

TREE COMMITTEE
Telephone (203) 563-0180
Fax (203) 563-0284



TOWN HALL
238 Danbury Road
Wilton, Connecticut 06897

WILTON TREE COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 10 April, 2019 – 5:00 p.m.

MEETING AGENDA

- I. CALL TO ORDER
- II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES (March 2019)
- III. TREE WARDEN'S REPORT
- IV. ONGOING BUSINESS
 1. Center Tree Plan
 2. Significant Tree List
 3. Tree Maintenance review for Wilton Center (Lars and Nick)
 4. Public Tree education outreach
 5. Open positions on Tree Committee (2)
- V. NEW BUSINESS
 1. Annual report discussion
 2. Goals and Objectives discussion
- VI. TREE LEGISLATION & LAWS
- VII. COMMUNICATIONS & PUBLICITY
- VIII. ADJOURN (next meeting Wednesday, 8 May 2019 – 5 p.m. at Annex). Consider moving meeting to Tuesday, 7th.

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10 April 2019

TO: M. CONKLIN, SUSAN DILORETO/CONSERVATION COMMISSION
FROM: J. ALGON, S. KNUTSON, S. DILORETO, M. KOELLMER, K. YOUNG
SUBJECT: 2008 - 2018 REPORT - WILTON TREE COMMITTEE

SUMMARY:

The Wilton Tree Committee was established following recommendations of an *ad hoc* committee in 2008. After its first decade, the Tree Committee has selected trees to fill most of the available sites noted on an aerial map locating the available spaces for new trees. Many of the trees planted have been shade trees, and some have been understory trees. The majority of trees planted were funded through a donations program that was set-up to honor or memorialize members of the community. A listing of notable trees throughout Wilton has been organized and various educational approaches have been implemented including articles in the media and lectures for the public on important topics related to trees and shrubs.

SPECIFIC ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP:

According to Appendix A: Town of Wilton Tree Ordinance Wilton Code, Chapter XX, TREES, the membership composition of seven members was to include four members appointed by the Board of Selectmen, two appointed by the Conservation Commission, and one appointed by the Planning and Zoning Commission. Each member's term was to be for three years. In another document, the Tree Committee's Charge, the composition was defined as seven members recommended by the Conservation Commission, including representation of the Planning and Zoning Commission, Wilton Garden Club, Chamber of Commerce, a civic organization, and a landscape professional. The Board of Selectmen was to formally make the appointments. Over the past decade, the confusion between these two mandates has not been clarified or formalized.

In Fall, 2018, K. Throckmorton, Chair of the Tree Committee, N. Lee and W. Meehan completed their 10-year terms and left the Wilton Tree Committee; three members remained with active terms. This report reflects the efforts of the Committee during this past year, although it lacks the input of those three key members.

MEETINGS HELD:

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In 2018, the Tree Committee met once each month in February through October. Meetings were cancelled due to lack of quorum in January, November and December. The Tree Committee does not meet in August.

ONGOING TASKS:

The Tree Committee was established as a sub-committee of the Conservation Commission in 2008. This followed work by an *ad hoc* group to define the needs of the Town and the purposes of a Tree Committee. The purview of the Tree Committee was:

- 1) to implement the Wilton Tree Center Plan (March 2008 and any subsequent revisions) and expand it, as appropriate, to focus on other areas of the town,
- 2) to educate the community about the economic and environmental benefit of trees, and the many ways that trees improve the quality of life in Wilton,
- 3) to develop partnerships with neighboring municipalities, local nonprofits and private property owners to achieve these goals.

The Committee has also made choices of new tree species to be obtained for the Town Center, and identified their placement using a map that was generated with assistance from the Department of Public Works to track these plants and provided ideal locations for future trees. The map coordinated with a Tree Inventory listing each tree and its condition.

The Tree Committee has worked closely with the Wilton Tree Warden, who has advised and updated the Committee on his concerns. The Committee has reviewed the Tree Warden's reports which evaluated the condition and priority for maintenance of trees in the Town Center. The members have tagged the trees to identify each tree for tracking purposes and has contacted the owners if a tree with an issue was privately owned, indicating the tree required attention.

