



# City of Gahanna

## Meeting Minutes

### Landscape Board

200 South Hamilton Road  
Gahanna, Ohio 43230

*Jane Allinder, Chair*  
*Kevin Dengel, Vice Chair*  
*Mark DiGiando*  
*Chris Schuett*  
*Matt Winger*

*Harmoni Grable, Clerk*

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Wednesday, April 29, 2026

6:00 PM

Committee Room

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#### A. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Chair Allinder called the meeting to order at 6:06 p.m.. The agenda was published on Friday, April 24, 2026.

#### B. ROLL CALL

**Present** 5 - Jane Allinder, Kevin Dengel, Mark DiGiando, Chris Schuett, and Matt Winger

#### C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion was made by Winger, seconded by Schuett, that the be Approved and Filed. The motion carried by the following vote:

**Yes:** 4 - Allinder, Dengel, DiGiando and Schuett

**Abstain:** 1 - Winger

**Attachments:** [MeetingMinutes24-Apr-2026-12-42-36](#)

[Signed MM 1.14.26 Lands](#)

#### D. ADDITIONS OR CORRECTIONS TO THE AGENDA

#### E. HEARING OF VISITORS

Mr. Ray Shaefer of 1239 Farhent Rd, Gahanna, OH requested to wait until discussion of the Rubber Trees.

#### F. OLD BUSINESS

#### G. NEW BUSINESS

**Eucommia Ulmoides**

Director Mrs. Ferrell provided the landscape plan, including the preferred street tree list, for the Board's reference and introduced State Forester Julie Predieri to continue the discussion regarding the city and street tree recommendations.

Ms. Predieri explained that the Hardy Rubber Tree is currently included on the approved street tree list within the medium-size category and has been used in several planting programs, including the recent spring tree planting initiative. She noted that concerns had been raised regarding potential latex allergies associated with the tree. Ms. Predieri stated that limited scientific research was available on the topic and suggested the Board discuss whether the tree should remain on or be removed from the approved list. She also noted that other common allergens exist in the environment and stated that no decision needed to be made that evening if additional research was desired.

Mrs. Allinder asked for additional clarification regarding the reported latex allergy concerns associated with the Hardy Rubber Tree, specifically questioning how exposure to the allergy could occur, including whether it was airborne or related to physical contact with the tree. Ms. Predieri stated that her understanding was that the allergy concern was primarily related to contact with the tree's sap and not believed to be airborne.

Visitor (Mr. Schaefer) explained that the concern relates to latex, noting that individuals with a latex allergy could potentially react through contact with the tree's sap or leaves, similar to how someone might react to latex in medical settings such as bandages or surgical materials. Mrs. Allinder amended that she was referring to if there was some other way to be exposed to the allergen.

Mr. Schaefer stated that while he was not an expert, available information indicates the tree is not used for commercial latex production, but it does contain latex. He explained that individuals with latex allergies could experience a skin reaction if they come into contact with the tree's sticky latex. He added that while the reaction would not be as severe as something like poison ivy, it could still cause dermatological irritation. Mr. Schaefer also noted concerns about the tree's suitability as a street tree due to its size and the limited space between sidewalks and the street.

Mr. DiGiando stated that the tree appears more suitable as a park tree rather than a street tree, noting that it is a large species expected to reach approximately 40 to 60 feet in height. Mr. Schaefer stated that a tree of that size would not have adequate space to grow properly in the proposed location and expressed concern that a 60-foot tree in that area

could cause infrastructure issues, such as lifting or damaging nearby sidewalks or streets.

Mrs. Ferrell explained that the recommended street tree list is organized by tree size categories, and that species selection depends on where the tree will be planted. She noted that larger trees would not be placed in locations where they are not appropriate for site conditions, emphasizing that planting decisions take site constraints into account.

Mr. Schaefer asked that the proposal involves replacing existing pear trees that have become problematic or “mutated” with a different tree species, noting concern that the replacement tree would grow significantly larger.

Mrs. Ferrell explained that tree replacement decisions depend on site conditions across different areas of the city, which determine what size and type of tree can be planted. She noted that the city uses a preferred street tree list, developed to provide residents with clearer information about suitable species, including size, cultivars, and general characteristics. Mrs. Ferrell also stated that the list was created in collaboration with the Landscape Board after moving away from a restrictive “do-not-plant” list. She emphasized that tree selection is intentionally diversified across the city to reduce the risk of widespread loss from disease or pests, and that no single tree type is used universally; instead, multiple factors are considered in determining appropriate replacements.

Mr. Winger asked if the concern of Mr. Schaefer was in getting one of the rubber trees by his house. Mr. Schaefer replied it was already there. Mr. Winger asked if someone in Mr. Schaefer's family was allergic to the tree. Mr. Schaefer stated that he did not, but you have an entire community that could walk on the sidewalk past the trees.

