

MINNEAPOLIS TREE ADVISORY COMMISSION

Meeting of August 17, 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 August 17, 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), Carol Sersland (District 5), Tim Keane (At-Large), Don Willeke (Mayor's Representative), Ralph Sievert (MPRB Forestry Director), Steve Collin (Public Works), Sydney Schaaf (City Trees Program Manager).

Not in attendance: Mary Bolla (District 4), Barb Schlaefer (District 6), Philip Potyondy (MPRB Sustainable Forestry Coordinator), Linea Palmisano (City Council, Ward 13), Steve Nicholson (MN Shade Tree Advisory Committee), Curt Hartog (School Board Representative, Billy Menz (MPRB Commissioner, District 1).

Guests in attendance: 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, and July 20, 2023 were approved as delivered.**

MPRB FORESTRY DEPARTMENT UPDATE

Director Sievert reported that the main focus of the Forestry Department has been watering trees. At this point there have been over 30,000 'waterings'. These have been recorded /entered into the *Tree Keeper* software. They have also been pruning and removing trees.

Pruning is limited to those species not susceptible to disease in the summer (not oaks, elms are ok).

Wood is going to the north side site. The Department was being paid by the tree chippers \$1500/month, but due to the change in the economy, the Department is now having to pay to have the wood processed into chips. The chips are going to district energy and 3 sites as mulch. Payment goes to the contractor, 'Precision Landscape and Trees'. Other details, the wood accepted at the site is only from the Park Board (previously they may have taken wood from other entities).

A question was asked: much is the Department now paying to have the wood processed? MPRB is paying the company \$40,000 annually.

Potyondy will be starting the annual Tree Survivability Study, checking on the 800 trees that comprise the study.

The Department has 4 arborist openings, which the Department is working on filling.

The Department received an award for outstanding project (2021) from the Minnesota Society of Agriculture (MSA). This was for the giant cottonwood tree removal.

Contracts are being put in place for stump grinding and private tree condemnation and removal. Essentially there are three companies who are bidding for this work. The Department, however, is trying to get more companies to participate. The stump grinding budget of \$280,000 is low. There is an almost \$2 million backlog on grinding. This results in complaints about stumps not being removed and oftentimes stump sprouting. Current companies on the list are Precision, Latchkey, and A Tree. The Department has considered doing the stump grinding, but it's more economical to contract it out.

A question was raised about the recently discovered **linden borer**. The vicinity is 3900 block of 39th Avenue South. Brian Schwingle went out to review and dug larva from the tree trunk. It's a native worm, but because of the drought, the trees' resistance has been weakened making conditions conducive to being chomped on. There's no known treatment, except the tree (which hosts the worm) must be removed. A letter will be sent to the neighborhood to alert them to the infestation and the tree removal. The extent is about 20 trees of a large size. No other inspectors have reported seeing this in other parts of the City. Based on information from the University of Wisconsin Extension there may be a preventative bark spray. This would not likely be applied by MPRB based on previous experience with residents' opposition to the use of pesticides during the EAB outbreak. Watering mature lindens would be an alternative prevention method – to keep lindens healthy.

Question: is there research being conducted on this worm? Mr. Schwingle mentioned the city of Mankato having found linden borers and subsequently removing the trees. It seems to be a recent discovery. **Mr. Schwingle will follow up with the Department about what Mankato has learned.**

There are reports of the white oak group being affected by the 2-line chestnut borer. This is also a native insect. Sievert reported that Chad Giblin (formerly with the University now a private consultant) gave a presentation to the tree inspectors about the 2-line chestnut borer – since, again, the drought weakens the tree and makes them more susceptible to this pest.

In addition, bur oak blight has been presented in department training as a disease to be aware of.

Schumerth presented her group's outreach efforts. There was safety camp at summer school programs (younger than 10 years old). Watering flyers were distributed for National Night Out. There was Nature Camp at Lake Hiawatha – using tree climbing. Lake Hiawatha Summer Festival is upcoming. Elmer will be in the State Fair parade. These events are often posted on the MPRB website.

FORESTRY TRENDS in NORWAY

Carol Sersland

Sersland gave an overview of some tree and forestry practices, and wood use in Norway that she experienced while living there this summer.

Minneapolis Mayor's PROPOSED BUDGET

Schaaf presented an overview of the portion of the Mayor's Budget that pertains to the urban forest. The budget allocates \$10 million for climate action including initiatives such as \$850,000 for private property trees. This translates to a little over \$455,000 annually (and ongoing funding), with \$400,000 in one time funding. This will fund an additional full-time employee (FTE) to the City Trees program. The money will increase the number of trees for the residential tree sale. Currently, they offer 2,000 trees, and are hoping to increase that to 4,000 trees. The plan is to plant more trees in the city's designated Green Zones (two designated environmental justice communities), increase the number of trees planted on commercial property. The funds do not target tree removal or watering at this time.

Through early December the City Council will hold public hearings to get residents' input. December will be final approval.

Schaaf noted that currently her budget is \$250,000 and this proposed budget would increase it to \$855,000 in 2024.

Additionally, if funds are received from the Federal funding request that was submitted, that funding could be used for private property removal.

MTAC BUSINESS Co-Chair MacDonagh

Co-Chair MacDonagh let the Commission know that he will be absent from the September meeting, and Co-Chair Marrari will lead the meeting.

The annual report that is submitted to the City Council and the MPRB was addressed. Based on Peggy Booth's previous reports, MacDonagh and Marrari will start working on this.

Co-Chair Marrari brought up the possibility of MTAC meetings transitioning to an in-person format or perhaps hybrid (part in-person and part ZOOM). The venue would most likely be the Park Board Headquarters near Broadway and the river. What month would we like to start? There will be discussion and a date will be set.

The Metro Transit bus route and station design was introduced for discussion. Sievert has contacted Metro Transit about the station designs and their large dimensions resulting in the removal of many mature trees. MacDonagh contacted them and requested a presentation to the MTAC. They are scheduled for the October meeting to make a presentation and answer our questions. A question was raised about the replacement for the ones that are cut down. Couldn't Sievert, as the department head, demand that? Or, the Park Board? Make them pay for the City trees and then replace. How can the Tree Commission be more activist in this area?

All of the MTAC members can contact their Park Board member.

Motion made that the MTAC send a letter to the appropriate officials, elected officials saying we are extremely concerned that trees are being removed with no compensation and without replacement for the planned BRT routes. A second motion was made for discussion purposes.

Keane mentioned that there is a provision in Minnesota Statutes for triple damages for improper tree removal.

Willeke requested that a letter go out to Metro Transit this week. MacDonagh gave his approval to send the letter out with his signatures. Marriari added his signature. The letter should be copied to other officials.

A letter drafted by Keane was sent by MacDonagh to the Met Council. MacDonagh will retrieve this.

Linde brought up the questions he receives: 'why do they prune the trees up so high?' Is there a source of information and answers for citizens with questions. **Request to Outreach Coordinator to put info on the website.**

Motion to adjourn.

ADJOURNMENT

The Commission's Meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:00 p.m.
Respectfully submitted: Carol Sersland – Commission Secretary