

MINNEAPOLIS TREE ADVISORY COMMISSION

Meeting of September 21, 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: Chris Linde (District 1), Co-Chair Giuseppe Marrari (District 2), John Kruse (District 3), Mary Bolla (District 4), 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), Steve Nicholson (MN Shade Tree Advisory Committee), Curt Hartog (School Board Representative), Billy Menz (MPRB Commissioner, District 1).

Not in attendance: Peter MacDonagh (U of M liaison), Barb Schlaefer (District 6), Philip Potyondy (MPRB Sustainable Forestry Coordinator), Linea Palmisano (City Council, Ward 13).

Guests in attendance: Craig Pinkalla, Danielle Schumerth (Forestry Outreach Coordinator), Mitchell Hansen (neighborhood representative, his attendance was intermittent because of other responsibilities).

CALL TO ORDER AND MINUTES

Introduction to attendees. Co-Chair Marrari called the meeting to order. **The MTAC meeting minutes for August 17, 2023 were approved as delivered.**

MPRB FORESTRY DEPARTMENT UPDATE

Director Sievert reported on the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) grant. It was not granted to Minneapolis. But Sydney Schaaf's / Department of Health proposal was successful.

A grant application was submitted last week to the MnDNR for stump removal because stump grinding is backlogged. The maximum amount for this relief grant was \$500,000 with the focus being on communities of 20,000 population or less. Therefore, the grant was written with Minneapolis neighborhoods as the 'community'.

Stump grinding has begun per the annual contracts the Department has with private companies. The stump grinding budget is approximately \$200,000 with \$2 million necessary to eliminate the backlog of stumps. District 3 Commissioner Kruse indicated that the grinding done in his neighborhood has been commendable.

Sydney Schaaf reported that their grant application through the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service¹ was awarded to the Health Department Program for Private Property Trees. It was a partial award: \$29M applied for and they received \$8M. Minneapolis received one of the highest amounts of all those who submitted. The funds are targeted to community engagement and

¹ The Minneapolis Equitable Tree Canopy Management Program

workforce development and property owners' assistance. Retroactive funding is not permitted under the rules of the grant.

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/urban-forests/ucf/2023-grant-funding>

Is it possible for the condemnations to be put on hold so they would be considered current? This would be up to the Park Board for consideration. **This would be a discussion item and recommended item to the Board.**

Nicholson mentioned that money may be available to non-profit organizations for tree removal with perhaps some restrictions. Valerie McClanahan is the contact at the MnDNR. Common Bond is the example organization Nicholson mentioned.

Another recent grant application is the MnDNR RELEAF Grant. The request is for \$500,000 and was submitted last Monday. The Department should hear back in a month with funds usable in early 2024. The grant application contained these items a) funding to cover private property cost of tree removal for low-income property owners b) development of a tree preservation ordinance with funds for an arborist to oversee the permitting process both for public and private property.

Discussion continued regarding oversight of the private contractors who are or will be doing the tree removal and the amount they may be charging. For example, would a cost-share program with homeowners be a potential method of making the money go farther?

The City will need to continue to look for ways to apply the relief retroactively since these grants don't cover those homeowners who have already been affected by tree removal costs.

WATERING

Staff can continue to work overtime for watering. Now over 40,000 waterings are completed. **Schlaefer has suggested a committee to study involvement of community water-ers.**

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Sievert is waiting for the official document from the Park Board Planning department. When Sievert receives the form, he will email it to the MTAC. NOTE: On 10/29 Sievert emailed the Conflict of Interest Form for MTAC members to sign and return.

LINDEN BORER

The Department has an upcoming meeting with entomology experts (University, U.S. Department of Agriculture, MnDNR) to find out more. No private property condemnations are planned. Waiting to determine the proper strategy.

UPDATE ON OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

Schumerth provided an update on Outreach efforts. The Department will schedule a meeting with Commissioner Schlaefer's District to talk about 2024 volunteer watering efforts.

- Trucksploration (Truxploration?!) at Lake Harriet Elementary School. A bucket truck and Elmer.
- Como Cookout at Van Cleve Park.
- CFANS – homecoming parade invite at the University of Minnesota.
- Medtronic Marathon Mascot race – Elmer will be there! To race against other mascots.

Follow-up from last month's meeting: Any progress regarding publicity and/or descriptions around pruning practices? Sievert replied that because of the heavy lift needed for the grant applications the **description for pruning is still to come.**

WATERING

Keep watering as much as possible until the ground freezes.

Request for clarification of what an invasive versus a local (native) pest is.

Question regarding if these native bugs will wipe out all lindens as the EAB has done.