A goal of the Tree Committee was to garner 'Tree City USA' status for Wilton. This was accomplished several years ago, and the designation has been obtained annually to the present.

Other concerns of the Tree Committee have included education of the public about issues related to trees, and awareness of State and Federal legislation on this topic. The Tree Committee has also held responsibility for hearing appeals from owners of private trees regarding decisions made by the Tree Warden for the Town to remove a privately owned tree due to his/her assessment of possible hazard to the public caused by the condition of the tree.

DONATIONS:

The Tree Committee has accepted donations in memory of, or to honor, a cherished person whose donors have wished to have either a shade or understory tree planted in

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Wilton. There are more than 70 trees donated and at least seven benches. The selection of species and identification of locations for these trees have been responsibilities of the Tree Committee. Associated with each donated tree has been creation and 'planting' of an engraved brick indicating the honoree, the tree genus and species, and the year of planting. To-date, trees have been sourced and planted at cost by a member of the Committee; going forward, these tasks will be provided through a Request for Quotation process with contractors. At this time, there are two donations requiring trees to be sourced and planted in Spring 2019.

NOTABLE TREES:

The Tree Committee has maintained a listing of trees of significant age, girth, height and condition and worked with the owners to guide their decisions on maintenance of these specimens. Currently, there are x trees on the Notable Tree List. The list has included both publicly and privately-owned trees that have been identified throughout the community.

EDUCATION / EVENTS:

1. Presentations
 - a. The Tree Committee periodically has arranged a lecture on a topic of interest concerning trees and shrubs for the public to attend. The most recent presentations were a talk on the Emerald Ash Borer, and a talk on trees and shrubs for pollinators. Both were held at the Wilton Library and both had approximately 40 attendees.
2. Start-up of Community Canopy program
 - a. The Tree Committee has been collaborating with the Arbor Day Foundation to host a project called the Community Canopy Program – Energy Saving Trees in Spring, 2019.
3. Articles in media and on Wilton website
 - a. Tree Committee members have written an article each year for inclusion in the media as educational outreach to the public. In addition, the Town website has been updated periodically to post links to information of interest and/or importance to the public about their trees and shrubs. These include:
 - [Southern Pine Bark Beetle](#)
 - [Emerald Ash Borer in Connecticut](#)
 - [Right Tree, Right Place Standards](#)
 - [DEEP Urban Forestry Program](#)
 - [Why Trees Matter - Jim Robbins, April 12, 2012 New York Times Article](#)
 - [Tree Care Information](#)
 - [International Society for Arboriculture](#)
 - [Arbor Day Foundation](#)
 - [Tree Owner's Manual](#)
 - [Environmental Affairs](#)

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Photo Gallery of Wilton's Trees

EXPENSES:

The Tree Committee has not had a budget to-date. Funding for expenses has been minimal and has come from the Department of Environmental Affairs' budget. Going forward, the Tree Committee will develop and submit a budget for ongoing projects and special events.

April 7, 2019

**Wilton Tree Committee
Updated Plan of Goals and Objectives**

INTRODUCTION

The Wilton Tree Committee (“Tree Committee”) was established as a sub-committee of the Conservation Commission in 2008 with a mandate to promote the benefits of community trees in Wilton Town Center (“Town Center”) and to provide for responsible stewardship of these trees. In this capacity, the Tree Committee was charged with the following responsibilities:

1. Maintaining an inventory of all the existing trees in the Town Center,
2. Evaluating potential sites for additional trees in the Town Center, selecting appropriate trees for these sites, and overseeing the installation of selected trees at each of these sites through a tree donation plan,
3. Educating the public and key stakeholders as to the care and importance of trees in the landscape,
4. Developing a proactive tree management strategy in concert with the Town, private property owners, and merchants.

While the Tree Committee was actively involved in all aspects of the foregoing responsibilities, the majority of its efforts were focused on its tree donation program. Given the success of this program, and the limited number of remaining available sites in the Town Center for additional trees, the Tree Committee believes it should redirect its efforts going forward. Accordingly, the Tree Committee has updated its stated goals and objectives, each of which is discussed in more detail below.

