

MINUTES
City of New Castle Tree Advisory Commission
August 3, 2026 – 5:00 p.m.
1 Municipal Boulevard

Members Present: Edward Ryan, Chair
Linda Suskie
Wolcott Davis

Absent: Alice Riehl
Art Walker

Also Present: Milt Draper, City Code Enforcement Officer
Ron Vukelich

Mr. Ryan called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. Roll call followed and a quorum to conduct business was declared.

Minutes

June 1, 2026

A motion was made by Ms. Suskie to approve the minutes of the June 1, 2026, TAC meeting as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Ryan and was unanimously passed.

July 6, 2026

Ms. Suskie recommended that the list of Gaps and Trees showing potential “open” spaces where new street trees could be planted in the East/West Historic District and Shawtown she distributed at the July 6, 2026, TAC meeting be submitted to the City Office to be added to the July 6, 2026 record of the meeting. The Commission members concurred and the document will be submitted for the record. Going forward, all documents distributed during TAC meetings will be submitted to the City office for inclusion in the meeting packet.

A motion was made by Mr. Ryan to approve the minutes of the July 6, 2026, TAC meeting as presented. The motion was seconded by Ms. Suskie and was unanimously passed.

Public Comments

There were no comments from the public.

Old Business/Tabled Applications/Old Applications

2026-06 – 301 West 7th St – John DiMondi – Planting Permit

Mr. Ryan stated that he confirmed with Mr. DiMondi that the trees he planted were on his private property and the request did not need a formal Tree Application.

A motion to close application 2026-06 was made by Mr. Ryan. The motion was seconded by Mr. Davis and was unanimously passed.

ACTION: Application 2026-06 can be closed.

2026-08 – 24 East 6th St – Renee Rousseau – Pruning Permit

Mr. Ryan confirmed with Ms. Rousseau that several branches are rubbing together and another branch was removed leaving a stub. She would like to have the branches that are rubbing inspected for possible removal of one of them and to have the stub removed properly.

Mr. Ryan explained that Mr. Lehr opined that removal of any branches should be postponed until winter. Mr. Davis said he would remove the stub properly.

Ms. Rousseau noted that the Red Bud street tree is prying up the bricks in front of her house. Mr. Davis said he would also look at the bricks and give Ms. Rousseau his best advice/suggestions; noting that there has been an ongoing debate as to who is responsible for sidewalk bricks. Mr. Davis will report on the status of the bricks at the September TAC meeting.

A motion was made by Ms. Suskie to approve pruning the tree where branches are rubbing together. The motion was seconded by Mr. Ryan and was unanimously passed.

ACTION: Application 2026-08 was approved and can be closed.

Mr. Vukelich stated that he would inspect the brickwork as well.

New Business

Mr. Ryan stated that the new Application numbers on the printed Agenda are off by one digit and each application should be one number higher than it appears on the Agenda (i.e., Application 2026-09 should be Application 2026-10, and so on).

2026-10 – 107 W 6th St – Jago Plant – Pruning Permit.

Mr. Ryan noted that Mr. Plant had addressed the Commission at the July 6th meeting and is very anxious to have the Sycamore tree in question preserved; but would like branches trimmed away from the 3rd floor roof.

Mr. Ryan referenced a previous application (2025-30) where Public Works had indicated the branches were too large for them to prune; opining that Mr. Plant's application may fall into this same category. Mr. Ryan recommended that Mr. Plant's request be submitted to Public Works for review.

Mr. Plant noted that when the tree was previously pruned a vine growing on the tree had been cut at the bottom but was not removed from the tree and asked that dead vines be removed as well.

A motion was made by Mr. Ryan to have branches of a Sycamore tree trimmed away from the 3rd floor roof of 107 West 6th Street, and to remove dead vines that are hanging free. The motion was seconded by Mr. Davis and was unanimously passed.