FOREST REMOVAL, PREVENTATION AND MITIGATION

Craig Pinkalla, Forestry Preservation Coordinator

"Tree Preservation Priority Reports – Guiding Development with Better Tree Information"

The goal as the Preservation Coordinator is to save the good, healthy trees growing in Minneapolis' urban forest. An example: if a 15-inch tree is cut down to make room for a picnic site, to replicate the leaf surface of the one tree, 37 to 40 trees need to be planted (in canopy benefits). Therefore, we are trying to NOT remove these mature trees which are in good condition.

The goal is to be more thoughtful about the design process. The proposed method is trying to rate the condition of the trees and the level of need to protect individual trees. We owe it to our stakeholders to do a better job when planning park development to achieve better outcomes. Since tree condition alone doesn't tell the entire story, 'preservation categories' were developed.

The following has been copied from the presentation:

FIGURE 1

Tree Preservation Priority Categories

Priority 1

The highest priority for preservation. Characterized by mature high value trees. Based on a combination of Species, size, location, condition, and overall contribution to the landscape (typically 16" DBH and larger).

Priority 2

Characterized by developing trees 7" DBH and larger that are high priority for protection based on a combination of Species, location, and condition but are not priority 1 primarily because of size (typically under 16" DBH).

Priority 3

Characterized by trees less than 7" DBH, in good condition and of easy short-term replication, or larger trees that are of lower value based on species and/or condition.

Priority 4

Characterized by trees that exhibit defects, decline or disease that will limit their longevity in the landscape. These trees are also typically not equipped to respond well to any construction impacts.

The next step in the process is to make the rating visual and interactive in order to help people visualize spatial relationships, and the location of the trees in relation to the proposed plan: use GIS to create a WEB map/application for the design team.

FIGURE 2

Let's Make it Visual & Interactive

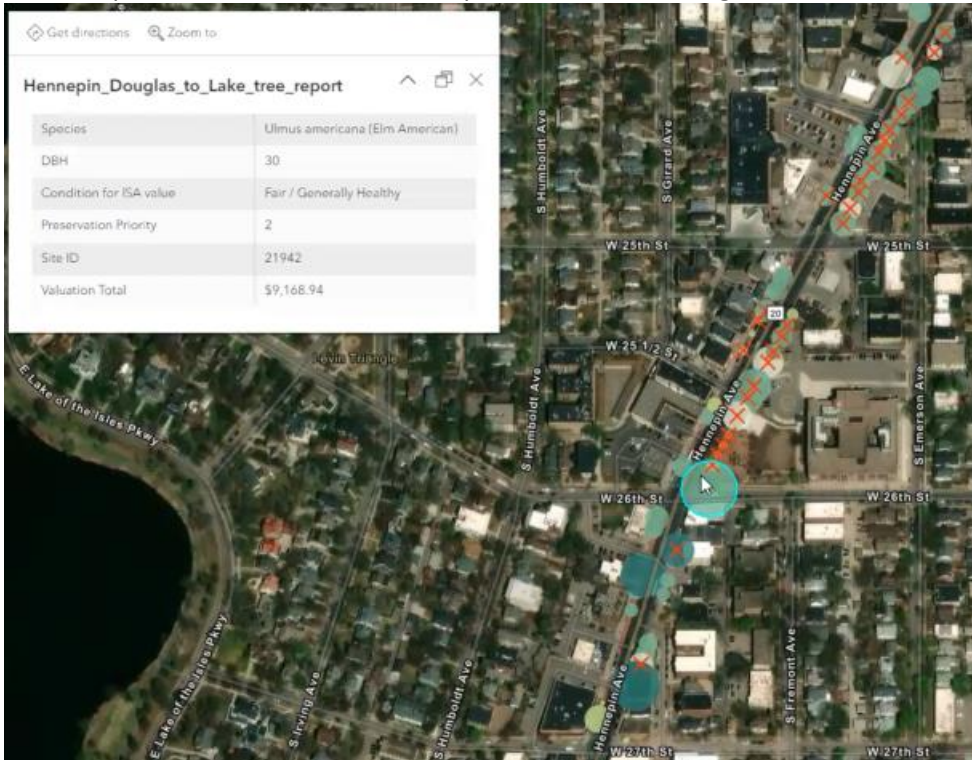
Web Map (for design use)

- <https://minneapolisparcs.maps.arcgis.com/home/item.html?id=bf55183f10e54d49806823b907dd78ce>

Web App (public facing)

- <https://minneapolisparcs.maps.arcgis.com/apps/instant/sidebar/index.html?appid=28cd3f0984f74719830b930421c56f92>

His example for our review was Hennepin Avenue from Douglas Avenue to Lake Street.



