

WHITEMARSH TOWNSHIP SHADE TREE COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES JANUARY 6, 2026

Members Present: Christian Fassbender, Vera Kosabutski, Natalie Borkowski, David D'Amore, and Fran Kelly. Also in attendance: Jacy Toll, Samantha Zrillo (Staff), and John Hosbach (Arborist).

CALL TO ORDER: Mr. Fassbender called the meeting to order at 6:33 PM.

ELECTION OF CHAIR: Ms. Kelly made a motion to nominate Christian Fassbender to be the Chair. Mr. D'Amore seconded the motion. Motion carried 3-0-1. Mr. Fassbender abstained. Ms. Borkowski was not in attendance at the time of the vote.

ELECTION OF VICE CHAIR: Ms. Kelly made a motion to nominate Ms. Kosabutski as Vice-Chair. Mr. D'Amore seconded the motion. Motion carried 3-0-1. Ms. Kosabutski abstained. Ms. Borkowski was not in attendance at the time of the vote.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- All speakers are requested to speak directly into the microphones.
Mr. Fassbender reminded everyone to speak in the microphones because the meeting is being recorded to assist with meeting minutes.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

- November 18, 2025
Mr. D'Amore made a motion to approve the November 18, 2025 meeting minutes. Ms. Kosabutski seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously (4-0). Ms. Borkowski was not in attendance at the time of the vote.

PLAN REVIEWS:

- Grading Permit #2025-10 Green Valley Country Club R1 (201 Ridge Pike); Padel Court Location Change
[Chair Fassbender revised the agenda to hear this Grading Permit second because the project representative was not yet in attendance.]

In attendance: Darrell Campana, PLA, Eustace Engineering, Applicant's Representative

The applicant's representative returned to the Shade Tree Commission to present revised plans for the Green Valley Country Club padel courts, proposing replacement of an existing tennis clay court with a concrete surface and padel court system. Shrubs and a 6" tree are to be removed and arborvitae is proposed to be planted. The applicant requested waivers related to tree survey requirements and tree protection fencing due to plan revisions and a change in court location.

Discussion included proposed screening along the courts, involving non-native arborvitae. Mr. Hosbach said that native red cedars can also provide screening. It was determined that the arborvitae would grow faster. A member of the Commission also commented on existing vegetation, including black walnut trees along the roadway.

Public in attendance: Debra Harris (resident)

Ms. Harris mentioned that consideration should be given to planting native species on the property to replace the 6" tree being removed.

A member of the Commission agreed with Ms. Harris. Mr. Campana said that can be done.

Ms. Borkowski made a motion to grant the following waivers, conditioned on the planting of two, 3” redbud trees on the property:

- **55-4.C.(3) to waive the requirement of a tree survey for the entire site and limiting it to the area depicted on the plans near the limit of disturbance**
- **55-4.C.(4)(b) to waive the tree protection fencing requirements as written in the ordinance and allow the protection fencing to be placed as shown on the plans**

Ms. Kosabutski seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously (5-0).

- Grading Permit #2025-25 Madras Investments 1, LLC (400 Stenton Ave); Building Addition
In attendance: Wick Littleton, Owner

The applicant gave an overview of the existing conditions of the site and proposed removing existing lean-to and metal structures and constructing a new building on existing blacktop. No trees would be removed, and all construction would remain within existing impervious areas. The applicant noted that approximately 12–14 foot cedar trees had already been planted along the existing retaining wall visible from Joshua Road.

Mr. Hosbach noted that the site contains limited scrub and invasive vegetation outside the limits of disturbance.

Waivers were requested for tree inventory, landscape plan, and tree protection requirements, as well as for concrete washout provisions, since a washout location was not shown on the plan. Mr. Littleton said that he can obtain a concrete washout dumpster.

There was discussion about the extent of the construction and where the concrete washout would be located. A Commission member stated that they would like the applicant to consider additional landscaping.

There was no public comment.

Mr. D’Amore made a motion to grant the following waivers as all disturbance will be on existing impervious surface, subject to the inclusion of the washout dumpster:

- **§55-4.C. to waive the requirement of having a tree survey and landscape plan**
- **§55-4.D. to waive tree protection and preservation requirements**

Ms. Borkowski seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously (5-0).

- Grading Permit #2025-24 Union League Liberty Hill, LLC (800 Ridge Pike); Construction of New Ballroom and Associated Improvements
In attendance: Greg Newell, P.E., Nave Newell, Applicant’s Engineer; Jared Lowman, RLA, Nave Newell, Applicant’s Consultant; Michelle Christensen, General Manager, Union League

Mr. Newell explained that the project includes renovations to the clubhouse and golf course, including work to consolidate a ballroom on the eastern side of the building. He noted a timing issue related to the grading permit review, during which it was identified that six trees would be removed and therefore require replacement. Due to construction starting later than expected, the applicant proactively planted about 30 replacement trees in the fall to get ahead of the replacement requirement and ensure they were established before spring. Mr. Newell requested a waiver to allow the project to receive credit for the replacement trees already planted, identifying their locations along Barren Hill Road to improve screening and along Hart’s Lane to provide additional buffering for a nearby residence and maintenance/parking areas. He also noted one larger tree near the rear of the clubhouse (near the former helipad area) would need to be removed in the future due to ADA access constraints.

