

# MINNEAPOLIS TREE ADVISORY COMMISSION

Meeting of October 19, 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 October 19, 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), Mary Bolla (District 4), Carol Sersland (District 5), Barb Schlaefer (District 6), Tim Keane (At-Large), Don Willeke (Mayor's Representative), Ralph Sievert (MPRB Forestry Director), Steve Nicholson (MN Shade Tree Advisory Committee), Curt Hartog (School Board Representative), Billy Menz (MPRB Commissioner, District 1).

Not in attendance: John Kruse (District 3), Sydney Schaaf (City Trees Program Manager), Linea Palmisano (City Council, Ward 13), Danielle Schumerth (Forestry Outreach Coordinator), Steve Collin (Public Works).

Guests in attendance: Adam Smith (Metro Transit), Erik Thompson (Metro Transit), Craig Pinkalla (Forestry Preservation Coordinator), Philip Potyondy (MPRB Sustainable Forestry Coordinator), Mitchel Hansen (neighborhood representative), Roxxanne O'Brien (citizen), Tony Moraine (unknown).

## CALL TO ORDER AND MINUTES

Introduction to attendees. Co-Chair Marrari called the meeting to order. **The MTAC meeting minutes for September 21, 2023, were approved as delivered.**

## MPRB FORESTRY DEPARTMENT UPDATE

Sievert reported that Ms. Schaaf, Ms. Schumerth, and Jeremy Barrick are at the World Urban Forest Forum in Washington, D.C. and will bring back news from that event.

Director Sievert reported that the Department has been picking up the thousands of water bags and those in good repair will be stored and used next year.

On November 2<sup>nd</sup> Elizabeth Shaffer, MPRB District 4 Commissioner, organized a community meeting for individuals in neighborhood associations to share tree watering practices and encourage citizens to water trees.<sup>1</sup>

Sievert emailed the MPRB newsletter which shows where Elmer has attended events.

The department is working on job descriptions for Arborists to become formalized as tree inspectors.

They are wrapping up quality control for spring tree replacements to achieve tree diversity from the order to the tree suppliers.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://northloop.org/neighborhood\\_notes/mprb-forestry-and-community-meeting/](https://northloop.org/neighborhood_notes/mprb-forestry-and-community-meeting/)

Potyondy reported on the 10-year survivability study – which was finished up a few weeks ago. Data has been sent to Robert Buck for analysis and they'll hear back from him in a few weeks. Of the 8,000 to 10,000 trees planted each year, 200 trees are randomly selected for study from each growing season. The 200 trees are inspected every 5 years. Also, a U of M professor is helping, Alison Coleman.

**Philip will LET THE CHAIR KNOW WHEN their RESULTS are completed.**

DNR ReLeaf grant was not successful in being awarded funding from this application for stump grinding.

Sydney Schaaf and the Health Department continue to work with the Forest Service on how the IRA grant will be implemented.

#### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The Conflict-of-Interest FORMs: as they are returned from MTAC members, Sievert sends them to the appropriate staff.

#### LINDEN BORER

Linden borer meeting: research on this pest is sparse and old. Mankato forestry department representative explained their approach to hazard mitigation. They have removed a couple hundred linden trees (maybe 15 trees per year) and are not anticipating that lindens will be decimated. If the weather gets back to normal rainfall amount, then we could see a reduction in the trees affected by the borer.

#### 2024 TREE PLANTING

There could be a list of tree species for 2024 planting available in December.

Question regarding ash and elm removal status – there are few elms remaining. he estimated that approximately 100 elms have been condemned on private property. The department continues condemning ash trees on private property and are on target with the process. A new process is in place following the action by the Council. Every tree that is condemned now gets reviewed by the companies that are under contract. Previously, advanced prices were based on the diameter of the tree. St. Paul is behind in removing their EAB affected ash trees.

A discussion of why it's beneficial for the infected ash tree to be removed sooner than later continued. Often, it's a safety issue, with the infected and dead ash dropping limbs. The ash tree doesn't die quickly but continues to live and host the Emerald Ash Borer insect which then increases the rate of spread of EAB infections.

#### **MINNEAPOLIS BRT TRANSIT STOPS**

**Erik Thompson, Associate Community Outreach Coordinator for Metro Transit  
Adam Smith, Manager for BRT Projects**

Co-Chair MacDonagh introduced the guests from the Metropolitan Council who will present on the topic of tree removal protocol in the planning process at Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) stops.

Adam Smith shared his screen with the presentation titled "Arterial BRT project approach to trees.

