

**City of Oxford Tree Board
Regular Meeting
Thursday, July 2, 2026**

Tree Board:

Cowan Hunter, Chairman

Mary Hartwell Howorth

Ed Croom (via Microsoft Teams)

*Nick Matthews, Director, Landscape Services

Not in attendance: Josh White

**Ex-Officio, non-voting*

City of Oxford:

Garrett Black, Special Projects

James Hirsch, Development Services – Planning

John Crowley, City Engineer (via Microsoft Teams)

Allison Ferris, Development Services – Engineering

Other:

John Granberry, Engineer, Granberry & Associates

Tympel Harrison, Mississippi Forestry Commission

Matt Nielsen, Arborist, Green Grove

A. Call to Order

Commissioner Hunter called the meeting to order at 11:05 a.m.

B. Approval of Agenda

Commissioner Hunter moved to approve the agenda; all in favor.

C. Approval of June 2026 Minutes

Commissioner Hunter moved to approve the minutes; Commissioner Mary Hartwell Howorth seconded; all in favor.

D. Department Issues and Reports

1. Landscape Services

a. Recent Public Assistance and Information Requests Regarding Trees

Nick Matthews, Director of Landscape Services, reported that Landscape Services has received standard tree-related calls. He indicated that no major removals are underway and that the team is currently working on stump removals. Nick reviewed this process.

James Hirsch, Development Services – Planning, indicated that he spoke with the gentleman involved in the discussion in an earlier meeting about the development process. Matt Nielsen, Green Grove, stated he would send a report regarding trees in that area.

b. Summer Watering and Tree Care

Nick noted that an employee is dedicated to watering and that newly planted trees are doing well.

2. Planning

c. Gary Subdivision – White Oak Arborist Report, Plan Updates, etc.

James introduced this item and summarized the proposal for the Gary Subdivision. He noted that plans do not appear to include grading within the drip line of the champion tree.

John Granberry (Granberry & Associates) described his work to gather more information to protect the champion white oak. He explained that the Williams Engineering survey has now been incorporated into the plans, along with a buffer zone.

The Board discussed the arborist's report, the importance of avoiding the root and drip lines, and tree losses in the area. Commissioner Hunter stated that the Tree Board would like to review the arborist report if possible. John said he would discuss that with his client.

Commissioner Ed Croom noted relevant research on tree preservation and drip lines. John stated they have a certified arborist report but that it was based on the earlier plan. A new report would be required for the revised plan. John also discussed drainage conditions in the area.

Commissioner Hunter summarized Commissioner Croom's concern regarding the adequacy of the proposed drip line protection. Additional discussion followed, i.e., regarding applicable design codes for future homes in the historic area as well as emergency access considerations.

Commissioner Hunter noted that the item will be taken up again at the next meeting in August and asked again for the arborist report to be made available.

d. Current/Pending Development Updates Regarding Trees, Mitigation, etc.

James reviewed the Planning Commission docket for July 13, 2026, and discussed tree-mitigation needs for multiple proposed developments.

Commissioner Hunter inquired about the steel structure near the movie theater. James confirmed it is an Oxford Commons commercial building. The Board discussed the Oxford Commons Planned Unit Development.

3. Special Projects

e. Progress Report on Tree Assessments, Inventories, and Next Steps

Garrett Black, Special Projects, reported no major updates. The tree assessment remains ongoing. Commissioner Hunter asked about a specific project, and Garrett said he would follow up with Mark Levy, Director of Special Projects.

f. FY26 special projects: trees and landscaping, pending or completed

Commissioner Hunter discussed tree escrow funds in relation to tree inventories and assessments and asked Garrett to coordinate with Mark regarding future projects that may require use of the tree escrow fund.

Matt provided more insight on the progress of the tree assessments. He reported data had been sent to Mark and Nick for review, but in the future, it might be shared with the Tree Board.

E. Business

4. Mississippi Forestry Commission Update

Tymple Harrison, Mississippi Forestry Commission, reported no new updates from the commission.

5. Matt Nielsen and Further Discussion of Parking Lot Tree Issues

Matt shared concerns regarding parking-lot tree conditions (e.g., at Kroger). He acknowledged these issues involve private property but expressed interest in establishing a system for evaluating long-term tree health and determining the City's role.

The Board discussed related issues. Commissioner Hunter noted progress in tree-mitigation efforts within development processes but acknowledged potential areas for improvement. James agreed there may be a need to re-evaluate aspects of the City's authority. Discussion continued.

F. Motion to Adjourn

Commissioner Hunter moved to adjourn at 12:06 P.M.; Commissioner Howorth seconded; All in favor.