

MINNEAPOLIS TREE ADVISORY COMMISSION

Meeting of June 15, 2023

Held remotely via Zoom

Decision/Consensus/Assignment items are set out in bold.

COMMISSION MEMBERS ARE RESPECTFULLY REQUESTED TO REVIEW THESE MINUTES CAREFULLY FOR ASSIGNMENT AND ACTION ITEMS PERTAINING TO THEM

The meeting of the Minneapolis Tree Advisory Commission (MTAC) of the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) convened at 5:30 p.m. on June 15, 2023, with the following Commission Members in attendance: Co-Chair Peter MacDonagh (U of M liaison), Chris Linde (District 1), Co-Chair Giuseppe Marrari (District 2), John Kruse (District 3), Tim Keane (At-Large), Barb Schlaefer (District 6), Mary Bolla (4), Steve Nicholson (MN Shade Tree Advisory Committee), Don Willeke (Mayor's Representative), Sydney Schaaf (City Trees Program Manager), Linea Palmisano (City Council, Ward 13), Billy Menz (MPRB Commissioner, District 1), Ralph Sievert (MPRB Forestry Director).

Not in attendance: Chris Linde (District 1), Carol Sersland (District 5)(traveling in Norway-returning in July), Steve Collin (Public Works), Curt Hartog (School Board Representative).

Guests in attendance: Philip Potyondy (MPRB Sustainable Forestry Coordinator), Danielle Schumerth (Forestry Outreach Coordinator).

CALL TO ORDER AND MINUTES

Co-Chair MacDonagh called the meeting to order. **The MTAC meeting minutes for June 15, 2023, were approved as delivered.**

MPRB FORESTRY DEPARTMENT UPDATE

Director Sievert started off with administrative topics;
Is the MTAC interested in having in-person meetings? Because of the size of the MTAC board, the meeting would be held at the Park Board Headquarters.

In association with the recently completed By-Laws there will be required training sessions. These are being developed and will be scheduled later this summer. An orientation session about the Forestry Department will be held.

Tree removal protocols and Park Board Planning Department:

MTAC will schedule a presentation by Craig Pinkala to provide further details. Sievert also described how the model has been reviewed by the County and State forestry departments. The model and data needed is becoming big enough that the tree inspectors will be brought in to contribute to the basic database.

Action:

Relay to Pinkala how much MTAC members appreciate his efforts and successful implementation of this prioritization system.

Schedule a visit to the MTAC by Pinkala.

Private property ash tree condemnation and removal process: the process for taking bids from contractors for the trees the City must remove is being modified to become more consistent between contractors – all bids will be requested as if there is a “special” situation at the tree site. The issue of certain property owners not being able to afford the cost of the removal continues – with the assessment being applied to the property.

Use of the Inflation Reduction Act funds: Park Board voted to apply the money to grind stumps and plant trees on the boulevards and in parks prioritizing disadvantaged areas of the City but not limiting it to boulevards and parks. The application also includes watering equipment. It's a 5-year time span with \$13 million. Notification of the grant will be around October 1.

Watering trees is happening and employees wanting to do this for overtime work will be granted. Routine pruning and removal of trees continues.

The tree “nursery” has been closed down – all trees have been planted.

On the MTAC website, the photo of the Commission has been updated.

The roster has been updated on the website. **Sievert emailed a roster on June 8, and will send out a roster of the current members.**

Danielle Schumerth, Outreach Coordinator for the Forestry Department, provided an update: Elmer the Elm tree (outreach representative for the department) has attended the Duck Races on Minnehaha Creek, been a present at the Tree Distribution site, tree planting at the Seward school. Tree climbing for 4th and 5th graders at Whittier School went well. Kenny Neighborhood Ice Cream Social is upcoming and Elmer will be attending. There is a safety camp being held. Coordinated efforts with Minnesota Tree Trust are upcoming. Schumerth has followed up with the Arbor Day volunteers in Windom Park supplying tree watering equipment. Schumerth also mentioned an upcoming tree climbing event at Pillsbury School.

A question about the number of watering trucks: Sievert responded that there are 16. Potyondy added that there is a system for tracking the location and date of trees being watered.

Menz commended Schumerth for supporting those volunteering for watering duty and was curious about expanding wateractivities to additional locations. Sievert expanded on the watering process – the bags hold 20 gallons and property owners are provided with a brochure about watering. The Windom Park activity serves as a pilot project and example to other neighborhoods of what they could do.

Discussion continued about watering protocol: **HOWEVER YOU DO IT, JUST PUT THE WATER ON THE TREE** is the bottom line. Menz encouraged Schumerth to develop a relationship with the Pillsbury community because of their existing focus on the environment.

A question was raised about the tree diseases the inspectors are looking for and if oaks are in the mix. Nicholson is seeing more diseased oaks (oak wilt or bur oak blight). It's a cause for concern.

Potyondy encouraged all MTAC members to use our networks to get more citizens to be active in watering our trees.

Wrap up by MacDonagh:

Have MTAC members signed a Conflict of Interest form? As indicated in the newly adopted By-Laws.

Consideration of holding in-person meetings will be added to the July agenda. Think about how we might implement this.

Sievert will confer with Pinkala about an appropriate meeting for him to join us.

CITY TREE PROGRAM

Sydney Schaaf, Health Department, City Tree Program Manager

Schaaf provided background on the program: It was a part-time position for five years prior to 2023. In 2023 it has become a full-time position. This program works to plant trees on private properties. The Department has applied to the US Forest Service for a \$29 million grant that focuses on removing and replacing ash trees especially on properties of low-income, and people-of-color ownership also known as Climate and Economic Justice locations. August 15th is the date to hear from the USFS regarding the grant.

There will be additional funding opportunities though the State.

Discussion continued about what the chances are of getting the funding, about the current cost of removal (approximately \$1800 per tree + \$300 for planting), retroactive reimbursement,

MTAC BUSINESS

Co-Chair MacDonagh

Chair MacDonagh asks: **Is there a presentation or a topic that you need or want to address? And if there is, if you could just drop me an email and let me know, because I'd like to start. I'd create a master list and start to put them together on the agendas.**

Some examples are Craig Pinkala, Meg Forney – Park Board President, Ben Shardlow – in charge of the downtown development district. Menz mentioned initiatives by the Park Board that would be good for the MTAC to hear about: resurfacing the parkways and stormwater management.

Kruse mentioned inviting a Landscape Architect from the MPRB doing a presentation about creating distinctive landscapes in and around the City. Sievert will contact **Mike Schroeder**.

Bolla asked about recognizing old and “amazing” trees and if there is a program for that. MacDonagh and Sievert referred to these as “heritage” trees. Marrari shared this link: https://www.minneapolisparcs.org/park-care-improvements/trees/heritage_tree_program/

Identifying and promoting heritage trees could be an area to work on, with Schumerth perhaps leading this effort.

Marrari returned the discussion to “amount of water that trees need” and the result when a tree is watered vs. not. The boulevard tree he spent time watering last summer survived the winter, the tree receiving no water did not. (And we are all sad to hear of the doomed tree.)

Motion to adjourn.

ADJOURNMENT

The Commission's Meeting was adjourned at approximately 6:45 p.m.
Respectfully submitted: Carol Sersland – Commission Secretary