TOWNSHIP OF ROCHELLE PARK 151 W. PASSAIC STREET ROCHELLE PARK, NJ 07662

SHATE TREE COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
October 1, 2026

Call to Order: 6:32 PM

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

In attendance: Chairperson Michael Warren, Christine Mueller, Ghada Abboud, Samantha Omerza, Pat Arimborgo, Lewis Mazzone

Absent: Chris Sheridan

Approval of Prior Minutes

- The minutes from the previous meeting were approved by motion and second, with no objections.

Chairperson's Report

Tree Removal and Replacement Ordinance
The Commission reviewed the permit and replacement requirements for removing living trees. Trees measuring more than 33 inches in diameter require four replacement trees, while trees measuring between 23 and 33 inches require three replacement trees. Dead trees require a permit but do not require replacement, subject to confirmation and measurement by the designated Township representative. Members discussed whether the current $350 payment in lieu of replacement adequately addresses tree removals, particularly for developers. Possible ordinance revisions included charging the fee for each required replacement tree or requiring developers to complete all mandated tree replacements rather than allowing an in-lieu payment. The matter will be discussed with the Township Committee.

Development Landscaping and Buffer
The Commission received an update regarding the proposed landscaping buffer at the development site. The developer indicated that six-foot arborvitae would be installed instead of the four-foot plantings previously proposed. The Commission will continue monitoring the project to ensure that the completed buffer is consistent with the approved plans and adequately protects the neighboring property.

Old Business

Fall Tree Planting

Fall planting was moved from mid-November to early November. A resident's request for a legacy sugar maple can be accommodated. Utility markouts will determine the final planting locations, and residents will be notified before installation through email, social media, or another public announcement.

New Business

DPW Report

Landscaping-design concepts are being developed for the gazebo area. Work near the brook and embankment is restricted by environmental regulations, and certain trees, including dead trees whose roots may stabilize the bank, cannot be removed without proper authorization. DPW recently removed overgrowth and debris obstructing portions of the brook.

Additional discussions on tree-related matters:

- A dead newly planted tree will be documented and reviewed.
- Two dead trees near the monument have been approved for removal.
- A large tree on Brooks Street is expected to be removed after the affected neighboring property owners expressed support.
- A small sycamore growing near a garden post may be removed.
    - Newly installed arborvitae at the garden were acknowledged and appreciated.

Beautification Initiatives

Members discussed purchasing additional planters and identifying appropriate locations for benches. The existing planters were reported to have been successful, with nearby businesses assisting with watering and maintenance.

Potential improvement areas included:

- The property near St. Anne Street and Becker Avenue
- The Essex Street entrance
- The Woodstone and El Asadero area
- Other side streets and public spaces suitable for benches or planters

Members were asked to bring beautification ideas and proposed locations to the November meeting.

Pocket Park and Memorial Tree - Tarah Galfo Tree

The Commission discussed the proposed improvement of the Chestnut Street pocket park. The project may require grading, stump removal, and engineering work to address the retaining wall. The Township is considering an expenditure of up to $100,000, with approximately $50,000 potentially reimbursed through an open-space grant.

Because construction could damage the memorial tree and bench, the Commission supported temporarily planting the tree and placing the bench at Carlock Field near the accessible walkway. The bench may later be moved to the pocket park after construction is completed, with another tree planted at the final location.

The Commission will explore obtaining donated landscaping plans, materials, or services from Bergen Landscaping and other local businesses. Engineering assistance will still be required for the retaining wall and site grading. The proposed business-donation letter remains subject to approval and financial review.

Crosswalk and Pedestrian-Safety Concerns

The Commission discussed faded or missing crosswalk markings near El Asadero, Woodstone, West Passaic Street, Rochelle Avenue, Fairfield Drive, and Dunkin'. Members also discussed whether flashing pedestrian beacons could be considered at heavily traveled crossings.

Because some locations may fall under Bergen County or Paramus jurisdiction, the appropriate municipal or county authorities will be contacted regarding restriping, jurisdiction, and possible pedestrian-safety improvements.

Motion to Adjourn: 7:36 PM