

# Sylvania Tree Commission

## *February Meeting Minutes*

**Date:** Friday, February 27, 2026

**Time:** 4:30–6:00 PM

**Location:** Parks & Forestry Building

### **1. Welcome / Call to Meeting**

The meeting was called to order on **January 23, 2026**.

**Present:**

- Brady Kohlenberg, Chair
- Anthony Haddad, Vice Chair
- Stacey Leffler, Secretary/Treasurer
- Helen Michaels, Public Relations Liaison
- Judi Young, Public Relations Liaison
- Margie Ott, City Adviser – Parks & Forestry
- Shawn Murphy, Council Liaison – Parks & Forestry Committee
- Kevin McGreevy (*Pending Member*)
- Beth Youngpeter (*Pending Member*)
- Samantha Ayres, Heritage Sylvania (*Guest*)

**Absent:**

- Rosey Duran (*stepping down from the commission*)

### **2. Motion to Accept Previous Meeting Minutes**

The **January 2026 meeting minutes** were presented.

**Motion:** To approve the January 2026 meeting minutes.

**Motion by:** Shawn Murphy

**Seconded by:** Helen Michaels

**Outcome:** Motion carried.

### **3. Business for Discussion**

#### **a) Tree City USA Growth Award**

Margie Ott announced that the City of Sylvania received the Tree City USA Growth Award. This marks the 5th time Sylvania has received the award in the past 43 years. (per Arbor Day Website) The award will be presented at the Tree City USA Awards Luncheon on Wednesday, May 13, 2026, in Maumee, from 9:30 AM to 2:45 PM. Commissioners interested in attending were asked to notify Brady Kohlenberg or Margie Ott so registration can be completed.

This will also be the final year of the 19-county celebration format for the event.

The Commission expressed interest in continuing to pursue the Growth Award in/for future years.

#### **b) Tree Commission Responsibilities**

Shawn Murphy distributed copies of **Chapter 160 of the Sylvania Codified Ordinances**, outlining the creation and responsibilities of the Tree Commission.

The goal of reviewing this ordinance is to clarify the Commission's role and ensure volunteer time is used effectively. Responsibilities were discussed within four primary focus areas:

- **Tree Health and Advocacy**
- **Education and Outreach**
- **Community Promotion** (highlighting positive tree initiatives in the community)
- **Tree City USA Coordination** (supporting Margie Ott with documentation and reporting)

Additional points discussed:

- The commission composition remains **nine members** as stated in **Section 160.02**.
- Members serve **three-year terms**, with the option for reappointment.
- Commissioners may be removed after **three missed meetings**.
- **Section 160.03** regarding officer roles will be reviewed at a future meeting.

Any proposed ordinance amendments will be evaluated to ensure they remain consistent with **Tree City USA program requirements**.

The topic was **tabled for further discussion at a future meeting**.

### **c) SAJRD – Veterans Memorial Grove Recommendations Update**

Anthony Haddad provided an update on the Tree Commission's collaboration with the Sylvania Area Joint Recreation District (SAJRD) regarding the Veterans Memorial Grove at Veterans Memorial Field.

A site visit took place on February 21, attended by Brian Kezur, Anthony Haddad, Margie Ott, Shawn Murphy, Helen Michaels, Brady Kohlenberg, and Beth Youngpeter. Kevin McGreevy also independently visited the site.

Observations included significant branch debris, overgrowth, and tree maintenance needs, including pruning and removal of some failing or dead trees.

The Tree Commission developed a formal recommendation document for SAJRD, which includes:

#### **Key Recommendations**

##### **Priority 1 – Safety & Stabilization**

- Removal of hazardous deadwood
- Structural pruning and crown thinning
- Training of young trees
- Removal of dead or failing trees
- Specialized tree care where needed (cabling, root corrections, vine removal)

##### **Priority 2 – Memorial Continuity**

- Any memorial tree removed should be replaced with the same species originally planted to preserve the historic design and commemorative intent of the grove.
- The original Silver Maple memorial trees installed in 1950 (should) remain consistent in species replacement.

##### **Priority 3 – Supplemental Tree Planting**

- Additional non-memorial trees may be planted strategically to enhance canopy coverage, biodiversity, and stormwater absorption while maintaining the historical layout.

##### **Priority 4 – East Fence Line Clearing**

- Brush and invasive growth along the east fence line should be cleared to reduce competition and protect existing trees.

