them that any empty spots on the mall should be filled with trees.

Councilman Meier stated that DPW should be notified about the dead tree at the Presbyterian Church and we should start a list of replacement tree locations.

Joe Griebau from ACE said that they often partner with municipalities with tree donations for Arbor Day. He estimated that they could possibly donate 5 trees to the city and that they typically like to do this in spring or fall to increase the survival rate. The size of the tree will depend on the type of tree, but it will not be a type that exceeds 25-30 ft in maturity.

He also reported that he stepped out of the meeting earlier to visit the tree sites that were discussed concerning aggressive pruning and trimming techniques. He took pictures and reported that the work on Washington St. had to be done by a private company as the cut

limbs were all facing an awning at one property. His workers also identified a private tree contractor that his crew witnessed doing work.

Lafayette and Madison St trimming he believes was done in the past as there is a lot of sucker growth and his crew just trimmed back the growth. He also stated that he didn't see anything out of the ordinary.

COUNCIL REPORT

Councilman Meier stated that at this year's Shade Tree Federation Conference everyone that needs certification must receive their core training.

DPW REPORT

None

COMMENTS/PUBLIC PORTION

Commissioner Goldstein noted that she has noticed several Street Trees that are completely covered in ivy. Vice Chairman Ator said that these ivy-covered trees should be reported to Public Works

ADJOURNMENT

Vice Chairman Ator **motioned** to adjourn, **seconded** by Commissioner York.

All in favor.

Respectfully submitted by:

Connie Anderson
Cape May City
Shade Tree Commission
Secretary