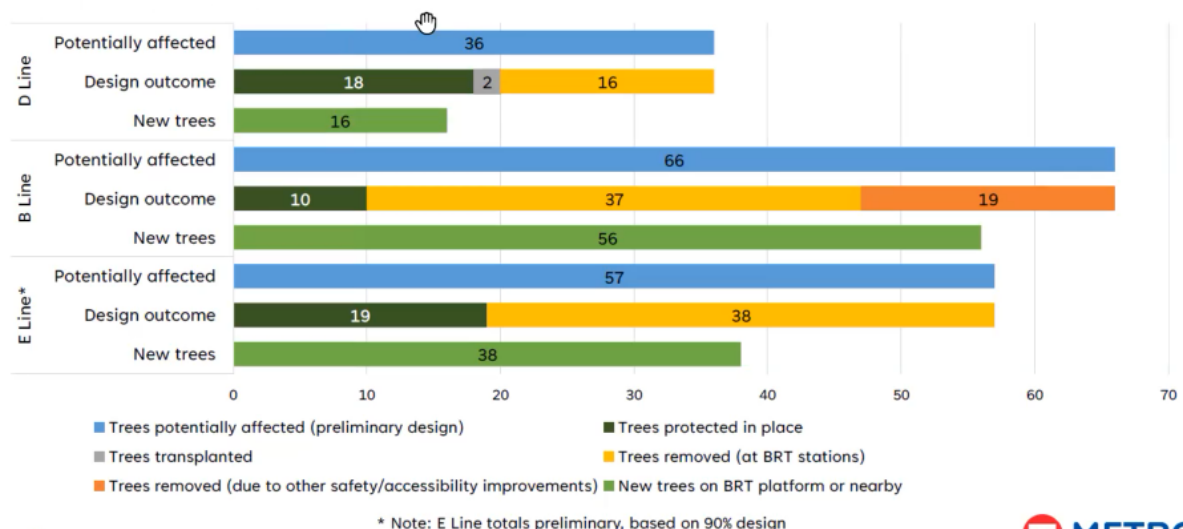
Smith described the process of planning to design to construction and the ways they consider trees and ways they can avoid, minimize, and mitigate impacts to trees within the BRT corridors. He wrapped up the overview of the tree removal and replacement outcomes of past and current BRT projects. Before they are released to the public.

From the transcript:

**“Park Board staff has always been involved in reviewing those kind of early recommendations. “Our approach, I'd say, as to trees, has evolved with each project as we get more experience and learn more. But you know it's always been the case that we prioritize efforts to maintain the existing tree canopy. That's out there. by preserving existing trees. So in some cases, you know, that could mean shifting the entire platform a bit so that we can avoid a tree working around existing trees in some cases, and I'll get into a little bit more detail about how that how that works throughout the, you know, into the final design process working in partnership with park board staff to calculate tree replacement costs based on that final list of trees identified for removal. And then the park board invoices Metro transit for those tree trees that are removed. And then here the valuations for that are based on the Council of tree and landscape appraisers, guide for plant appraisal.”**

Here is a graph presented summarizing trees removed from 3 projects:

### Arterial BRT tree removal and replacement outcomes



Questions for the presenters: Schlaefter asked about the tree value rating system MPRB developed and is this being used by Metro Transit. Usually after they finalize the impact memo. An example was provided for a stop that was reconfigured around a mature oak along France Avenue.

Note from Nichols that the CTLA method of assessing trees is not ‘local’ based, it’s a national group that has developed a method. Therefore, it’s not biased toward local trees. It is quite complicated to use.

Sersland requested more clarification regarding the graph presented and the number of trees indicated for removal. Smith indicated that these are preliminary numbers and could be subject to change as the design process progresses.

Sievert mentioned the known impacts to mature existing trees which will become a new bus stop (i.e. not at the existing location of the current bus stop) and the benefits of the trees will be lost forever.

MacDonagh's question is about how the tree evaluation process works in practice. If there are valuable trees removed (e.g., a removed tree gets replaced with a 2-inch tree whether the removed tree was a 40-inch oak or a 5-inch oak) how does that replacement work. Not enough mitigation currently, it seems.

Pinkalla addressed the current process: "to clarify the gross value that says that is assessed for the trees impacted in the case of I'll say the B line, since Park Board is actually the ones that end up replacing the trees. And there's a few reasons we do that. Control the means deal away with warranty concerns and follow up and immediately assume ownership and care. If it was done contractually, we would apply a credit for the replacement trees that are getting planted, usually a very small number several \$100, and then the difference between the value of the trees impacted. minus the credit for the trees that are being replaced in the case of B-line. There is no credit, since we are internalizing the replacement of trees. so they actually will be invoiced for the full asset value of all the trees impact just to clarify how that gets worked out, that's all I had to share."

Smith encouraged people to get involved in the early planning process to point out the valuable existing assets in the corridor.

