



Shade Tree and Beautification  
Commission Meeting

Minutes

October 28, 2025  
3:00 PM

**CALL TO ORDER**

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Matthew T. Starr	Mayor	Absent	
James Brown	Chair	Present	
Brian Ball	City Engineer	Absent	
Quetin Platt		Present	
Sarah Wagner		Absent	
Laura De Leon		Present	
Randy Pursel		Present	
Russ Mentzer		Present	
Emil Diener		Present	

- April Brady- Water Dept.
- Zane Mikesell- Engineering Dept/ City Forester
- Scott Zimmerman- City Inspector
- Brian Wade- Wade & Gatton Nursery
- Bob Beck
- Peg Robertson
- Mike Hiller
- Carmen Dixon
- Pat Dixon
- Marcia Crim
- Clint Hura
- Don Carr
- Randy Canterbury
- Mike Rednour
- Randy Pursel
- Susan Homan
- Tyler Mitten
- Sheila Robertson

**MINUTES APPROVAL**

***Minutes of July 29 2025 3:00 PM***

Minutes will be reviewed at the next meeting.

***Minutes of Aug 26, 2025***

Minutes will be reviewed at the next meeting.

***Minutes of Sept 30 2025 3:00 PM***

Minutes will be reviewed at the next meeting.

**FINANCIAL REPORT****NEW BUSINESS*****Arista Villas*****- Replanting**

Mr. Huhra is with K&G Equity. They are the development consultants for the Arista Villas project. Mr. Mitten is an ISA Board Certified Master Arborist. He is also the owner of Ohio Tree Assessment and Consulting LLC. Mr. Mitten conducted the on-site woodland assessment, the canopy modeling review, and their technical validation that they have presented to the committee. Arista Villas' plan is to present and review their findings for the existing site, explain their replanting strategy and show how their plan meets Mount Vernon's 40% canopy goal at maturity, and to secure the committee's support so the project may proceed to the MPC process. The project covers approximately 40 acres, 31 of which are existing woodland. Mr. Mitten's survey recorded 256 trees across 16 evenly distributed circular plots. Each one was 100 feet in diameter. The sampling plots accounted for approximately 3 acres or 10% of the overall forestry. Trees greater than 5 inches in diameter at breast height or the DBH were documented using tree plotter software and a GNSS satellite positioning device to ensure accuracy. Each sampled tree was recorded with its common and scientific name, the DBH, estimated height and condition. Standing dead trees taller than 30 feet were also included. Based on this sample data, it was estimated that the wooded area contains approximately 2,700 total trees. The report determined that about 40% are in fair, poor, or dead condition. The stand was dominated by sugar maple, American elm, and black cherry. Tree of heaven and white mulberry were also documented, which are invasive species. Tree of heaven are also known to be the host for lantern flies. The understory has a widespread coverage of invasive shrubs including Japanese honeysuckle and autumn olive suppressing regeneration of natural trees in the area. This invasive tree and shrub species are not part of Mount Vernon's recommended planting and are identified for removal in their replanting plan. The woodland has been previously logged which shows classic decline, uneven canopy, poor regeneration, and limited ecological value. That is why Arista Villas' focus is not simply on tree replacement, it's on long-term canopy restoration and urban forest stability. Their replanting strategy was built around five key objectives: ecological restoration, replacing the declining woodland with a healthy native specie, diversity and stability following the 10-20-30 rule. On the plan presented, there are 781 trees. 646 will be new plantings and they will attempt to save 135 existing trees. The street and common areas will have about 290 trees with 40 to 50 foot spacing, the pond perimeter will have 56 trees for erosion control and habitat, they will have 300 home site trees which will have 100 in the front yard and 200 in the year yards. The specie mix would include burr oak, swamp white oak, American linen, maple, hackberry, horn bean, bald cypress, red bud, dogwood, service berry, and evergreen screens such as arborvitae and Alaskan weeping cedar. All species are on the Mount Vernon approved list and are suitable for local conditions. The canopy growth that they used was modeled using USDA Forest Service urban data database. IT Tree species modeling was used to estimate the crown width and canopy expansion over time. The model projected 31.6% at year 25, 36.5% at year 35 and 40-42% canopy coverage is expected by year 40. These projections were used with realistic growth data and built-in overlap discounts for tree spacing. The plan achieves the City's goal of crown growth not by over planting. The plan is also about ensuring long term success through professional oversight and maintenance. All trees will be supervised by a board-certified arborist during planting to ensure their long term growth. They have a two-year establishment and replacement commitment to ensure that everything on the canopy gets to full development in the early years. Any trees lost during the two year period will be replaced by the developer. This plan replaces a

declining woodland with a well planned diverse and sustainable urban forest. Mr. Huhra requests the Shade Tree Commission's approval for this strategic planting.

Mr. Brown said that the dogwood and beech trees are on the preferred list, but they do not grow very well in the Mount Vernon community. He asked if they could avoid planting those two types of trees and replace them with something else. Mr. Huhra said that they should be able to replace those trees with another species.

Mr. Huhra said that the 10-20-30 rule is that only 10% of the trees can be of the same species, 20% can be of the same genus, and only 30% can be of the same family. Mr. Huhra explained that the goal of the City of Mount Vernon is to reach 40% tree coverage by maturity. Mr. Huhra said that they also had to do discounts for overlapping shade. Mr. Huhra said that they wanted to save more of the existing healthy trees, but the grading on the site is so extensive that in order to get to home sites, they have to do mass grading to bring it down to a natural roll. They are going to try to save the trees on the North side because they will not be doing as much grading. The grading cuts are anywhere from five feet to twenty five feet.