ACTION: Add trimming of branches of a Sycamore away from the 3rd floor roof of 107 West 6th Street and to remove dead vines hanging in the tree to the City Tree List for pruning. Application 2026-10 can be closed.

2026-11 – 69 West 4th Street – Monica Callahan – Pruning Permit

An application was submitted to have trees pruned. The trees are located in front of 69 Wst 4th Street and in the grass area between 71 West 4th Street and the tennis courts.

There was uncertainty among the Commissioners as to exactly what scope of work was being requested. The Commissioners concurred that it did not appear the street tree required pruning; and it was opined that the other trees are on Trust property. It was recommended that the application be tabled to get clarification of the scope of work and to determine if the tree(s) by the tennis courts are on City or Trust property. Mr. Ryan will reach out to Ms. Callahan and check with Antonio regarding the two (2) trees by the tennis courts.

A motion was made by Mr. Ryan to table Application 2026-11 pending further clarification and information. The motion was seconded by Ms. Suskie and was unanimously passed.

ACTION: Add Application 2026-11 to the September TAC Agenda.

2026-12 – 47 West 4th Street – Sue & Joe Campbell – Consultation

An application was submitted regarding the defoliation and discoloration of leaves on a 4-year old tree.

Ms. Suskie inspected the tree and opined that the center branches appear to be dead. Mr. Ryan noted that Mr. Campbell has been watering the tree regularly, but the tree is exhibiting some stress. Mr. Ryan said he could supply a tree bag to Mr. Campbell. Mr. Vukelich opined that Mr. Campbell may not have watered enough during the recent heat spells. Mr. Vukelich will inspect the tree.

A motion to tale application 2026-12 for further investigation was made by Ms. Suskie. The motion was seconded by Mr. Davis and was unanimously passed.

ACTION: Add application 2026-12 to the September TAC Agenda.

Mr. Vukelich referenced the third (3rd) photo in the packet and opined that the tree is alive; and the issue may be that matted-down mulch is causing water to slough away from the tree. He added that the Hostas Mr. Campbell planted in the tree pit may be a contributing factor as well. Mr. Vukelich stated that they have been aerating packed-down mulch around trees in tree pits throughout the city; suggesting that this should be done to all city trees.

2026-13 – 118 West 6th Street – Ellie Campolei – Pruning Permit

An application was submitted to have several large dead branches removed from 2 (two) trees (possibly Maple trees) located at 118 West 6th Street.

Mr. Ryan opined that the trees are not dead, but noted that they have been hacked and neglected. A discussion of the state of the trees ensued during which Mr. Davis opined they are Oak trees. After discussion the Commissioners concurred that the trees should be inspected by an arborist.

A motion was made by Mr. Ryan to table application 2026-13 for professional evaluation and recommendation. The motion was seconded by Mr. Davis and was unanimously passed.

ACTION: Have two (2) trees located at 118 West 6th Street inspected by an arborist. Add application 2026-13 to the September TAC Agenda.

2026-14 – 37 East 6th Street – Marcello DiAlessandro – Pruning Permit

An application was submitted to have tree branches overhanging the roof of 37 East 6th Street pruned.

A motion was made by Mr. Ryan to approve application 2026-14 to have tree branches overhanging the roof of 37 East 6th Street pruned. The motion was seconded by Mr. Davis and was unanimously passed.

ACTION: Add pruning tree branches overhanging the roof at 37 East 6th Street to the City Tree List for pruning. Application 2026-14 can be closed.

Member Comments/Discussion

Agenda

Ms. Suskie recommended that the address of the tree be included for each Application on the Agenda.

Budget Report

Mr. Ryan reported that \$40,000 was added to the 2026-27 TAC budget. \$1,200 was paid to Brandywine Valley Services for tree trimming leaving a balance of \$38,800.

Stump Grinding

Mr. Vukelich opined that recently it has been necessary for Brandywine Valley to come back again to completely grind the stumps. He noted that often the collar of the tree has not been ground out. Mr. Draper will discuss this with the vendor.