## **MTAC BUSINESS** **Co-Chair MacDonagh**

### EAB Removal process discussion

Co-Chair MacDonagh introduced today's guests: Mitchel Hansen and Roxanne O'Brien. Their comments are summarized here:

Mr. Hansen expressed his concern regarding the condemnation of ash trees on private property and how costs to property owners will be covered or reimbursed to those owners who are struggling to pay. Hansen has received the new packet that is being provided to property owners getting assessments (regarding the notice of the public hearing scheduled for November 15<sup>th</sup> and that people can go to District Court. This pertains to MRPB Resolution 2023-178). Hansen is curious about the need for the "special assessment bonding bills", when there seems to be money available for other programs within the MRPB. The bonding arrangements made private tree removals the priority "26 out of 26", and he is "wondering why we're last on the list for priorities".

Co chair MacDonagh recognized Ms. O'Brien. She introduced herself as a Community Organizer from North Minneapolis. Her mother as well as other black people in her community have been impacted by the EAB infected ash tree condemnation process. Ms. O'Brien's feeling is that they (the black community) have been racially targeted, because they have not been aware or notified about the option for treating ash trees. O'Brien suggests that we (the MTAC) investigate "our" (MRPB) policies and procedures and alleged several practices that she believes are problems.

Roxane O'Brien shared this link in the Chat:

<https://youtube.com/@parksandpower?si=kC4sN6vu8yWdNO-->

Sievert commented that the Department and the MPRB have addressed the various theories about procedures that have been circulating. The Department has tried to schedule meetings with the community members, but they have not responded with their consent to attend meetings so far.

MacDonagh reiterated the fact that the MTAC is an advisory board, rather than a policy board.

**An invitation has been extended to Mitchel Hansen and Roxanne O'Brien to attend the MTAC November 16<sup>th</sup> meeting at which time their questions can be addressed in a more complete manner.**

NOTE: On November 2nd, 2023 the City Council adopted a resolution to replace the City Council's 2010 resolution which recommended private property owners not apply insecticides to their trees. [SEE COPIED TEXT FROM NOVEMBER 6<sup>TH</sup> MTAC EMAIL SUMMARIZING THE RESOLUTION. At the end of the minutes.]

#### ANNUAL REPORT STATUS

The Annual Report for the MPRB is pending.

The following is background information on the MPRB Resolutions regarding EAB policies.

MPRB Resolution 2023-89 (from May 24, 2023).

The Board adopted Resolution 2023-89 which provided for a temporary delay of levying property assessments for the costs associated with removing trees infested with Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) on private property until October 4, 2023

Resolution 2023-178 was presented for a vote on October 4th.

RESOLUTION ORDERING HEARING TO CONSIDER ASSESSING CERTAIN PROPERTIES TO DEFRAY THE COST OF REMOVING DISEASED TREES FROM PRIVATE PROPERTY DURING 2022 THROUGH 2023

HERE is the link to Resolution 2023-178 content:

<https://agendasuite.org/iip/mprb/file/getfile/16000>

The resolution passed: 7 for, 1 against, 1 absent.

<https://agendasuite.org/iip/mprb/meeting/details/161>

**The hearing will be held on the 15th day of November 2023, at 5:45 p.m. at the MPRB headquarters.**

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

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

Respectfully submitted: Carol Sersland – Commission Secretary

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Excerpted from Dawn Sommers' email (forwarded by Ralph Sievert on November 6<sup>th</sup>) regarding City Council approval of resolution on November 2<sup>nd</sup>.

The City Council approved an [Ash tree treatment policy resolution](#) last week; see CM Ellison's newsletter info below. While there's lots of good Whereas clauses, there are a few Whereas

and Resolved phrases that seem to give residents a lot of choice in determining if a tree is removed.

### **Ash Trees Resolution**

Our office brought forward a resolution to update the standards in how we are dealing with emerald ash borer. The resolution encourages education to homeowners so that they understand all of their options for ash trees on their property that may be infested with emerald ash borer.

Emerald ash borer is an invasive species that is killing ash trees throughout our state. Constituents and organizers such as Roxanne O'Brien, Mitchel Hansen, Felicia Perry, Melisa Newman, Amoke Kubat, Nichole Buehler and more brought this issue to my office's attention.

The resolution is about choice, equity, and transparency for constituents while being responsible and responsive to the emerald ash borer infestation. The resolution which passed unanimously by the council supports an equitable tree canopy and allowing residents the chance to dictate the life of their trees through education without the fear of losing their homes due to forced removal and automatic liens.

**Thank you so much to Parks and Power, Harrison Neighborhood Association, Tree Trust, Metro Blooms, University of Minnesota, City, County, State staff, Minneapolis Park and Recreation staff and Council Vice President Palmisano for helping draft this resolution.**

[https://lms.minneapolismn.gov/Download/FileV2/33211/Ash-Treatment-Resolution-Motion.pdf?utm\\_content=&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_name=&utm\\_source=govdelivery&utm\\_term](https://lms.minneapolismn.gov/Download/FileV2/33211/Ash-Treatment-Resolution-Motion.pdf?utm_content=&utm_medium=email&utm_name=&utm_source=govdelivery&utm_term)

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