Mr. Schuett stated that based on the information he reviewed, the latex-related concern is associated with the leaf extract or sap of the tree, and not simply casual contact with the leaves themselves.

Ms. Predieri stated that the hardy rubber tree is listed on the approved medium-size tree list and also appears under a special use category as a cultivar. She explained that while it is the same species, the special use version is a columnar, narrower form of the tree. Mr. Winger asked Mr. Schaefer if there were many trees or just one by his road. Mr. Schaefer responded that there are a lot up his road, at least ten but not on his property. Ms. Predieri noted that a similar concern had been raised in a prior planting season and, at that time, accommodations were

made to substitute a different tree if a recipient had a latex allergy. She stated her view that the tree does not present a general public health issue and that exposure risk would be minimal. Ms. Predieri also expressed concern about removing the tree from the medium list, noting that the list is relatively limited and includes many commonly used city trees. She indicated she would prefer not to remove it unless there is a clear and justified reason, and she presented the issue to the Board for their consideration and decision.

Mr. Dengel stated that he is interested in understanding the tree's potential mature size and whether it is more appropriate as a park tree. He also asked whether the city attorney had any input or guidance on the matter.

Mrs. Ferrell stated that the issue had not yet been discussed with the city attorney, as the Landscape Board is responsible for making recommendations. She explained that any recommendation from the Board could be forwarded to City Council for consideration and potential action. Mr. Dengel shared a personal experience of having seasonal allergies and noted that he initially assumed pollen was the more common concern with trees. He expressed surprise at the idea of latex being present in a tree and stated that this is not typical for most local tree species. Mr. Schaefer interrupted stating it was native to China. Mr. Dengel stated that he is uncertain about the actual level of risk associated with latex in the tree, but noted that most people would not expect trees to contain latex. He suggested reconsidering how the tree is categorized, such as whether it should remain in the special use category, while also emphasizing the importance of maintaining a diverse urban canopy in residential areas.

Ms. Predieri stated that the tree is commonly used in many neighborhood communities.

Mrs. Ferrell stated that, as Julie had noted, the Board could take additional time to consider the issue if needed. She added that if the Board wished to seek a legal opinion, that could be done, and emphasized that the matter remains open for discussion and further input. Mr. Dengel stated that he believes it would be important to clarify the city's responsibility if the city is selecting and planting trees, particularly in terms of liability if issues such as lawsuits arise. He noted uncertainty about relevant case law but emphasized the importance of understanding potential legal responsibility.

Mrs. Allinder asked if when a street tree is being replaced, is a resident notified? Ms. Predieri responded that this is an opt in program and the residents are notified when a tree is planted.

Ms. Predieri stated that while the city generally has a strong understanding of what trees will be planted, last-minute changes with the contractor sometimes occur up to the day of planting. She explained that these changes have made communication more difficult, which is why using a pre-approved list helps ensure clearer expectations even if specific species shift slightly. Mrs. Allinder verifies that they are told about the list. Ms. Predieri explained that participants are informed about the approved tree list and can request more detailed information if desired. She noted that while she has sometimes seen the full list referenced, communication around it can vary, and she emphasized that providing the list is optional depending on the level of detail requested.

Mrs. Allinder stated that if tree plantings are known in advance, any concerns could be raised earlier by those affected, providing an additional safeguard or “safety mechanism” to address potential issues and reduce concerns the city may have.

Ms. Predieri explained that the city previously tried providing more advance specificity about tree plantings, but it proved difficult to manage administratively. She noted that once trees are contracted and purchased, changing selections late in the process creates logistical and financial challenges, especially if replacements are declined after procurement. She stated that due to these issues, the city moved away from that approach.

Mr. Winger asked what Mr. Schaefer's goal was from attending this meeting. Mr. Schaefer stated that the tree does not seem well-suited for use as a street tree, noting concerns about its eventual large size. He compared it to the existing pear trees, which he also described as problematic because they damage sidewalks due to their size and root growth. He emphasized that even the current pear trees are already causing infrastructure issues. Mr. Winger again asks what resolution Mr. Schaefer was looking to obtain. If that would be to have the tree in front of his house replaced?

Mr. Schaefer stated that he has not yet discussed the issue with other residents but believes there may be shared concerns about both the latex aspect and whether the tree is appropriately sized for placement between the sidewalk and street. He noted confusion at a planting site due to unclear labeling and color-coded tags, which led to uncertainty about identifying the hardy rubber trees. He also observed that other, smaller plantings were present and expressed the opinion that a large tree may not be suitable for a residential street setting.

