

Parks & Trees Commission Meeting – September 14, 2026

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

Elizabeth Shook opened the meeting and moved to consider the previous minutes.

Approval of Previous Minutes

Elizabeth reported that the revised June minutes had been circulated with the correction from “Kirkwood Commons” to “Kirkwood Park.” She requested approval of the previous minutes, acknowledged responses, and proceeded to park reports.

Park Reports

Ricky reported no new concerns at Kirkwood Commons but remained uncertain of the full inspection area. Rectory Square was generally in good condition, with several small piles of limbs and tree debris needing removal.

Michael reported that City Arena Park looked good overall, although litter continued to collect in the trees and vegetation. He removed several pieces near the basketball court. Town Green was in good condition. At Environmental Park, algae remained a concern in the ponds, although those near the entrance gates appeared clearer. Michael observed the warning sign concerning alligators and snakes and planned to return in cooler weather to complete his walk.

Bob reported that Kirkwood Park was neat but remained bare and uninviting. Members discussed the approved walking-trail grant, the City's efforts to secure a contractor, and the need to coordinate tree planting with that work. Planting was anticipated early the following year. Youth football activity at the park was noted. Bob reported that Edgewood was in good condition; he had not inspected the remaining park on his assignment.

Barb Willens reported that Burndale Park looked good, while expressing concern about overgrown lawns in the surrounding neighborhood. The Kendall Walking Trail had been mowed, but trimming was needed along the ditches and waterway. At Kendall Lake, two historic signs had faded and needed replacement. Barb will send a photograph to Elizabeth. She also reported overgrown vegetation and a dead pine with no bark or limbs to the left of the parking-area entrance and suggested mowing the area and removing the tree.

Bob reported seeing a large mower driven on the Kendall walking track. Elizabeth will remind Parks staff to keep mowers off the track. She noted that the City was performing more of the maintenance directly, with First Class Landscaping continuing to handle some work.

Barbara Cantey reported that City Hall Park looked good, although one of three newly planted trees appeared unhealthy. The park at Rutledge and Broad was in good condition

after she removed a small amount of litter. Powder Magazine was also in good condition, with several groups using the benches; clothing had been spread across a table and benches to dry.

Rachel reported fallen limbs and accumulated debris at Hampton Park, Archives Park, and the three sections of Monument Square. Several dedication markers were faded or covered with mildew and needed attention. At Hampton Park, the previously nonfunctioning drinking fountain had been removed, while the decorative fountain remained out of service. Three dead trees were reported in the northeast area near Fair Street: a dogwood, a tulip tree, and an unidentified tree.

At Archives Park, Rachel reported dead and living vines in the wooded area across from the Monument Square exit and behind the school. A pile of dead limbs appeared to have been left beneath the undergrowth and needed removal.

At Monument Square, the missing trash-can liner had been replaced, but other maintenance concerns remained. Rachel identified a declining post oak with large dead limbs in the northeast section near the school and expressed concern about its safety. The dead dogwood in the Broad Street right-of-way remained. An adjacent white oak inside the park, bearing a dedication marker, had yellow leaves and brown spots and needed evaluation. Elizabeth noted that Broad Street is a state transportation department roadway; Rachel clarified that the white oak was inside the park. A dead dogwood beneath the live oaks in the northwest section also needed removal.

Fountains and Landscape Maintenance

Members discussed the importance of drinking fountains and the maintenance and vandalism problems affecting them. A member will follow up with the Mayor regarding an earlier request to explore a different approach to park drinking fountains. Elizabeth explained that repeated removal or damage to components contributed to the decorative fountain's outages and repair costs.

Rachel reported that the dedication marker beneath a large cypress in Monument Square remained obscured. The marker identified a 2011 planting. Elizabeth will determine responsibility for ongoing care of dedicated trees. Members discussed proper pruning, horticultural training, and the respective work performed by City crews and First Class Landscaping. Azaleas in the northeast corner of Rectory Square and at Monument Square remained a concern following pruning.

Rachel reported successfully testing the new pet microchip scanner. It identified her dog's chip and the correct registration company, and she considered it a useful addition.

Legacy Recognition Programs

Elizabeth will invite City Manager Matt DeWitt to the October meeting to discuss Lisa's Legacy Tree proposal, explain his concerns, and present other recognition ideas for

Commission input. If he is unavailable, the discussion may move to November or another mutually convenient date; a special meeting was also suggested.

Rachel referred to the August 18 City Council minutes, in which Mayor Shaheen requested review of the Legacy Bench Program and alternatives for recognizing people who have made a lasting contribution to Camden. Members discussed coordinating the bench and tree concepts within a simpler recognition program. Members observed that some parks already had many benches.

Alternatives discussed included commemorative plaques in passageways off Broad Street, a hall-of-fame-style display, plaques in parks, and tree dedications. Members emphasized keeping a future program simple and considering maintenance needs. No replacement program or funding arrangement was adopted.

Barbara Cantey noted that a dedicated tree at Kirkwood Commons had died and that two dead trees there had been donated by a garden club. Members discussed the need to clarify responsibility for donated trees. Barb Willens explained that the Camden Tree Foundation historically raised funds, purchased trees, and paid for planting with City approval, including plantings in Dusty Bend and around the racetrack. The Foundation was spending its remaining funds, and its continued operation was uncertain.

Environmental Park Wildflower Garden

Bob reported discussions with Councilman Phil Elliott about establishing a wildflower or butterfly garden at Environmental Park. The proposed approach was to prepare the soil and plant wildflower seeds in the fall, preferably in October when weather permitted. Bob will coordinate with Phil, who has equipment for site preparation, and offered to purchase the seeds. Commission members were invited to assist, potentially before the next meeting.

The proposed site was near the parking area, beside a grassy knoll and sloping toward the pond, with nearby benches for viewing. Bob estimated an area approximately 35 by 15 feet. Members discussed the absence of a convenient water source and the need for watering during establishment if rainfall was insufficient.

Elizabeth will consult Jack and Matt regarding possible City watering assistance and determine whether City equipment or First Class Landscaping could provide support. Watering assistance remained subject to staff review; no expenditure or formal project approval was adopted during the discussion.

Adjournment

With no further business, Elizabeth asked whether members were ready to adjourn and closed the meeting. Next meeting: Monday, October 12, 2026, at 5:30 p.m.