



## City of Rome Tree Board

### Minutes

November 18, 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  
Seth Hawkins, Urban and Community Forest Program Coordinator  
Keith Mickler, University of Georgia Extension Coordinator  
Josh Athon, Georgia Power- Rome Distribution Arborist  
Brian Roberts, Environmental Compliance Manager  
Pam Roberts, Tree Board Member  
Georgia Burns, Tree Board Member

Guests: Brice Wood, Planning Director  
Paul Murray

#### **Call to Order:**

Chairman John Hendrickson called this meeting to order. The minutes from the September 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, 123 trees have been removed, requiring 470 labor hours. An additional 27 trees have been installed. Tree maintenance activities, including pruning, watering, and general care, have accounted for 3,868 labor hours.

## **Floyd County**

Mr. Roberts reported that he has addressed multiple hazardous tree complaints throughout Floyd County. In addition, he is providing technical assistance to a property owner in Silver Creek regarding an ongoing tree-related issue. He continues to work with Publix on their conservation planning efforts. Mr. Roberts also attended the annual GTC Conference, where he obtained information he considers vital to supporting the mission and advancing future tree canopy preservation goals.

## **Georgia Power**

Mr. Athon reported that preliminary work has begun on seedling selections for Arbor Day 2026. A finalized list is not yet available at this time.

## **Extension Office**

Mr. Mickler began his report by thanking Chairman John Hendrickson and retired Municipal Arborist Terry Paige for leading the October Halloween Tree Walk along the AdventHealth ECO Greenway. Mr. Hendrickson noted that the event had 27 participants this year, many of whom were community members rather than Master Gardeners.

Mr. Mickler also informed the Board of upcoming educational classes hosted by fellow gardening enthusiasts in partnership with GNTC. The first class will focus on creating wreaths using recycled coat hangers, and the second will involve assembling containerized centerpieces. Both classes will take place on December 6, 2025, at 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM and 2:00 PM - 4:00 PM at the local GNTC campus in the lab near the greenhouse. A \$10 registration fee per person is required. Interested participants may call the Floyd County Extension Office at (706) 295-6210 or visit the office at 12 E 4th Ave, Rome, GA 30161.

<https://extension.uga.edu/county-offices/floyd/Agriculture-Natural-Resources.html>

## **Georgia Forestry Commission**

Mr. Hawkins addressed the Board and expressed his appreciation for the City of Rome's continued efforts in tree canopy preservation, noting that he believes Rome is a regional leader in this area. He reported that the GFC offices are now fully staffed and working to ensure that all operational needs are met.

Mr. Hawkins also addressed last year's issues with the seedlings distributed during the Bring One for the Chipper event. He explained that the high seedling mortality rate was due to

extended transit times, which resulted in the seedlings arriving dried out. He noted that the nursery has since hired new staff and anticipates improved outcomes this year.

He further reported that federal funding is beginning to flow again following the reopening of the government, which will support the ReLeaf Grant program. Fire season is running later than usual but is now beginning to intensify, with fire teams mobilizing across the state.

Mr. Hawkins informed the Board of the new Forester assigned to the local GFC office, Mr. Taylor Willingham, who will serve as an excellent resource for the community.

## **Old Business**

### **Mount Berry Trailhead Improvement Project**

Mrs. Bagley provided an update on the Mount Berry Trailhead improvement project. As discussed at the previous meeting, a small park will be constructed at this location. The site has been fully prepped and is ready for construction. AdventHealth has reported that the equipment is scheduled to arrive on January 5th, with project completion anticipated within seven weeks of the start date.

She noted that the project will require the relocation of four Arboretum trees. These trees will be moved to a new location along the Mount Berry Trail once they enter dormancy in the coming weeks. Mrs. Bagley has contacted each family associated with these memorial trees, all of whom expressed appreciation for the care taken and had no objections to the relocation. According to Mr. Watson, the trees will be hand-dug, moved, and replanted during January and February.

### **Memorial Arboretum Restoration Project - Berry College Collaboration**

Mrs. Bagley also shared an update on the ongoing Memorial Arboretum Restoration project involving Berry College students. The students have completed cleaning and hand-digging around each memorial plaque that required attention. Additionally, they took the initiative to clean the memorial brick wall at the entrance to the Arboretum. Although this task was not included in their original scope of work, they felt it was important due to the wall's significance in honoring loved ones.