Mrs. Ferrell stated that there are multiple factors to consider, including both species selection and tree size. She noted that homeowners' associations may identify allowable trees for their communities, and while the city maintains a preferred list that must be followed for compliance, those HOA considerations are also relevant. She explained that tree placement is determined by site conditions, including required tree lawn size, and that medium-sized trees would not be installed where conditions do not support them. Mrs. Ferrell emphasized that the city follows an established process and set of recommendations when selecting appropriate trees.

Mrs. Ferrell stated that allergens can exist across many different tree species on the approved list and noted that the Board should consider the appropriate approach for addressing allergy concerns and determining whether changes to allowable species are necessary. Ms. Predieri stated that the estimated 40- to 60-foot height represents the tree's maximum potential size and noted that street trees often do not reach their full mature height in typical urban conditions.

Mr. Shaefer asked how a tree that big survives in five feet of dirt without heaving up the sidewalk. Mrs. Ferrell stated that root growth patterns are considered when evaluating tree species, though natural and environmental factors can affect how roots ultimately develop. She noted that while outcomes cannot be guaranteed, the city relies on available research and information to select tree species that are appropriate for specific conditions. Mr. Shaefer asked why more native tree species are not being used, noting that he had heard similar questions from others. He referenced native tree and shrub lists promoted by soil and water conservation organizations and questioned whether factors such as cost influence the city's tree selections. Ms. Predieri stated that native tree species are included on the approved list and that cost is not the determining factor in tree selection. She explained that many native species fall into the large-tree category, requiring larger tree lawns than some sites can accommodate. She added that several native species are included on the medium-size list and have been used in city planting programs alongside other approved species.

Mr. DiGiando stated that while the tree may be capable of reaching 60 feet at maturity, its growth would likely be limited by the urban environment in which it is planted. He noted that street trees often do not reach their maximum potential size due to space and environmental constraints, referencing large older street trees in established communities as examples of long-term growth over many decades. Mr. Schuett stated that all trees eventually reach the end of their lifespan and require ongoing management or replacement over time. He noted that

planting a tree is not a permanent solution and that the city must continue to respond to changing conditions as trees grow and age.

Mr. Winger stated that before making a decision, he would like additional information regarding the potential allergen risks associated with the tree, any legal or liability concerns for the city, and the estimated cost to replace the tree in front of the resident's home. He indicated that these factors would help inform the Board's decision-making process. Mrs. Allinder asked Mr. Shaefer if he would like his tree replaced. He replied yes.

Mr. Shaffer expressed concern that residents may not have clearly understood that removed trees might not be replaced as expected. He also noted that some existing trees could still be in problematic locations and may need to be removed later due to utility conflicts or other infrastructure issues.

Mrs. Ferrell stated that the program provided an opportunity to remove certain trees that will need to be taken down in the near future anyway, and that it also helped offset removal costs for the city. She noted that because the species can no longer be purchased by residents, its removal made sense as part of long-term planning. However, she emphasized that replacement trees cannot always be "like for like" because site constraints such as spacing and utility clearance must be considered. Mrs. Ferrell concluded that while the city values and wants to preserve trees, it must also manage them responsibly to avoid future infrastructure conflicts and unnecessary removals. Mrs. Allinder requested clarification on the concern that had been raised, asking the speaker to explain what outcome they were hoping to achieve. Mr. Shaefer replied that he was hoping for a different tree to be replaced. Mrs. Allinder confirmed that the only request was to replace his tree. Mr. Shaefer said that was his only request as long as it was an appropriate tree that would fit into the space. Mr. DiGiando asked if Ms. Predieri knew roughly how much it would cost to replace one of the trees. She replied between four and five hundred dollars.

Mrs. Ferrell stated that the Board should consider the broader implications of the decision, including how it may affect other tree species and the overall street tree canopy if the tree is removed from the medium-sized list. She emphasized that these are factors to reflect on rather than decisions that need to be made immediately. Mrs. Ferrell stated that since no formal motion had been made, no action was required at that time, but there is still outstanding information that needs to be provided. She asked the Board to clarify how much time is needed to review the matter, so the process can be properly planned and not delayed until the next meeting.

Mr. DiGiando stated that he has two additional questions for follow-up: why two trees are being removed but only one is being replaced, and how many rubber trees were originally included in past agreements. He requested that this information be provided and indicated he would need about a week to review the materials once received. Mr. Schuette stated that it would be helpful to first clarify the overall goal or desired outcome-whether the Board is making a decision about a single tree or all related trees-before providing more detailed input. He noted that it is difficult to offer specific recommendations without clearer direction or information. Mr. Winger asked if there are any other trees on the list that the public would be surprised to learn have allergens in them? Ms. Predieri stated that she can reach out to Ohio State University to look for any relevant studies on the topic and also contact other municipalities, such as Dublin, that have long used the tree, to gather additional information from her professional network.

