



Common Functions of a Tree Board

- **Policy Formulation.** This is the creation of guiding principles, such as those reflected in a tree ordinance. For example, who is responsible for right-of-way trees, what rules should be imposed on developers, etc.
- **Advising.** A board can provide citizen input to the city forester and/or mayor and city council on tree-related issues.
- **Administration.** In smaller communities, this may include keeping records, making assignments, overseeing the Tree City USA application process, and similar tasks.
- **Management.** Again, this would mostly be a function in smaller communities, where the tree board may be directly responsible for tree care such as planting, pruning, watering, and removals.
- **Representation.** Sometimes boards are structured to make sure certain community interests are included, such as nursery operators, arborists, Master Gardeners, downtown merchants, and similar groups. At the very least, a tree board member is a representative of the town's residents.
- **Advocacy.** This is a tough one, and sometimes related to the function above. As a member of the board, you probably are — or should be — an advocate for the trees in your community. How you apply your advocacy, or balance it with the interests of any particular group you may represent, will help determine the success of urban forestry in your area. Compromise is sometimes a key to success, and it is essential to not alienate elected officials or other policymakers. At the same time, as a board member, your primary goal should be to advocate for good, sound urban forestry and for it to be conducted on a systematic and continuing basis.
- **Education.** Rare is the tree board that is not interested in and willing to help residents, including children, gain a better understanding about the benefits of trees and the need for planting and care.

pointed out in Chapter 1, this should be spelled out in a tree ordinance or sometimes by executive order or declaration of the mayor or city council/commission. In some small communities, the board may have formed as the result of an incident, such as an invasive pest destroying trees, or to help with a community event. In any case, you and all members of the board must have a clear understanding of what you are charged

to do. As chartered, is the board advisory to the mayor and council or to the city forester or city arborist? Are you charged with making policy for an overall program, or are you to develop a city tree program and serve as labor? What limitations have been placed on your board, if any? Read the ordinance and ask questions.

Times and circumstances change, so another thing to consider is whether the original purpose of the board will still serve the needs of the community. If not, what latitude do you have for making adjustments to meet current and future needs?

The answers to these questions will get you off to a good start, making sure you are on the same page with city officials and your colleagues.

■ A Job Description

This may seem like something only created for employment, but it is also good for volunteers, including tree board members. Before joining the board, it can help a candidate decide whether participation is a good fit. Once a member, it provides clarity about what is expected, and even grounds for asking an unproductive member to resign. It should be in writing and include what is expected in the way of duties, time commitment, and meeting attendance. The example provided at the right, is just that — an example. Yours should be tailored to the needs of your community.

■ Keys to Effective Meetings

Time is our most precious possession, and nothing wastes more of it and has a more dampening effect on enthusiasm than long, dull meetings. Here are some proven techniques to make meetings productive and maintain the interest of tree board members:

1. **Send reminders.** Nothing kills productivity like missing members or unfilled assignments. The chair or secretary

should email or call members a few days ahead of each meeting to serve as a reminder. Members who are consistently absent should be replaced.

2. **Start on time — and stay on time.** Time is important to most people. The board chair needs to respect this and clearly ask members to do likewise.

Job Description

Volunteer Tree Board Member Pleasantville, Anyplace

General Responsibilities: Serve in an advisory capacity to city council, assist the city forester in educational efforts, plan and conduct annual Arbor Day activities, and participate in special projects such as tree plantings.

Qualifications:

- Resident of the City of Pleasantville
- An interest in trees and how they benefit the community
- The ability to work as a team member and actively participate in scheduled events
- Willingness to commit approximately six hours monthly, including one evening meeting per month, usually on Tuesdays

Activities:

Activities are variable, and some depend on the interests of board members. Those of a routine nature include:

- Assisting the city forester in developing and/or reviewing annually and updating as necessary a long-range plan for the city's urban forest.
- Reviewing annual work plans related to the urban forestry program with the city forester.
- Advising the mayor, city council, and city departments on matters concerning trees and related resources, including revisions of the city tree ordinance.
- Serving on an appeals panel regarding decisions to remove or allow the removal of trees in the city rights-of-way.
- Helping to plan and conduct an annual Arbor Day celebration on the last Friday in April.
- Participating in educational campaigns that may include occasional school and civic organization presentations, interviews with mass media, and creation of printed materials.
- Serving as liaison with organizations planning and conducting tree-related events or projects.