A member of the Commission asked what trees were planted. Mr. Lowman responded: 18 Norway spruce, 12 White spruce, and 6 Siberian spruce. Mr. Hosbach mentioned that the replacement requirement for this project would be 17.33 (rounded to 18 trees). Commission members discussed the request, noting concerns regarding ordinance compliance, specifically the requirement of canopy (shade) trees over evergreens, native species requirements, and the potential precedent of granting credit for pre-planted trees. A member

of the Commission expressed dissatisfaction of having the evergreen trees replace the trees to be removed and said that canopy trees should be planted. Another member questioned if the evergreen species planted were native. Mr. Hosbach responded that the Norway is not native and the White spruce is native. Mr. Hosbach asked if the applicant would consider planting 10, 3" native canopy trees. Ms. Christensen said yes.

Public in attendance: Steve Kaufman (resident); Debra Harris (resident)

Public comment was received from Steve Kaufman, who expressed concern about setting a precedent for retroactive credit for tree plantings and emphasized that waivers should be granted only where hardship exists and ordinance intent is met. He noted that replacement requirements prioritize canopy trees and suggested additional native shade trees be planted rather than relying primarily on evergreens. Later in the meeting, Mr. Kaufman mentioned that the planting of 10 canopy trees would still leave the applicant short (without consideration of the evergreens). Debra Harris commented on the importance of meeting native species percentage requirements and questioned if the requirement was being met with the addition of the 10 trees. Mr. Hosbach said yes.

There was further discussion about the tree replacement calculations. Mr. Hosbach said that a total of 52 inches of tree caliper is being removed, which—using the three-inch replacement standard—equates to approximately 17.5 replacement trees. The applicant has already proactively planted 30 or 32 evergreen trees (8–10 feet), which are estimated to be equivalent to 2.5–3-inch trees. Although evergreens are typically measured by height and width rather than caliper inches, Mr. Hosbach stated that if the Township accepts credit for the proactive plantings, the applicant would exceed the replacement requirement with an additional 10 trees also referenced as further offsetting the removal.

Following discussion, Ms. Borkowski made a motion to grant waivers and accept credit for the previously planted evergreen trees, conditioned on the applicant planting an additional ten native canopy trees (minimum three-inch caliper) elsewhere on the property and revising the plans to reflect all replacements. Waivers included:

- **55-4.C. to waive the requirement of a tree survey for the entire site and limiting it to the area depicted on the plans near the limit of disturbance**
- **55-4.D.(6)(a) to allow the previously planted evergreen trees be considered as replacements, whereas it is required that every living and healthy tree removed is to be replaced with one or more canopy trees**

Ms. Kelly seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously (5-0).

OLD BUSINESS:

- **Abolition Hall- Tree Project Update**
John Hosbach provided an update on Abolition Hall, noting that a more complete report would follow an upcoming inspection scheduled for the next day. He stated that he had been in contact with the contractor and that, while communication had been limited, the work appeared to be progressing satisfactorily. A compliance inspection would be conducted on site by Ms. Zrillo, Mr. McAnally (Township Manager), and himself, to verify that approved removals were completed, no property damage or rutting occurred in agreed-upon areas, and that chipped material had been evenly distributed within the woodland. Mr. Hosbach also commented that the contractor performed quality work along Butler Pike, describing the results as well executed.
- **2026 Tree Giveaway Species**
The Commission reviewed the proposed 2026 Township Tree Giveaway species list and discussed species diversity, climate adaptability, evergreen characteristics, and anticipated nursery availability. It was noted that final availability would not be confirmed until mid to late summer.

Public in attendance: Steve Kaufman (resident)

Mr. Kaufman asked for clarification about the Sweet Bay. Mr. Fassbender and Mr. Hosbach said that it is a multi-stemmed, semi evergreen. There was a discussion about the preference of evergreen options.

Mr. D'Amore made a motion to approve the provided list with flexibility, directing staff, Mr. Hosbach, and Karen Kabnick, to prioritize species and develop alternate options as needed

based on availability. Ms. Kelly seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously (5-0).

- **Continued Discussion on Chapter 55 Amendments**
The Commission agreed that additional time was needed to develop priorities and next steps. Members determined that further discussion would remain in a public forum. Staff indicated that work would continue offline to prepare a memo outlining priorities, which would be brought back to the Commission for review. It was agreed that dedicated time would be scheduled at a future meeting, with the goal of providing a draft memo in March.

NEW BUSINESS: (none)

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD: (none)

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS: Mr. D'Amore mentioned that the Vice-Chair, Ms. Kosabutski, should sit next to Chair Fassbender at future meetings.

Mr. Hosbach congratulated Ms. Zrillo on her AICP credential (American Institute of Certified Planners).

Ms. Toll said that at the Board of Supervisors re-organization meeting, they voted to modify the public comment time to 3 minutes with the ability to allow more time. The Commission took the comment under advisement.

NEXT MEETING DATE: Tuesday, February 3, 2026

Mr. Fassbender noted that the next meeting is Tuesday, February 3, 2026. Ms. Toll said she will not be in attendance.

ADJOURNMENT: Ms. Kosabutski made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. D'Amore seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 7:33 PM.