Mr. Schuette stated that the Board would need a clear understanding of the intended goal or desired outcome before making any formal recommendation or decision. He emphasized that without knowing whether the issue pertains to a single tree, a species, or broader policy, it is difficult to determine what recommendation should be made at this time. Mrs. Allinder asked if there are certain types of latex that would be an allergen where other would not. Ms. Predieri asked if it would be helpful to gather information and shared with the group before the next meeting. The Board agreed that it would. Mrs. Ferrell stated that, in the interest of time and respecting staff availability, a one-week period would be appropriate to gather the needed information, followed by an additional week for Board review, and she asked whether this timeline would be acceptable. The board agreed. Mrs. Ferrell landed on May 20th at 6 p.m. for the next board meeting to meet.

Mrs. Allinder asked again if there was anything else Mr. Shaefer would like to add on. He stated that he was concerned about the HOA following the City's guidelines of tree options and placements in a timely manor. Mrs. Ferrell stated that city code would take precedence in these situations and that the city cannot override HOA bylaws. She explained that while HOA requirements govern their communities, they must still align with city code, and it is up to the HOA to define and enforce its own specific requirements within that framework.

### **Street Tree Requirements**

Mrs. Ferrell explained that the city has an ongoing tree replanting effort to replace trees lost due to factors such as disease and hazards. She noted

that this program allows the city to restore canopy coverage and address previously lost trees. She stated that while the Board can discuss and make recommendations on tree placement, city code-such as required setbacks from driveways (typically 20 feet)-must be followed. She also explained that certain site conditions, like narrow cul-de-sacs and closely spaced driveways, limit planting locations. Mrs. Ferrell identified specific properties under consideration for new street trees and asked the Board to evaluate whether those locations are appropriate for planting given spacing constraints. Mrs. Ferrell stated that the goal is to ensure trees are planted in appropriate locations using the “right tree, right place” principle. She noted that this guidance, emphasized by Julie and her team, helps ensure the correct tree size is matched to suitable planting sites. She added that the identified location represents an opportunity to install a properly sized tree in an appropriate setting.

Mr. Dengel asked what the tree lawn size was. Ms. Predieri responded that it was six plus, maybe six and a half. Mr. DiGiando asked if it was planned to go back to one tree. Mrs. Ferrell stated that in some developments, the city cannot retroactively replace trees or conditions that were previously established. She explained that city code exists to guide decisions and ensure work is done within established parameters. Mr. Winger asked if the concern was that there was not 40 feet at this location. Ms. Predieri stated that, based on an on-site measurement, the distance was approximately 36 feet, meaning the trees in question were about four feet short of the required standard. Mr. Winger asked if the code would have to be revised or if the request was to just make an exception. Mrs. Ferrell stated that the Landscape Board had the ability to make the recommendation to allow that street tree to be replaced. Ms. Predieri stated that this was in the Clareton neighborhood in which the HOA has selected six trees they would be comfortable being placed on this lot. Four of which are in the medium and two in the small category of trees in which we would have the final decision of the six trees that go in.

Mrs. Allinder asked what Ms. Predieri's comfort level for a small or medium tree to be planted in this space was. Ms. Predieri stated that she believes it is appropriate. Mrs. Allinder asked if the Forestry Department would be the ones picking the tree from those six options. Ms. Predieri replied yes.

**A motion was made to approve an exception to allow a medium or small size tree to be planted at 1257 Fareham Dr.**

**Yes:** 5 - Allinder, Dengel, DiGiando, Schuett and Winger

Mrs. Ferrell stated that there is another nearby property on the same

street with a similar situation that should also be considered, specifically located to the left or south of the driveway. Ms. Predieri stated that in person it is almost identical to the other location. It is between 30 and 36 feet in measurement. She noted that one medium-sized tree from the HOA-approved list would be appropriate under the same conditions. Ms. Predieri stated that the spring program had concluded so these trees would go in the fall.

Ms. Predieri stated that no additional tree removal requests have been made in the neighborhood at this time, but residents with existing street pear trees may still request removal. She noted that while removals are not currently planned, trees can be removed in certain cases due to safety concerns or through the city’s sidewalk maintenance program, which operates separately from the current situation.

**Motion was made to make an exception to approve a tree placement at 1276 Fareham Dr.**

**Yes:** 5 - Allinder, Dengel, DiGiando, Schuett and Winger

**H. CORRESPONDENCE AND ACTIONS**

**I. POLL MEMBERS FOR COMMENT**

**J. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 7 p.m.

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**Harmoni Grable**  
Clerk

*APPROVED by the Landscape Board, this  
day of 2026.*

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**Jane Allinder**