One can click on a tree symbol and review the specific info about the tree, including an estimated valuation. Priority 1 and 2 are the ones that we need to design around. The project started with 100 tree removals, and now 51 removals, with the top priority trees being preserved.

There is also a public facing website to provide transparency and accountability:

<https://minneapolisparcs.maps.arcgis.com/apps/mapviewer/index.html?webmap=6e500260265246299c3f175fa7794f35>

Those using this MPRB Planning, MPLS road construction, sewer projects, Hennepin County, MnDOT, and Metro Transit (E-Line). Positive outcomes are better initial designs, and feedback has been good. Raising awareness and priority of designing for tree protection. Finally, this is a long-term solution. Contact Craig (cpinkalla@minneapolisparcs.org)

MPRB Commissioners have not seen this presentation yet, and Menz would like to have the Board be aware of this process. Pinkalla replied that it's in the pilot stage and he's trying to keep up with requests.

A question was raised about the valuation process: there is formula that is applied based on diameter, selection and tree condition resulting in a reasonable estimate. Though Pinkalla is more focused on the “replicability” of a tree.

Nichols noted that there are tree inventories in other cities he’s worked for but it’s not reviewed by the foresters – so this seems to be a first for design proposals.

A question was asked about the input of carbon emissions, which has not been included specifically in the methodology.

Check out this website with videos from Washington DC of them MOVING their heritage trees:
<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/a98fde39c8db4719be60d80e90d4c655>

MTAC BUSINESS
Co-Chair Marrari

From the meeting agenda:

- 9/6/2023 MPRB Board meeting public comment discussion
and
- EAB Removal process discussion

Willeke proposed that this topic could be rescheduled to the October meeting.

Sievert mentioned that he emailed video clips on September 17th from the September 9th MPRB meeting so that the MTAC could know what was said during the open remarks portion of the meeting. The Co-Chair encouraged committee members to watch the comments.

What is the process for sharing comments in an email chain? Commissioner Keane provided a short tutorial regarding open meeting laws. For example, individuals talking offline is not a violation of the open meeting law. It’s when there’s a quorum in the discussion process that’s not acceptable. Discussions in an email exchange, this is also a violation. Adding discussion items to a Meeting Agenda is the preferred method for discussion.

Sievert summarized the Open Time presentations at the MPRB meetings. There is no opportunity for a response to the comments or allegations during Open Time presentations.

Public comment at the MPRB meeting is rescheduled to the next meeting’s agenda (October 19) – to discuss after members have had a chance to watch the MPRB meeting videos. Invite Mitchel Hansen to the October meeting.

Though this is also an issue if we do not appear to address this person and his concerns. Would a conversation about the condemnation process and subsequent liens be the preferred alternative. Sievert reported that the department has tried to meet with Mr. Hansen and Hansen has not been available or has turned down their invitation to dialogue with the department.

Appropriations for tree removal are on the MPRB October 4th meeting agenda.

Sievert explained the City Council's 2010 resolution that recommended private property owners not use insecticides on their trees, with the result that the Forestry Department could not promote or advise property owners to use insecticides. Even though private property owners could legally use insecticides.

On 9/22/23 Sievert emailed the 2010 City Council Resolution pertaining to the application of insecticides for treating EAB.

Also discussed: the need to explain why insecticides were discouraged (a misunderstanding that the insecticides adversely affected pollinators when injected) vs how we now know that treatment could help extend the life of the ash tree, though the tree will eventually succumb to EAB.

The use of insecticides as an option for EAB treatment was mentioned at the four public information sessions.

Schaaf described the resolution her department (Health and Safety) is drafting with Council Member Ellison's office to bring forward a new resolution which responds to the previous (2010) resolution. Also, one of the components for the \$8 million grant they were awarded includes informing property owners of the option to treat their tree when it is a viable option.

NOTE: On 10/11/23 Sievert sent an email to the MTAC with the proposed resolution which will be brought to the City Council Public Health and Safety Committee on 10/25/23 at 1:30 pm for review and recommendation to the full Council.

On 10/2 Sievert emailed an update regarding the 10/4/23 MPRB meeting where the topic of EAB condemnation assessments will be discussed. Updates to Resolution 2023-89 will be presented. Resolution 2023-178 will be presented for a vote.

Co-Chair Marrari proposed that the topic of EAB assessments goes on the October 19th meeting with an invitation to Mitchell Hansen.

Motion to adjourn.

ADJOURNMENT

The Commission's Meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted: Carol Sersland – Commission Secretary