##### **Priority 5 – Long-Term Considerations**

- In ground walking paths are not recommended to avoid root zone disturbance. A recommendation would be to look into permeable surfaces that require minimal root disturbance base
- Mulch is recommended if done in a way where flooding isn't going to create more maintenance.

The Commission's objective is to preserve the historic integrity of the Memorial Grove while improving long-term tree health and safety.

The final recommendation document will be submitted to SAJRD by March 15, 2026.

Kevin McGreevy suggested that wood from downed trees could potentially be repurposed within the memorial area or used for mulch.

### **d) America 250 Heritage Tree Planting / Arbor Day Planning**

Samantha Ayres from Heritage Sylvania provided updates regarding the America 250 Heritage Tree Planting, part of the statewide initiative to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the United States.

Sylvania will host the **Lucas County Heritage Tree**, with the ceremony scheduled for:

**Monday, April 27, 2026 at 1:00 PM**

Location: **Sylvania Municipal Building (Judi Young Lane)**

Event highlights discussed:

- The ceremony will focus primarily on official guests and media coverage while still welcoming community participation.
- Invitations will be extended to Lucas County leaders, mayors from surrounding communities, county commissioners, and regional tree commissions.
- Mayor Mark Frey and Commissioner Lisa Sobecki are expected speakers, along with representatives from Destination Toledo.
- Brady Kohlenberg will speak on behalf of the Sylvania Tree Commission, sharing information about the significance of the White Oak being planted and the importance of trees in the community. The tree selected for planting will be a **White Oak**, which can live **300–350 years**.

Community engagement ideas included:

- Involving 4th-grade students through essays, artwork, or presentations
- A MemoryFox QR code where residents can share stories about trees or community memories
- A potential student band performance

Additional planning considerations included:

- Event staging and seating
- Parking logistics and safety
- Tent rental for rain contingency
- Coordination with local organizations such as:
  - Lucas County Soil & Water
  - Keep Lucas County Beautiful
  - The Sylvania Tree Commission

Promotional ideas included a "Coming Soon" sign at the planting location possibly in the shape of a large cut out tree, social media promotion, and participation in Red Bird Sylvania's First Friday "Deep Roots" event in April.

Stacey Leffler offered to bring Timberstone student volunteers to assist with event setup and guest guidance.

## 4. Projects / Topics to Remain on the Agenda

### a) 2026 Commission Goals – Growth Award

The Commission will continue identifying and completing activities that contribute to the **Tree City USA Growth Award**.

### b) Resident Requests for Street Tree Planting

The Commission continues discussing the development of a City website form or request process for residents interested in street tree planting.

Margie Ott and Brady Kohlenberg will review possible wording and procedures.

### c) Commission Vacancies

With Rosey Duran stepping down, the Commission currently has two open positions available for City residents interested in serving.

## 5. General Discussion

### a) Commission Transparency

Commissioners discussed the importance of improving public access to Tree Commission information following a recent article about the transparency of public committees in the Toledo Blade. Currently, meeting dates, agendas, and minutes are not posted on the City website.

Brady Kohlenberg will contact City staff (Laura) to explore options for making this information publicly accessible or including a notice stating that documents are available upon request.

The Mayor has already received meeting agendas and minutes since September 2025.

## 6. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 6:00 PM.

## Sylvania Tree Commission Update

The Sylvania Tree Commission met on February 27, 2026, to review ongoing initiatives and plan several upcoming community events. Members celebrated the announcement that Sylvania received the **Tree City USA Growth Award**, marking the **5th time in the past 43 years** the city has earned this recognition for its commitment to urban forestry. The award will be presented in May at the regional Tree City USA celebration in Maumee.

Commissioners also continued their collaboration with the **Sylvania Area Joint Recreation District (SAJRD)** on recommendations for restoring the **Veterans Memorial Grove** at Veterans Memorial Field. Following a recent site visit, the commission developed guidance focused on improving tree health and safety, preserving the historic memorial tree plantings, and strengthening the long-term resilience of the grove.

Planning is underway for the **America 250 Heritage Tree Planting**, scheduled for **April 27, 2026**, at the Sylvania Municipal Building. The event will feature a ceremonial planting of a **White Oak** to commemorate

the nation's 250th anniversary. Community leaders, local organizations, and students will be invited to participate, with Tree Commission Chair **Brady Kohlenberg** speaking about the significance of the tree and the role of urban forests in the community.

The commission also discussed ways to improve transparency by making meeting information more accessible to the public. With a current vacancy on the commission, city residents interested in supporting Sylvania's urban forest are encouraged to consider getting involved. 🌱