UPDATED PLAN OF GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The Tree Committee has identified the following goals and objectives it plans to address over the next several years. Each of these is discussed in greater length below.

1. Develop tree management strategy and plan for implementation
2. Expand tree advocacy
3. Continue tree donation program in revised format
4. Expand educational efforts

5. Administer the Tree City USA Status of Wilton including naming and honoring an annual Tree Steward

6. Develop program for researching, writing and applying for grants

Develop Tree Management Strategy

With more than 70 trees planted as part of the Tree Committee's successful tree donation program, as well as the many trees already existing on land owned by the Town and private property owners, the Town Center now boasts an extensive and very impressive collection of trees. However, trees are not self-sustaining, and the need for their proper maintenance is crucial. Accordingly, the Tree Committee plans to develop a voluntary tree management strategy for the Town Center, which envisions private property owners and the Town working together to achieve healthier trees at a significant cost savings for all parties.

Under this plan, the Tree Committee, in conjunction with the Tree Warden, would continue to maintain an updated tree inventory, noting any trees requiring attention, including tree removal, pruning, shaping, cabling, stump grinding and/or vine removal. The trees requiring maintenance would be prioritized assuring all trees are addressed within a three-year time period. Based upon this inventory, the Tree Committee would commission a local licensed arborist once each year to proactively undertake all the tree work for the Town Center, including trees on Town property, private property, and trees planted as part of the tree donation program. (Note: This tree work would be separate from reactive and immediate tree maintenance required due to weather-related damage.) The Town would pay for the tree service (from either the Public Works or Environmental Affairs budget), but would be reimbursed by private property owners for their share of any work that was performed on their property.

We believe property owners would benefit from this arrangement in several ways. First, it would enable them to care for their trees with minimal effort on their part. Second, most private property owners in the Town Center do not have enough tree work in a given year to make it worthwhile for an arborist to undertake the task. By "bundling" the tree maintenance for all of Town Center into a single, sizeable job, we believe we will be able to attract several competitive bids from local arborists and negotiate a more attractive rate for the combined work. Third, it will help ensure the maintenance performed reflects best practices for the health of the trees and the aesthetics of the Town, while alleviating the responsibility from individual property owners.

Expand Tree Advocacy

The Tree Committee plans to take a more active role in advocating for the Town's trees. Towards this end, we envision a two-tiered approach, which involves responding quickly to legislation that affects the Town's trees and expanding, improving and publicizing our Notable Trees list.

Given the Tree Committee's role as steward for the Town's trees, we believe it is critical to respond quickly and decisively to any proposed legislation that affects these trees. This includes contacting state legislators and expressing our thoughts as it relates to the Town's trees, as well as publicizing such legislation locally and in neighboring towns in an effort to encourage residents to voice their opinion. This need for advocacy stems from concerns that have been raised over the way trees in Fairfield County are being pruned by utility companies and specific legislation that has been proposed in response to these concerns. However, it underscores the need for the Tree Committee to remain vigilant and carefully monitor any other proposed legislation that may arise that could impact our trees. In addition, the Tree Committee would be responsible for awareness of diseases that are affecting trees and shrubs in our region and for alerting the Town administrators and private property owners of necessary actions to prevent harm to persons, property or the trees.

In a further effort to advocate for the Town's trees, we believe it is important to identify and document trees in Wilton, both native and introduced, that would qualify for inclusion on our Notable Trees list. Trees may be located on both public or privately owned land. Such documentation would include photos as well as a detailed, written description of each tree. The purpose of maintaining and publicizing such a list is to raise awareness of these trees, highlight their importance and unique attributes, and preserve their place in the cultural landscape of the Town.

