

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE
TREE PRESERVATION COMMISSION ON
NOVEMBER 18th, 2025**

The regular meeting of the Tree Preservation Commission was called to order at 6:00pm at the Village of Franklin Park Police Station, community room, located at 9451 W. Belmont Avenue, Franklin Park, IL 60131

Member Michael led the Pledge of Allegiance

ROLL CALL

Tree Preservation Members Joan Ambo, Les Grahn, Ramona Michael

Bee Committee members Mary Ellen Smolen, Violet Pamintuan

Absent: Monika Suryovich

Present Trustee Karen Special

Present SFFPD Andrew Smolen

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF OCTOBER 21st, 2025

Motion by Ambo, Grahn. Motion approved

BUSINESS

Buckthorn Removal workday on November 15th was very successful with Village of Franklin Park Fire Department representatives and Chief Mark Stewart, Deputy Utilities Commissioner Nick Weber, West Leyden Ecology Club sponsor Dr. Todd Veltman and Ecology club students, Triton College Sustainability Coordinator Benjamin Kadlec and students, and others from the village in attendance, and collaboration with Openlands' Samantha Chavez and colleagues leading the event. Coordinating the effort required communication with multiple people, including approval from the village. The weather for the Buckthorn removal workday was ideal. SFFPD Smolen noted that Franklin Park is one of the few—if not only—municipalities to host a Buckthorn removal event on Village-owned property.

Member Ambo to present a powerpoint regarding the Buckthorn workday at the Village Trustees' Board meeting on December 1st.

Library event on Saturday, November 22, 1-2:30 pm.: Speakers educated the Tree Board regarding imperative subject matter relevant to municipality tree care and role, and providing connections.

Member Michael emphasized that reciprocal invitations strengthen community partnerships.

Member Pamintuan shared that Brookfield Beautification recently awarded a resident the best pollinator yard award, including a yard sign and a \$50 gift card. She suggested adopting a similar program in Franklin Park to encourage residents to showcase their native and pollinator-friendly plantings. Possible incentives could include a yard sign, recognition in the Village newsletter with a photo, and a gift card.

Rotary Club Chicago O'Hare awarded the Tree Board/Bee Board \$300 to use at the Board's discretion. A yard recognition program was proposed. Board members are not eligible to participate in the proposed

program. Trustee Special noted that sharing more of our ongoing work will encourage greater interest and prompt more residents to ask how they can get involved.

West Leyden High School's Ecology Club, volunteers from the Buckthorn Workday, wrote a short paragraph to accompany photos of their perennial pollinator garden. These will be featured on both the Tree Board and Bee Board web pages. The Board discussed how to increase participation from East Leyden high School.

Motion to approve Ecology Club mention on Tree village's website. 1st ME Smolen 2nd Pamintuan

Upcoming:

Seed swap February 14, 2026;

Renewal for Bee City USA certification starting February 1st, 2026

Earth day is April 18, 12-2 @ North Park. Tree board tabling

Arbor Day in April, with a possible tree walk at the Arboretum (Tree Tags for the trees and signage needed)

Bee Board event at the library in May

Franklin Park Library Summer reading kickoff May or June

Railroad Daze in June and we'll be giving away plants;

School presentation either at West Leyden to be planned

Tree Preservation Commission seminar date set for October 17, 2026. Motion ME Smolen, 2nd Ambo motion carried.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

SFFPD explained to resident attendee the details of the grant the Village received and how the funds are being used. An invoice for \$31,000 has been submitted, and the Village is expected to receive reimbursement by December 31, 2025, with supplemental planting until 2029. Approximately \$38,000 remains. Carl Hament suggested that the Tree/Bee Board determine how best to allocate the remaining funds.

Member Michael recommended using a portion of the funds to purchase dogwoods suitable for planting under power lines and elsewhere as needed. Remaining funds need to be spent on tree related items. Member Ambo suggested purchasing tree tags for the Arboretum as well as additional signage. This will be looked into.

A total of 67 diversified burlap trees will be planted throughout the Village. Two of these trees will be planted at the Arboretum; one of them is a Tupelo. One tree was donated by the Arboretum, and the remaining 66 trees were purchased.

December 6th CRTI is having their partner recognition event at the South Shore Country Club. Friday, November 21st Westdale Park is having a Christmas tree lighting event, and the theme is 'bee kind'. Member Suryovich is creating chestnut 'bee' ornaments for the Village of Franklin Park's Tree/Bee board Christmas tree.

TRUSTEE REPORT

Trustee Special stated that Fire Chief Mark Stewart was impressed with how well the event was organized on Saturday. He expressed interest in future buckthorn removal efforts and noted that, despite the windy

conditions, the fire remained controlled and produced only light ash. The Fire Chief was pleased to see the level of community interest and the smooth execution of the event, and he indicated that we can count on his support for future initiatives.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

Member Michael shared a rain garden recommendation proposal for the Board's review and vote. Trustee Special asked whether the Village has an entity responsible for maintaining the rain gardens. SFFPD explained that an outside contractor currently performs that work. Member Michael reported that the rain garden had been completely cut down. The Police Department had notified the Village that they observed rats emerging from the site. Member Michael clarified that the rats were not using the rain garden as a food source, and the underlying issue is unsecured waste from nearby businesses, and determining location of their nesting sites. The presence of rats is tied to food availability, not the existence of the rain garden. Cutting the rain garden down severely undermines its ecological purpose. Rain gardens play an important role for pollinators and environmental health. Member Michael suggested that providing clear recommendations for proper maintenance may help prevent similar issues in the future. The Board agreed that no vote would be taken on this recommendation at this time.

PUBLIC COMMENT

VOFP resident Alefiyah Master proposed ideas such as having our seminars at either a local business like Mina's Restaurant or one of the bars in town, or at a local coffee shop. Also, to have signs in yards that explain what the plants are being grown. Other suggestions were to join forces with other organizations such as NAMI, teach people to use the plant apps online, and use the arboretum space for yoga classes in the summer.

ADJOURNMENT

At 7:41 pm a motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Members ME Smolen, seconded by Ambo

Approval Signature:  Date: 1/20/2026
TreeCommision@vofp.com

