

MINNEAPOLIS TREE ADVISORY COMMISSION

Meeting of February 15, 2024

Held at the MPRB Headquarters and 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 February 15, 2024, with the following Commission Members in attendance: Co-chair Peter MacDonagh (U of M liaison), Co-Chair Giuseppe Marrari (District 2), John Kruse (District 3), 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), Steve Collin (Public Works), Billy Menz (MPRB Commissioner, District 1), Katie Cashman (City Council, Ward 7).

Not in attendance: Chris Linde (District 1), Sydney Schaaf (Health Department, City Trees Program Manager), Curt Hartog (Public Schools Representative)

Guests in attendance: Danielle Schumerth (Forestry Outreach Coordinator).

CALL TO ORDER AND MINUTES

Co-Chair MacDonagh called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm. **The MTAC meeting minutes for January 18, 2023, were approved as delivered.**

Following the resignation of MacDonagh as Co-Chair, Tim Keane has accepted the invitation to serve as the Co-Chair of the MTAC. **A motion was made to accept Keane as the MTAC Co-Chair. The 'ayes' have it and Keane is now the Co-Chair.**

MPRB FORESTRY DEPARTMENT UPDATE

Ralph Sievert and Forestry Staff

You can copy the recording information below and share with others

https://us06web.zoom.us/rec/share/3d2c9FA9xWVDQqLHxF1wbXbmh3-TUYKNNmCefUNIIvruGuSd38F2egM9plb8FQ_K.DjR4c-okIbMllx5R

Passcode: s+Eq#1*W

PRUNING

Sievert reported that the warm weather was conducive to extensive pruning activity as it was easy for the 12 bucket trucks to access trees. The arborists have also been doing manual climbing.

STUMP GRINDING

The department is proceeding with stump grinding and because of the mild weather they are getting ahead on the stumps that need deep grinding for this spring's tree planting.

2024 TREE PLANTING

The bid deadline for nurseries was Thursday (February 8th). Potyondy completed the analysis of the bids. Pinkalla and Magers (Department staff) have been contacting the nurseries to verify they have the stock. The resolution (to approve the purchase of the 9,600 trees) goes to the MPRB on March 20th. Discussion continued around taking the lowest bid. It's described as the lowest and best. In

terms of dollar volume, it's approximately \$1 million (average of 1,000,000 \ 9600 = \$104 per tree). Planting is scheduled to start on April 8th.

Question: if the drought continues, is the department taking any special precautions? The trees are watered when they are planted, then a second watering. More routine watering happens during the season.

Could a tour of the nursery be planned for the April 18th meeting? Since Minneapolis plants more trees than any other agency in the state (exception being the Mn Department of Natural Resources (MnDNR) it's a worthwhile trip. **Sievert will check with Pinkalla to determine if the April or May meeting would be preferable.**

OUTREACH EFFORTS

Danielle Schumerth presented:

- Saturday March 16 a maple syrup sap boil in King Park. Minneapolis Sap Tap Project and city is supplying the equipment.
- The Department has been invited to do Tree climbing at school carnivals this spring (Windom – June 7th) and Waite Park May 30th. Has plans for Elmer to lead tree watering 'parties' at the carnivals.
- The date for 2024's Arbor Day celebration at McRae Park in south Minneapolis (corner of 46th Street and Chicago Avenue): the last Friday in April, April 26th from 4 to 8 pm. She welcomed any of us to join the Committee. Trees are ordered.
- The Downtown Improvement District (DID) received a grant for volunteer tree planting in public areas like the Elliot Park neighborhood and she will be meeting with them.

In April the city will find out about recertification of the Tree City, USA and World Tree, etc.

CITY TREE (Department of Health) UPDATES

Updates on the Forest Service grant was provided by Sievert. Potyondy and Magers have been working with Schaaf on the agreement that was presented to the Forest Service. They would like to have the agreement finalized and the funds available before June. No details regarding the agreement are available. The general criteria is that qualifying for funds for tree removal will be focused on disadvantaged communities.

Therefore, the Forestry Department has stopped condemning trees on residential properties until the funding and application process is in place.

Question: has the mild winter made it more urgent to return to removing ash trees? Sievert summarized the City's situation being a "high pressure" area in which the EABs are so prevalent that their emergence schedule is not the priority and won't make a difference in the spread.

Additional discussion, does this weather pattern (dry and warm) make it more important to address the community (our neighbors) about things we should be doing for our trees? Can we still prune? Sievert replied that pruning can still be done, and we'll see how things go with the future precipitation and effect on tree conditions.

NOTE: On March 8, a link to an article about the \$18 million in funding was emailed to the MTAC.