Continue Tree Donation Program in Revised Format

Since the inception of the tree donation program upon the formation of the Tree Committee in 2008, more than 70 trees have been planted in the Town Center. The town now boasts a rich diversity of trees and an extensive canopy cover, which reduces land temperatures and storm water runoff. With very few open and available sites remaining to plant trees in the Town Center, the Tree Committee plans to make the following adjustments to its tree donation program:

- The Tree Committee will develop a landscape plan addressing the remaining available sites,
- Tree species and site selection will be determined by the Tree Committee (as opposed to the donor) to ensure that the tree is appropriate for the space and relates to the surrounding landscape in a cohesive and aesthetically pleasing manner,

- Only native trees will be considered,
- Whenever possible, donated trees will be planted in the fall to reduce the amount of labor required to keep them watered and stress-free during the summer,
- Donation requirements for tree donors will include a one-time maintenance fee in addition to the cost of purchasing and installing the tree,
- The possibility of expanding the program beyond the Town Center will be explored.

When the tree donation program was initially implemented, donors had significant input into the tree they were interested in donating and where they wanted it placed in the Town Center. However, as more and more trees were planted according to the donor's wishes, and without the benefit of a master landscape design, the streetscapes began to lack unity and cohesiveness. Accordingly, the Tree Committee realized the need to exert greater influence over the process. Moving forward, the Tree Committee will develop a landscape design for the remaining available sites in the Town Center and assume responsibility for tree selection. This will ensure that trees are appropriate for their space and are aesthetically pleasing relative to the surrounding landscape. In addition, as the benefits of native plants have become more widely appreciated for their inherent hardiness, resistance to disease and pests, and the role they play in promoting biodiversity, the Tree Committee has committed to selecting native trees exclusively for its tree donation program.

As the trees planted through the tree donation program have begun to mature, the need for maintaining them has become more of an issue. In hindsight, the Tree Committee realizes that donors should share the cost with the Town for the ongoing maintenance of their trees. As a result, the Tree Committee will charge a one-time maintenance fee to donors at the time their tree is purchased. This fee, as yet to be determined, would be in addition to the fee they would pay for the purchase and installation of their tree. These maintenance fees would be accumulated in a dedicated fund and would be used solely for the future upkeep of trees in the donor program.

The Tree Committee also recommends expanding its tree donation program to sites beyond the Town Center. For example, the Tree Committee believes an opportunity exists to strategically place trees along the Route 7 corridor running through Wilton to improve the overall aesthetic appeal of this major thoroughfare. A number of available sites currently exist to plant trees on either side of Route 7, many of which would replace trees that died after they were initially planted by the State when Route 7 was widened. One possibility that the Tree Committee is exploring is the use of trees to create a "signature look" for the Town in much the same way that the Greenfield Hill community in Fairfield has created a signature look with its sweeping vista of flowering dogwoods. To achieve this goal, the Tree Committee recognizes it would require specific approval from the state Department of Transportation to plant trees on state-

owned land, as well as approval from the Board of Selectmen and the Conservation Committee; however, it is not believed that these hurdles are insurmountable.

Expand Educational Efforts

As part of its mandate, the Tree Committee is committed to expanding its educational outreach within the community to raise appreciation for the importance of trees in the landscape. These outreach efforts will include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Speaker programs at the library devoted to the subject of trees and shrubs with an emphasis on native species,
- A reprisal of “Wilton’s Wondrous Trees” photo contest with awards given for the best photos, as well as trees that warrant inclusion on the Notable Trees list,
- A “Community Canopy Program,” encouraging residents to buy native trees through the Arbor Day Foundation,
- A series of quarterly articles in the local newspaper highlighting the importance of trees,
- A newly-created brochure targeted at new homeowners explaining the importance of native trees and providing a list of some favorite varieties, and
- A letter-writing campaign to town administrators and local newspapers voicing our opinions as it relates to proposed legislation.

Administer the Tree City USA Status of Wilton

Each year, the Tree Committee recognizes an individual in the community as its Tree Steward based on her/his volunteer contributions to the conservation-based concerns of the Town. To honor this person, the Town donates a tree and the Tree Committee sources it, identifies an appropriate site, and plants it on Arbor Day. The First Selectperson officiates at the planting, proclaiming the honoree as Tree Steward.

Develop program for researching, writing and applying for grants

The Tree Committee will assume responsibility for seeking funds for trees, shrubs, lecturers, and relevant publications by applying for grants and possibly partnering with like-minded organizations to supplement its budgetary requirements.