TOWN OF WEST SENECA
ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION - MEETING MINUTES

DATE October 15, 2026

TIME 6:30 PM

LOCATION Large Conference Room, West Seneca Community Center, 1300 Union Road, West Seneca, NY 14224

CALL TO ORDER

The regular meeting of the Town of West Seneca Environmental Commission was called to order by Robert Amadon at 6: 30 PM.

ROLL CALL

Present:

1. Robert Amadon, Chairperson
2. Ben Szablewski, Vice Chairperson
3. Kathleen Duffy
4. Gina Geller
5. Erin Lakomski
6. Robert Wyeth

- Barb Lipiew, Associate Member
- Councilmember Scott Robertson, Town Board Liaison
- Councilmember Mary Sherman, Town Board Liaison

Absent:

1. Ryan Taylor

- Danielle Bagley, Associate Member
- Evelyn Hicks, Associate Member

Note: Jim Jenkins, Principal Consultant from DRG Resource Group (DRG), participated virtually in the meeting.

Additionally, the audience in the room included 9 members of the public.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion by Mr. Wyeth, seconded by Vice Chairperson Szablewski, to approve the Environmental Commission meeting minutes from September 17, 2026.

- Ayes: All Noes: None Abstain: None Motion: Passed

PRESENTATIONS

- Update on the Town of West Seneca Grant for a Tree Inventory and Community Forestry Management Plan (NYS DEC UCF Round 16)

- Robert Amadon presented the presentation from October 2025 entitled “Town of West Seneca Grant for a Tree Inventory and Community Forest Management Plan”, for background information.
    - Grant implemented in 2023; delayed until December 2024. In spring of 2025, DRG Resource Group (DRG) was chosen; August 2025, grant kickoff meeting between Town, DRG, and regional foresters from NYSDEC. Inventory began mid-August 2025 focusing on Town right of way (ROW). Grant funds dependent on completion of work and quarterly status reports.
    - Mr. Wyeth asked how the Town determined the Right-of-Way (ROW) on Town owned streets and wondered if the lack of sidewalk was considered. A member of the public was also concerned about trees being planted in ROW vs outside.
    - Councilmember Robertson said the ROW is an average of 30 feet from center of a Town Road on either side (60 feet total).
    - Jim Jenkins (DRG) said that during data collection, they use digital parcel mapping info which allows them to see the ROW boundary. That is also in the Tree Keeper program. (It is important to note that DRG provided the Tree Keeper program and data collected to the Town at the completion of the tree inventory.)
    - They also use a measuring tool to mark each individual parcel to give rough approximation of how many feet wide the ROW is. Typically, it is 60 feet, which is 30 feet on either side of centerline. This let them know which trees were and were not in the ROW during field survey.
    - Mr. Wyeth asked if soil type and condition were considered for tree planting locations. Chairperson Amadon said the Town would need to know this information. Jim said when they do tree inventory, they look at parameters of locations for tree planting and base recommendations on those parameters in context of small, medium, and large mature-growing trees. Data indicates if there is an available vacant area for a tree. Conditions (soil and depth) are important, but it’s imperative that correct species are chosen for planting which are amenable to the available space and soil conditions.
    - A member of the public asked if DRG found butternut trees during inventory. Jim showed database on a screenshare. Jim Jenkins showed the Tree Keeper map on the screen and three butternuts were found. A member of the public asked which streets they were on. The butternuts were on Holland Avenue (one tree), and Manhassett Street (two trees). The two trees on Manhassett Street were confirmed to be the ones the member of the public was aware of.
- Robert Amadon presented a presentation entitled “The 10 20 30 Rule” for additional information as this is referenced in the presentation from DRG.
- Jim Jenkins of DRG Resource Group (DRG) presented his presentation entitled “Town of West Seneca Tree Inventory Summary”
- Robert Amadon presented a presentation entitled “Use of Tree Keeper Data by the Town of West Seneca Highway Department”, which included input from Brian Adams, Highway Superintendent.
- Questions and Answers.
    - Mr. Wyeth asked about potential budget allocation concerns for large trees only. Was wondering if larger trees may not be in the budget because of size, equipment needed, time, etc. Jim Jenkins stated that the benefits of large trees over their lifetime outweighs the maintenance of the tree. Individual trees, over their lifespan, provide more benefits than the costs to maintain them.

- Mr. Wyeth asked why almost all trees inventoried in the ROW are deciduous. Jim's personal opinion was that because conifers add canopy all the way to ground level, these would block roadways and sidewalks and would require pruning unnatural to the state of a coniferous tree. There is an emphasis in current urban forestry initiatives to consider coniferous species- the key is to find areas where those trees are most appropriate (open space to plant them away from the road and pedestrian walkways).
- Councilmember Sherman asked if the tree inventory was done in the ROW only (not Town in total). It was confirmed the inventory was completed in the Town-owned ROW, not on State or County roads.
- A member of the public asked if butternut trees will be planted. Ms. Lipiew said she reviewed the environmental needs for butternut trees and they are not ideal for ROW areas. She stated the recommended tree species in DRG's report are those that are appropriate for the ROW, even if not native tree species. Jim agreed.
- A member of the public inquired as to how data was collected in the field. Jim explained that all data is collected in the field using a tablet and then is uploaded to a cloud-based system.
- Councilmember Robertson stated the Town's tree grant was $75,000 for grant. He then asked Chairperson Amadon if that was correct, and he confirmed that. Chairperson Amadon and Ms. Lipiew said more grants could be applied for if deemed necessary.
- Jim Jenkins discussed the trunk formula, which a consulting arborist can use to quantify the appraised value of a tree. The value is discounted/adjusted based on the tree's location, setting, species, existing pests or disease, and other limitations.
- Mr. Wyeth asked who was responsible for maintaining trees in the ROW. Councilperson Robertson stated that any Town-owned land is the responsibility of the Town, including trees, but work may need to be subcontracted out depending on the issue (including trees damaged from storms, trees endangering utilities, etc.). He stated that the Town's goal is to maintain any tree unless it's damaged beyond repair or not sustainable long-term.

- In addition, a presentation and discussion on local soils, and tree care will occur at the Town of West Seneca Environmental Commission meeting scheduled for November 19, 2026, at 6:30 PM in the large conference room at the community center.
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    - Ms. Lipiew asked Chairperson Amadon who will be giving the presentations at the November commission meeting. Chairperson Amadon said he would need to follow up.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Vice Chairperson Szablewski, seconded by Ms. Lakomski, to adjourn the meeting at 7:45 PM.

- Ayes: All Noes: None Abstain: None Motion: Passed