Update from Mr. Ryan

- The new Recommended Tree List compiled by Ms. Suskie in March has been added to the City website.
- The August issue of The Crier included a 1/4 page article on proper watering that was written by Ms. Suskie, and the Code Enforcement Corner devoted 1/2 of the segment to TAC.
- The Weekly ran a reprint of the New Castle Eagle from 1988 that included an article about how detrimental weed killers are to trees.

- On July 11th Ms. Suskie and Messrs. Ryan, Vukelich and Lehr walked the streets of New Castle to complete the spring 2027 planting plan.

2026 Planting Plan

Ms. Suskie compiled the 2026 Tree Order for Gateway Nursery that identifies all areas that should be planted in the fall and spring. Ms. Suskie noted that Shawtown has areas where trees could be planted. She suggested that the Tree Order document be submitted for the record and that a copy be delivered to the City Office to be included with the August 3, 2026, minutes.

Mr. Ryan noted that Ms. Suskie's Tree Order notes locations where property owners have consented to have a tree planted. A copy of the Consent Form was distributed to the Commissioners. Mr. Vukelich noted locations where the property owner has requested that no trees be planted. He added that in three (3) years planting on the West side has increased from three (3) to 60.

Ms. Suskie noted that the 5-year Plan is now three (3) years old and suggested that updating the 5-year Plan be added to the September TAC Agenda.

Update from Ms. Suskie

- Ms. Suskie stated that last year she completed the class to become a Master Gardener at the University of Delaware and she offered to do a Brown Bag presentation of Master Gardeners on Street Trees. She asked that the presentation be submitted to the City Office to be included in the record of the August 3, 2026 minutes.
- During the Q&A session of the Brown Bag presentation, it was recommended to Ms. Suskie that TAC reach out to various organizations, including:
 - **Delaware Center for Horticulture** regarding grants for trees on public property. Ms. Suskie has been in touch with them and will try to set up a call.
 - **Wilmington Tree Commission** to discuss challenges that Wilmington and New Castle are both facing.
 - **Urban & Community Forestry Society** offers networking for Tree Commissions regarding troubleshooting local ordinances, choosing trees, and community management strategies. The City can join the Society at a cost of \$150 per year, which would come out of the TAC budget.
 - **Tree Board University** that is funded by the U.S. Forest Service Urban and Community Forestry Assistance Program offers eight free online courses for Tree Commission members. After all members have completed the courses, Commission members can network with other Tree Commission members.
 - **Delaware Forest Service** – It was suggested that Taryn Davidson, Urban Forester for the Delaware Forest Service, be contacted regarding any resources the TAC could take advantage of.

Mr. Vukelich opined that it would be beneficial for new members of TAC to review Ms. Suskie's Brown Bag presentation. Mr. Ryan opined that it would be beneficial to include the presentation on the City website.

Mr. Ryan noted items that will be submitted to the City for the record:

- 2026 Tree Order.
- Brown Bag PDF Presentation.
- List of networking and professional development opportunities.
- List of Gaps and Trees from the July 6th TAC meeting.

Street Tree Pit Maintenance

Mr. Vukelich noted the possibility of having Ryan Scully take on the responsibility of tree pits. Mr. Ryan explained that Mr. Scully has experience in tree pit maintenance and masonry and is willing to work with TAC. It was suggested that he could service and maintain tree pits for six (6) months a year 20-30 hours per month for \$20 per hour. Mr. Ryan recommended that a discussion of hiring Mr. Scully be added to the September TAC Agenda.

Next TAC Meeting

The next TAC meeting will be Monday, September 14th at 5:00 p.m.

There being no further business to discuss, Mr. Ryan called for a motion to adjourn.

A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Ryan and seconded by Ms. Suskie. The motion was unanimously passed and the meeting adjourned at 6:22 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen R. Weirich
City Stenographer