

(4 minute intro with historical context for Tree Warden role):

The important role of municipal tree warden was created in 1899, when Massachusetts passed America's first state-wide public shade tree protection law, MGL Chapter 87, known as the Public Shade Tree Act. Back then, as now, the tree warden was assigned responsibility for the legal protection and management of all shade trees on municipal property, with a few exceptions.

Recognition that healthy tree canopy on city streets is a sign of a well-run, well-cared-for town, goes back long before 1899 in Massachusetts: the first official Public Shade Tree was planted way back in 1646.

Back before our air-conditioned horseless carriages took over the streets, just about everyone experienced the practical benefits of public shade trees every day. If you were on the road, every shade tree you passed could shelter you from searing sun, pelting rain, and driving wind. If you had a home or business on the street, tree canopy helped filter noise, glare, smells and dust from the roadway, and gave a protected spot to park your horse and cart.

While our streets, the density of our neighborhoods, and the primary ways we travel have all radically changed since then, these street-level benefits are still very important to healthy city living. We also understand now how important urban trees are in other ways too, thanks to decades of arboricultural and social research: research on how trees lessen the deadly urban heat island effect; how trees control flooding, reduce energy costs, support the urban ecosystem, and support our own physical, social and mental well-being. And it's now understood that these benefits are increasingly important as the climate heats up.

So while the legal role of the municipal tree warden hasn't changed much over the years, the challenges of maintaining enough healthy urban tree canopy to provide these benefits, and our understanding of the urgent importance of these benefits, have both increased dramatically.

The challenge today for our city and our tree warden -- and for us as citizens -- is to protect and increase these important benefits in a challenging and changing urban environment. And there's no time to lose. We know that urban trees provide their greatest benefits when they can grow to have big healthy canopies and strong root systems. If we want to ensure and maximize these benefits for Watertown, we must plant many more trees today, but we must do more too -- we must make sure that our trees can have long healthy lifetimes.

Building a healthy public shade tree population for the future, along with the day-to-day challenges of maintaining the health and safety of existing public shade trees, is the job of Watertown's Forestry Supervisor and Tree Warden. It's a one-person job description, but strong municipal and community support is essential to guarantee long-term success.

So we're so happy to see so many joining us tonight to welcome the man who has accepted the responsibility of managing our public shade trees, as Watertown's new Forestry Supervisor and Tree Warden, Gregory Mosman. Welcome, Greg!