



City of Rome Tree Board

Minutes

June 2, 2025, 2:00 P.M.

Rome-Floyd ECO Center

Present: Hannah Bagley, KRFB Program Coordinator
Meredith Ulmer, Assistant City Manager
John Hendrickson, Tree Board Chairman
Chad Hampton, City of Rome Street Department Director
Ernest Watson, City of Rome Municipal Arborist
Georgia Burns, Tree Board Member

Call to Order:

Chairman John Hendrickson called this meeting to order.

Old Business

Mr. Hampton presented a homeowner's request to remove a maple tree located at 301 East 5th Avenue. The tree sits entirely within the city's right-of-way. While the previous homeowner had no complaints, the current homeowner expressed concerns about surface roots potentially damaging the home's foundation. Photographs of the tree were submitted for review. Mr. Watson consulted with fellow board member Josh Athon, Georgia Power's Rome Distribution Arborist, who confirmed that although there are power lines within the canopy, the tree does not meet removal criteria and shows no signs of significant issues.

Mr. Hampton also reported that the homeowner has contacted the City Manager's office and Public Works Director Chris Jenkins multiple times. Both officials recommended that the matter be brought before the Tree Board. Mr. Watson and Mr. Hampton emphasized that while tree failures during weather events cannot be predicted, there are currently no indications that this tree is hazardous. The board decided to conduct an on-site evaluation before making a final determination. At this time, there is no recommendation for removal. However, selective pruning of overhanging limbs may address the homeowner's concerns about the tree falling

onto her home. The tree was confirmed to be on city property, within a 60-foot right-of-way, and is classified as a city tree.

New Business

Mr. Hampton reminded the board that at the previous Tree Board meeting, he presented a request from a homeowner to remove a red maple tree located entirely within the city right-of-way at 301 East 5th Avenue. While the former homeowner had not expressed any concerns, the current homeowner has repeatedly raised concerns about surface roots potentially threatening the home's foundation. Photographs of the tree were submitted for the board's review. The board agreed that an on-site assessment was necessary before making a final recommendation.

A site visit was conducted on May 29, with board members John Hendrickson, Keith Mickler, Georgia Burns, Pam Roberts, and Seth Hawkins in attendance. Due to inclement weather, participation was limited to those available. Written assessments were submitted via email by Josh Athon, Keith Mickler, Seth Hawkins, and Pam Roberts.

Email Assessments Submitted:

- **Josh Athon (Georgia Power):** He was unable to attend the site visit, but previously observed the tree. He described the tree as healthy, though not an ideal specimen in form. Power and communication lines run through the canopy; Georgia Power does not perform proactive maintenance unless utility service is directly impacted.
- **Seth Hawkins:** Noted that the tree poses at least a moderate, potentially high, risk based on the ISA TRAQ (Tree Risk Assessment Qualification) risk matrix. Factors contributing to this assessment include multiple codominant stems common to red maples, shallow root systems under the landscaped sidewalk, and the potential impact on the home if failure occurs. He stated that the tree's age (approximately 50+ years) means root presence predates the homeowner's occupancy. Given the proximity to the home and constant target occupancy, the likelihood of failure and consequence warrants further concern.
- **Keith Mickler:** From a visual inspection at two vantage points, concluded that the tree likely qualifies as moderately hazardous.
- **John Hendrickson:** Recommended removal following the on-site visit, describing the tree as a top-heavy red maple with a shallow root system that may be vulnerable to

failure in multiple directions during severe weather.

The board acknowledged that several of its members are ISA Certified Arborists and Tree Risk Assessment Qualified (TRAQ), providing a high level of professional evaluation. After reviewing the emailed recommendations and on-site observations, the Tree Board carefully considered all expert input and emphasized the importance of making the most informed decision for the tree in question. During the on-site assessment, no formal recommendation had been finalized. The board agreed to review the collective assessments and consider possible next steps, which could include pruning, continued monitoring, or removal.

A called meeting was held on June 2 at 2:00 PM to further discuss the findings and recommendations submitted by Tree Board members regarding the red maple at 301 East 5th Avenue. During the meeting, Mr. John Hendrickson stated that the consensus among the board members was to move forward with the removal of the tree due to its hazardous condition.

Mrs. Ulmer confirmed that the tree is located entirely within the city's right-of-way. Mr. Hampton reminded the board that the tree is approximately 50 years old and has lived a long life. He noted that when trees are planted, homeowners often do not consider the long-term impact of root systems and placement concerning infrastructure and buildings.

Both Mr. Hendrickson and Mr. Watson expressed concern about the tree's root system, which appears to be compromised due to its growth beneath the sidewalk, street, and in close proximity to the home's foundation.

Mr. Hampton acknowledged that the tree is located within the Historic District and that its removal may be met with concern from nearby residents. While the tree does not appear overtly hazardous to an untrained observer, Mr. Hampton explained that hazardous conditions are not always visible through canopy discoloration or leaf loss. This underscores the importance of thorough assessments by multiple certified board members.

After reviewing the emailed recommendations and conducting a thorough discussion, the Tree Board agreed that the tree in question is a candidate for removal. The Board, which includes several members who are ISA Certified Arborists and Tree Risk Assessment Qualified (TRAQ), provided a high level of professional evaluation. Mrs. Bagley confirmed the Board's consensus to move forward with the removal process effective immediately.

Mr. Hampton stated he would begin obtaining quotes from local tree removal contractors right away. While the exact timeline will depend on contractor availability, he hopes the removal can be completed within the week.

Adjourn

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Hannah Bagley

Hannah Bagley, Program Coordinator

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