The next phase of the project is now underway and focuses on accurately identifying each Arboretum tree and verifying that every tree is correctly paired with its corresponding memorial plaque. This effort will establish a clear and reliable baseline for future Arboretum

management and will ensure that all families have an accurate record of their loved one's plaque location along the trail.

### **Covington Park Project - ReLeaf Grant**

Mr. Hampton provided an update on the Covington Park project, funded through the ReLeaf Grant from the Georgia Tree Council. The project is expected to begin in early 2026 and will include the addition of approximately 15 new trees. He emphasized that this location is particularly valuable, as planting opportunities within the city are limited and efforts are made to avoid right-of-way areas. When opportunities arise to plant large-growth trees in suitable spaces, he intends to fully capitalize on them to enhance the city's long-term canopy.

### **New Business**

Mr. Hawkins shared that this year's Georgia Tree Council Conference differed from previous years, with fewer awards granted despite a higher number of applicants. He reported that Rome received the **Excellence in Urban Forestry Award** for its work at Banty Jones Park and Covington Park.

Mr. Hawkins praised the City for its hard work and noted that he was not involved in the selection process for Rome's award; rather, the projects stood on their own merit. He reiterated earlier comments that Rome is considered a leader in the region for its canopy preservation and intentional planting efforts.

Mr. Hampton added that both park projects were completed in the same year and were substantial undertakings, each representing the City's commitment to strategic, thoughtful, and impactful urban forestry practices. He invited all present to attend the ribbon-cutting ceremony for Banty Jones Park on **Friday, November 21st, at 10:30 AM**, at the corner of Maple Avenue and Crane Street.

Mr. Hawkins presented a new tool developed jointly by the Georgia Forestry Commission and Georgia Tech to support data analysis and advocacy related to urban forestry. He explained that this tool provides critical information that can strengthen funding requests and help communities better understand the condition of their tree canopy.

The statewide mapping data shows that, since 1985, Georgia has lost approximately **2.6 million acres of tree canopy**. Mr. Hawkins noted that canopy loss varies across the state due to multiple factors, including severe weather events, construction, development pressures, and other environmental influences. When evaluating local impacts, the research team compared counties of similar size to ensure the most accurate and balanced analysis possible.

The tool also provides data on key ecological indicators, including ecosystem health, riparian buffer zones, stormwater benefits, carbon footprint reductions, and air pollution mitigation. These metrics can be especially valuable when advocating for the benefits of urban forestry programs.

Mr. Hawkins shared that the tool incorporates **i-Tree**, a long-standing data modeling program widely used in the forestry community. Data collected through the mapping system is analyzed and extrapolated using i-Tree models to produce detailed environmental and economic valuations. <https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/8a8fe7ff6b5d4113929d7a5f20044be6>

Additionally, the platform includes features that allow municipalities to integrate their own GIS data. Local governments can compare canopy changes across different years, explore multiple data layers, and generate customized reports to inform planning and decision-making.

For communities unable to dedicate time or staff to extensive mapping and data analysis, Mr. Hawkins noted that the **Green Infrastructure Center** will open an application cycle on December 1st. Selected applicants will receive in-depth, community-specific mapping and recommendations tailored to their urban forestry goals.

He emphasized that the long-term objective is to develop a more targeted and intentional approach to tree planting and canopy management across the state.

### **Upcoming Events**

Mrs. Bagley informed the Board that the annual **Bring One for the Chipper** event will be held on **Saturday, January 3rd**, from **9:00 AM to 12:00 PM** at the local Home Depot. She shared her excitement about a new partnership with the local DNR Fisheries office, which will collect the recycled trees and place them in the **Rocky Mountain Project** and **Lake Arrowhead**, both DNR-managed areas. These trees will enhance aquatic habitats and improve youth fishing opportunities by creating additional underwater structure. Volunteers are always needed, she encouraged everyone available to attend.

She also announced that **Arbor Day** will be celebrated on **Friday, February 13th**, from **1:00 PM to 2:00 PM** at **North Stars Park**, the newly constructed pocket park near the well-known restaurant Stanley's on North Broad Street. Planning is still underway, and she will provide additional details to the Board as they become available. She encouraged everyone available to attend.

**Adjourn**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

*Hannah Bagley*

Hannah Bagley, Program Coordinator

DRAFT