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/ash-tree-removal-is-expensive-hennepin-county-minneapolis-have-18-million-to-help-low-income-homeowners/ar-BB1jqpDz?ocid=hpmsn&cvid=e522374b49314417a3262baceb9877de&ei=93>

Cashman brought up issues that may be related to the downtown area. She mentioned the Downtown Improvement District (DID) “greening” team is looking for volunteers to become members of the Adopt-a-Tree program. Has the MTAC partnered with them before? Kruse discussed his neighborhood involvement with a program of this type. Willeke noted that the City has been doing this sort of program since the 1970’s. **MacDonagh proposed that Ben Shardlow, who has presented before, be invited back to provide information to the MTAC.**

Bolla brought up the possibility that tree maintenance (including watering) could be prioritized over planting more trees. Perhaps planting less trees that receive higher quality maintenance is a better option. It has been reported that the survival rate is 93%, but citizens are feeling like the rate is lower. Sievert: the 93% is a number from the ongoing survival study. MPRB Forestry relies on the citizens to supplement the watering effort. Ideas: TV weather could remind people to water, or the watering bags could remind folks to water. Discussion continued around the effectiveness of continuing to plant thousands of trees that may (or may not) survive because of lack of care.

There’s a cost-benefit consideration between the cost of planting (with no watering/care, e.g.) and some trees that die and need to be replanted VS. planting less and adding more care (aka expense). Craig Pinkalla, Tree Preservation Coordinator, will support that “it makes more sense to just replace the trees that die”.

Sievert reported that this year there will be 500-gallon water trailers to use – which don’t require staff with a special license to operate. There can be staffing issues in the summer.

Could other park staff be enlisted to assist with watering? Staff could be and have been – if they are asked to help. Could citizens request that the Park Board make this happen (i.e. general park staff assist with watering)? Menz mentioned that perhaps some of the new youth worker funding could be applied in this direction. **Add this subject for future discussion.**

Is there money for tree maintenance through the Green Minneapolis (now known as Green Cities Accord) carbon offset program funds (initiated in 2021)? Sievert: through the funding process that is established, Forestry is accountable for the trees. We (forestry) do what we normally do and get money for it. With the exception of falling below the initial tree tally, then Forestry will have to pay to replace the trees?¹

EMERALD ASH BORER (EAB) IMPACTS: PRIVATE PROPERTY CONCERNS MPRB Commissioner Menz and MTAC member Sersland

EAB and Property Owners’ Communications

Subcommittee name: Response to EAB infestation on private property (or, EAB and private property subcommittee). The Subcommittee has met three times. We met with the Forestry Staff, then a kick-off meeting, and then a follow up meeting. Our focus has been on the communication process

¹ 6/15/2022 From a PPT presentation explaining the MOU between Green Minneapolis and the MPRB:

* Specifies that the MPRB is financially responsible for avoidable tree losses

* Requires all proceeds the MPRB receives from carbon credit sales to be used exclusively for purchasing, planting and maintaining new trees

between forestry and the property owners. Some of the issues we have learned of are a) staff going on to property with no notice, b) reviewing the information that the property owners receive and how they might interpret it, c) problems that may be encountered in the process. There are not regularly scheduled meetings at this time, we've been using ZOOM. Members on the subcommittee represent the Harrison Neighborhood Association, Minneapolis Health Department, the U of Minnesota. Another challenge is to get citizens to recognize if they have an ash tree on their property. HOW to tackle this challenge so that residents may have the option to treat their trees?

Willeke mentioned that getting folks to recognize trees and tree problems has been an on-going challenge for years.

Marrari offered a solution of sending letters to residents to raise their awareness.

ANNUAL REPORT PREPARATION

MTAC member Schlaefer

Ms. Schlaefer has enlisted one person to join her on this committee. It has been suggested that the report be presented in-person to the MPRB and the Council in August (of 2024). The PowerPoint format has worked previously, so that is recommended to use it again. Key thing is to get the Report presented before the Budget process.

The 2023 Annual Report: <https://www.minneapolisparcs.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/MTAC-Annual-Report-2023.pdf>

MTAC BUSINESS

Co-Chair Marrari

Keane brought up the loss of 'legacy' trees because of drought, specifically large oaks in Loring Park. How can we prevent this from happening again. The tree situation in the downtown area is in very bad condition. If trees are going to be planted downtown – there are conditions to create a successful outcome for trees to survive. **This topic will be discussed at a future meeting.**

MacDonagh shared information from MnDOT about the drought throughout the state which affects tree planting. Ms. Schumerth also mentioned the amount of salt (applied to the street) that drains into the tree locations.

Watering in the disadvantaged communities could be made a priority to create tree equity throughout the City. Also, acknowledging that drought is the new normal.

Marrari brought up the Heritage Tree Program – and was curious about how it is run. In many instances the Heritage Tree grows on private property. Why are the large trees being lost? And how can we track these special trees and care for them on public property? Sievert discussed the public use in parks and the possibility of having a tree 'fee' included in the use of the park for the event.

Next meeting will be an in-person meeting along with Zoom capabilities. At Park headquarters in north Minneapolis near Broadway and the River Road.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Respectfully submitted: Carol Sersland – Commission Secretary