



City of Rome Tree Board

Minutes

July 15, 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
Brian Roberts, Environmental Compliance Manager
Keith Mickler, University of Georgia Extension Coordinator
Georgia Burns, Tree Board Member

Guests: Paul Murray

Call to Order:

Chairman John Hendrickson called this meeting to order. The minutes from the May meeting were approved by common consent.

Reports

City of Rome

Mr. Watson presented the City of Rome's 2025 Year-to-Date Summary. To date, 98 trees have been removed, requiring 271 labor hours. Additionally, 27 new trees have been installed, and tree maintenance has accounted for 2,179 labor hours. Mr. Hampton provided an update on the East 5th Avenue tree, noting that the tree and stump have been removed since the last meeting.

Floyd County

Mr. Robertson reported that he continues to coordinate with an industrial project in Floyd County, which is expected to result in a significant number of new tree installations. This will be a multi-year effort in collaboration with the company involved.

The board discussed the removal of the mature maple tree located at the corner of Turner McCall Boulevard and Keelway Drive, near the Publix Shopping Center. Board members expressed regret over the loss of the tree. Mr. Robertson explained that although it had been a beautiful tree, it became hazardous very quickly due to strong, consecutive storms in June. These storms caused a large crack to develop in the center of the tree, particularly affecting one of the co-dominant stems that extended over Turner McCall Boulevard. The compromised structure posed a serious safety risk and potential loss of life.

Mr. Robertson shared that he is working closely with Publix and their consultant on a preservation and restoration plan for the site, which includes plans to replant a tree in the area. The situation will be revisited this fall.

Berry College

Mr. Ellsberry could not attend due to being out of the country, but at this time, Berry College is working to limb trees up, vertical mulching, and installing gator bags on trees.

Extension Office

Mr. Mickler reported that while there are currently no major updates from his office, they are preparing for upcoming programs scheduled to resume in the coming months.

He shared that he was recently asked by a homeowner at 418 3rd Avenue to inspect two maple trees, one located in the front yard and another in the backyard. The tree in the front yard appears to be situated within the public right-of-way. Unfortunately, Mr. Mickler observed that this tree has declined rapidly: it shows significant signs of rot, a thinning canopy, and evidence of beetle infestation. Based on these findings, he believes the tree is in poor health and poses a high risk of causing property damage or injury if it were to fall. Mr. Mickler recommended that the tree be removed promptly to prevent potential hazards.

Old Business

Mr. Hampton elaborated on the recent removal of the tree at 301 East 5th Avenue. He noted that although the homeowner had initially requested the removal due to safety concerns, she later expressed disappointment about losing the privacy that the tree had provided. The board determined that the tree was a candidate for removal because of its compromised growth and structural concerns. Mr. Hampton advised the homeowner that if she chooses to plant new vegetation to restore privacy, it should be installed outside of the right-of-way to help avoid similar issues in the future.

Mr. Hendrickson referred back to the minutes from the called meeting held in June, where the board had discussed the future of the tree at 301 East 5th Avenue. He asked if there were any corrections or changes needed to those minutes. Hearing none, the minutes were approved by common consent.

New Business

Mr. Hampton presented information about the ReLeaf Grant to the Board. He explained that this grant is offered through the Arbor Day Foundation in partnership with the Georgia Forestry Commission. Its purpose is to fund the installation of new trees in low-income neighborhoods, public spaces, or areas impacted by storms, helping to restore and strengthen the local tree canopy.

Mr. Hampton shared several potential planting sites identified on the approved map of low-income neighborhoods, including:

- **Covington Park**, this year's Arbor Day site
- **Parks Hoke Park**, a former Arbor Day planting site
- **GE Trails**, where recent water department infrastructure work unfortunately disturbed the critical root zones of mature water oaks; since these trees will likely need to be removed in the future, planting replacements now will support long-term canopy health
- **Bridge Point Plaza**, which he proposed as an excellent site for large-growth tree planting

Mr. Hampton noted that planting within parks is preferable to planting in rights-of-way, as parks can better accommodate large-growth species, allowing them to thrive without future conflicts.

He added that he will be working closely with Seth Hawkins, a Georgia Forestry Commission representative and Tree Board member, to prepare and submit the grant application promptly.

Mrs. Bagley informed the Board that City Manager Sammy Rich had contacted her regarding a Red Oak seedling recently donated to the City of Rome.

Mr. Hendrickson and Mr. Hampton both recommended keeping the seedling in a pot and caring for it until it becomes more mature and suitable for planting. Mr. Watson noted that this tree would make a wonderful addition to the City Arboretum in the future.

Mr. Hendrickson agreed to take responsibility for nurturing the seedling until it reaches maturity. Mrs. Bagley shared that she would be meeting with Mr. Rich to arrange for the transfer of the seedling to Mr. Hendrickson. Mr. Hendrickson expressed that he was pleased to take on this task.

Adjourn

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Hannah Bagley

Hannah Bagley, Program Coordinator