

City of Camden Parks & Trees Commission

Meeting Minutes – August 10, 2026

Participants identified during the meeting included Elizabeth Shook, Barbara Cantey, Barb Willens, Lisa, Michael, Rachel, and Ricky. Bob was absent.

Elizabeth Shook opened the meeting and proceeded to consideration of the previous minutes.

Approval of Previous Minutes

A correction was requested to change “Kirkwood Commons” to “Kirkwood Park” in the previous minutes. Elizabeth requested a motion and a second to approve the minutes with that correction, acknowledged the responses, and proceeded to park reports. She will make the correction and email the revised minutes to members the following day.

Committee Business

Elizabeth confirmed that park assignment spreadsheets for the third and fourth quarters had been emailed. Michael’s assignments were identified as City Arena, Town Green, and Environmental Park, and he indicated he would inspect them. Lisa had inspected Town Green and City Arena under the previous rotation and will submit reports for Scott, Boykin, and Armory parks by the end of the week.

Park Reports

Kendall Park and Kendall Lake were mowed and free of litter, although detail trimming remained necessary. Elizabeth reported that she, Public Utilities and Public Works Director Jack Thornsberry, and Streets and Parks Supervisor Robbie had inspected the walking trail. Standing water following heavy rain had delayed trimming; the work remained planned when conditions permitted. Fishing activity continued near the creek.

Burndale Park’s limited amenities, including benches and two picnic tables, were discussed. Members noted its value as neighborhood green space and questioned whether additional activities for children were needed. No improvement project was adopted.

Town Green was in good condition overall. Weeds remained among the rose bushes and needed removal.

City Arena Park was generally clean, and recently planted trees were growing well. Litter remained concealed by underbrush along the fence line, and a substantial pothole still needed filling. Lisa suggested encouraging sustained community cleanup efforts through possible park improvements, such as shade structures. This remained a suggestion.

Kirkwood Commons was discussed as a largely open, memorial-style green space without playground equipment. A member requested help identifying the full inspection area. Rectory Square was generally in good condition, with mowing underway; leaning trash cans

and one dead shrub or hedge were reported. A dead young memorial tree at the Commons was also identified. Elizabeth requested a photograph to determine whether City staff or First Class Landscaping was responsible for the work.

Rachel reported that a large limb had fallen from a mature post oak on the Fair Street side of Hampton Park. Debris had been removed, but the incident raised concern about tree inspection and public safety. The drinking fountain did not work, and the decorative fountain was not operating during the visit. Members also noted inconsistent fountain operation at Rectory Square. Landscape cleanup had improved, although Virginia creeper remained in a stand of gardenias and continued vine control was needed.

At Archives Park, Rachel could not locate a sign identifying the park and was uncertain of its boundaries. Members discussed the open area behind the Archives building, its memorials, and the need for clearer park identification.

At Monument Square, a dedication marker beneath a large cypress in the northeast section had become obscured by the tree. Unwanted woody growth also needed removal. A marker near a Japanese maple had faded until it was unreadable. A dead dogwood along Broad Street and an adjacent trash receptacle apparently missing its liner were reported; responsibility for the roadside tree was discussed. New trees in the southwest section were doing well with watering bags.

Environmental Park Updates

Elizabeth reported that updated signs had been ordered addressing motorboat restrictions and warnings about snakes, alligators, and ants. Staff were pricing directional signs consistent with other City park signs and considering removal of the “Dead End” sign to make the park entrance more inviting and easier to locate.

Two green benches had been ordered for the walking trail, with shipment expected in October. Funds had been budgeted for three benches; the need for a third would be evaluated.

Staff continued monitoring the trail and the area previously affected by beaver activity. No additional problems had been reported to Elizabeth. Approximately six beavers were believed to be present. Goose droppings remained a trail maintenance concern, and members discussed changing trail conditions with rainfall and pond levels.

Tree Maintenance Concerns

Members discussed aging trees, falling limbs, loss of canopy, and the need for proactive inspection, pruning, and replacement planning. Barb reported a declining oak in the right-of-way near the Joseph property that continued to drop limbs. Lisa indicated she would look at the tree.

Elizabeth asked members to email photographs and locations of trees needing inspection. She will route concerns to City staff or the tree contractor and, where appropriate, submit a

request to the state transportation department. Forestry contacts were also being consulted regarding resident requests submitted through Connect Camden.

Members asked about replacing the City arborist and expressed concern that duties assigned to that position lacked a designated person. Elizabeth had not been advised of plans to hire a replacement and noted that the decision rested with City management. She will note the concern for administration; the City Manager, Assistant City Manager, and department director receive the Commission's agendas and minutes.

Legacy Tree Program

Elizabeth reported that City Manager Matt DeWitt did not support the proposed Legacy Tree Program as presented. His concerns included continuing maintenance obligations, City responsibility if a tree became diseased, and the additional accounting work required to receive and track donations. He was unable to attend this meeting because of another meeting commitment.

Members discussed the need to replace the City's aging canopy and whether a memorial tree program could complement the Council-initiated Legacy Bench Program. Suggestions included limiting plantings to Arbor Day and Earth Day, maintaining digital recognition records rather than physical signs, clarifying that tree survival or replacement would not be guaranteed, and setting contributions to cover planting, watering, mulch, and maintenance. Members also discussed whether excess donations could support broader tree care. No program, fee, or funding arrangement was adopted.

Barb described an existing tree organization with approximately \$2,000 remaining that was considering dissolution. Possible collaboration or use of remaining funds to support initial legacy trees was discussed. Members agreed to hold off on inviting its representative until after discussion with the City Manager.

Lisa offered additional copies of the proposal and encouraged members to review it and provide input. Members favored continuing the discussion in October so Lisa and Bob could participate. Elizabeth will request Matt DeWitt's attendance at the October 12 meeting and advise members of his availability during the week. If he is unavailable, another date will be considered.

Additional Business

Members reported difficulty locating house numbers on Fair Street between Laurens and Union streets and discussed visibility concerns. Elizabeth identified Code Enforcement and Connect Camden as possible avenues for reporting the issue; applicable requirements were not determined during the discussion.

A member reported that a planned park tree garden was awaiting related site work and contractor selection. Funding was reported to be available. The selected design included four groups of trees representing the four regions of South Carolina. Planting timing

remained dependent on completion of the preliminary work, with the possibility of extending into the following year. Members discussed fall and winter as appropriate planting seasons.

Lisa asked whether the Commission had a role at the farmers market and suggested shade sails along its corridor. Elizabeth believed the site was owned by Kershaw County but will confirm ownership with staff the following day before determining the appropriate referral.

Adjournment

With no further business raised, Elizabeth requested a motion to adjourn and closed the meeting with thanks to those present.

Next meeting: Monday, September 14, 2026.