Mr. Brown asked if they were planning to peel the topsoil off and reapply it.

Mr. Huhra said that removing the topsoil and applying it is all part of the land development plan. There is a mass grading plan that does cuts and fills. They come in and they strip it and put the top soil aside, they do a mass grading, install all the utilities, then the topsoil comes back in after the infrastructure goes in and creates a good base. He said they may potentially do a mulch style or a blended mix to make sure they create the best blend for the trees and the overall growth yards.

Mr. Huhra said that the arborvitae are more for screening on the back side of the pond to the adjoining neighborhood. They sprinkled in some of the weeping cedars toward the front for the aesthetic aspect.

Mr. Brown said that they would be losing around 2,000 trees that are 5 inches in diameter or larger. Mr. Brown said that when they were on the phone, they talked about a tree bank and doing some things where they could use the money in other places in the community.

Mr. Huhra said that this is a pretty expensive planting, and he feels like they are meeting the requirements for the tree planting. He said that they are bringing back a little bit more of a native spread rather than just a consolidated woodland of random forestry.

Mr. Mentzer said that he feels like it is more important to have healthy trees and 40% coverage rather than having a forest of unhealthy trees with a lot of overlapping coverage.

Mr. Huhra said that their plan is going for the positive native urban forestry that is going to sustain the long-term growth.

Mr. Mitten said that the satellite imagery is very misleading because once you are to the site, the forestry is not that great. The plan that is presented is a quality over quantity plan.

Mr. Diener said that the plan stated that there was going to be a board certified arborist that will be present to oversee the plantings. He asked Mr. Huhra if there will be a board certified arborist there full time.

Mr. Huhra said that if a tree is being planted, an arborist will be onsite.

Mr. Diener asked if the plans will be followed out in the field because past experiences have shown that the contractors do not follow what is on paper.

Mr. Huhra said that they will follow the plan because if they do not, then they start replacing trees and that becomes very expensive. They want to do it right the first time so that they will not have to come back and replace trees.

Ms. Hager asked if there would be a warranty on the trees after they are planted.

Mr. Huhra said that the nurseries do not have a warranty because the success of the tree is more based on the plantings.

Mr. Mitten said that the planting warranty typically comes from the planting contractor, not necessarily the nursery that the plants come from. Mr. Mitten said that the warranties are typically two years, and it would not be hard to find a contractor who would warranty the trees for two years.

Ms. Homan asked what would happen if Arista Villas did not finish the project. She asked if there was some sort of guarantee that they would reforest the area so that a mudslide would not occur. Mr. Huhra said that if they would get through MPC and get through the land development, then there would be a developers agreement with Mount Vernon and that would include a performance bond. If the work was not completed, then the performance bond would finish the work.

Mr. Platt said that the city code specifically says: "Depending upon conditions relating to the season of the year, the size of the proposed development, the complexity of the tree planting plan, and the developers time schedule, the City reserves the right to require a financial guarantee equal to the approximate cost of

tree planting to assure that all required improvements shall be completed within two years of the acceptance of the final subdivision plat by the City."

Ms. Showman asked if all the trees will be removed in phase one of the project. She also asked if they are going to plant a lot of trees that are going to hurt that infrastructure and then the City is going to be responsible for taking care of them when this happens.

Mr. Brown said that the City has a 10 foot tree lawn. The closest thing the City has to a 10 foot tree lawn is West High St. The ordinance says that they now have to put down a gravel base before they put down the concrete for the sidewalks. The roots have an opportunity to grow under the concrete instead of bringing it up.

Mr. Huhra said that they have to follow the ordinance and that they did not design it. Mr. Huhra could not answer the question about the phasing because they need to meet with MPC and make more progress.

Mr. Platt said that the stormwater ordinance requires the developers to stabilize the site if they are not going to be doing work for a certain period of time.

Mr. Hiller asked how do they assure that the conversation that they are having goes to Municipal Planning. Mr. Zimmerman, the zoning and enforcement officer said that he will make sure this will be in the agreement and it will be addressed.

Ms. Dixon had a concern that everyone on the Shade Tree Committee has not had adequate time to look over the 30 page document

Ms. Homan has a concern that if they remove the trees then there will not be anything to soak up the water when the rain comes. She is concerned that the rain will get into the basements of the neighboring houses.

Mr. Huhra said that the stormwater management on projects like this are very important and very well regulated from a state level as well as a municipality level. They come out and inspect weekly to ensure that everything is in place.

Mr. Carr has a concern that the retention pond is going to have to be dammed behind the houses on Upland Terrace. Mr. Carr wants to know what will happen to the roots of the trees that they are planting alongside the bank. Mr. Carr also wants to know if they actually have a 10 foot tree lawn between the curb and the sidewalk.

Mr. Huhra said that he cannot speak on anything about dams, heights, or elevations because that is not what he had prepared for and they are not at that point. He said that the tree lawns are per the ordinance of Mount Vernon.

Mr. Holman is concerned about the water runoff during and after development.

Ms. Roberston asked if the utility trench will include buried electric lines or if it will just be water, sewer, and gas.

Mr. Huhra said that there will be an electric line in the utility trench.

Mr. Mentzer made a motion to table the Arista Villas Development until the next meeting. Ms. De Leon second the motion.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

*Tree City*

*Pear Removal*

*Grants*

*Arbor Day*

*Food Forest*

*Delano Field of Discovery*

## **OTHER**

## **ADJOURN**

Mr. Mentzer made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Brown second the motion.