

# MINNEAPOLIS TREE ADVISORY COMMISSION

Meeting of March 21, 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: Peter MacDonagh (U of M liaison), Co-Chair Giuseppe Marrari (District 2), Chris Linde (District 1), Carol Sersland (District 5), Barb Schlaefer (District 6), Co-Chair 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), Sydney Schaaf (Mpls Health Department City Trees Program Manager).

Not in attendance: Billy Menz (MPRB Commissioner, District 1), John Kruse (District 3), Katie Cashman (City Council, Ward 7), Mary Bolla (District 4), Danielle Schumerth (Forestry Outreach Coordinator), Curt Hartog (Public Schools Representative)

Guests in attendance: Philip Potyondy<sup>1</sup> (Sustainability Coordinator). From the Downtown Improvement District: Michaela Taddeini, Cassidy Swanson, Ella Graham.

## CALL TO ORDER AND MINUTES

Co-Chair Marrari called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm. **The MTAC meeting minutes for February 15, 2023, were approved as delivered.**

## MPRB FORESTRY DEPARTMENT UPDATE Ralph Sievert and Forestry Staff

### 2024 TREE PLANTING

Delivery of the tree stock is happening next Wednesday, with tree planting start date of April 8. The Nursery/tree distribution site is being prepared.

Arborists are being interviewed to fill vacancies (i.e. not new positions). 41 arborists on staff.

### OUTREACH EFFORTS

Sievert reported for Danielle Schumerth (who is at the Arbor Day Committee meeting):

- Saturday March 16 was a maple syrup sap boil in King Park. Minneapolis Sap Tap Project and city is supplying the equipment. The neighborhood brings their sap from their maple and then, do the boil at the park. For the first time, maple trees in the park were tapped.
- Philip Potyondy and Heather XX were at the Brewing a Better Forest event on Saturday.
- The date for 2024's Arbor Day celebration at McRae Park in south Minneapolis (corner of 46<sup>th</sup> Street and Chicago Avenue): the last Friday in April, April 26<sup>th</sup> from 4 to 8 pm.

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<sup>1</sup> Arborators in the Star Tribune on May 5<sup>th</sup>: <https://www.startribune.com/meet-the-twin-cities-only-tree-climbing-brass-band/600362992/>

- 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.

#### FOLLOW UP on ANNUAL TREE MORTALITY ASSESSMENT

For example, how do we understand the number of trees planted in 2022 that have survived in 2023? Or: number of trees planted in 2022? There is an ongoing Survivability Study (which samples a portion of the annual planting. Survivability rates:

- 91.2% in the first year
- 76% in the second year

Survivability is not only related to watering but there are other ‘killers’ of trees or mortality ‘causers’: like automobiles, vandalism, theft, clerical data error.

The Department does collect information on vandalism.

Of the 8,000 to 10,000 trees planted annually, about 200 are randomly selected for study.

- Those trees are visited each year for 5 years
- Now visiting up to 1,000 trees.
- Once a tree dies, it’s not visited again, or If it’s gone it’s replaced (removed vs missing are two separate things)
- Trees are replaced. Tree condition is recorded.
- Guidelines are used for planting the correct tree in the suitable location.
- Separate team that does the monitoring (different than the ‘planters’).

Is there a way to determine if drought is the reason for mortality?

#### CITY TREE PROGRAM (Department of Health) UPDATES

Schaaf reported:

Green Team (AmeriCorps team members) attended the Shade Tree Short Course.

The residential tree lottery applications are being taken through the end of March. Recipients will be notified in April, pick up in May.

The Department is applying for the Hennepin County Healthy Tree Canopy grant with the goal of funding the development of a Tree Preservation Ordinance. They will be finalizing it Friday March 22nd and submitting.

The Project Coordinator has been hired. This person will be managing the federal contracts related to the US Forest Service Grant. Then they will be hiring an outreach coordinator and a community forester. The positions will be funded through the Grant. For general outreach people from the Health Department team are working with Schumerth for Arbor Day and will be hosting a table there.

There’s an Environmental Justice event at the U of MN and a Public Health Fair at the Public Service Building in April and they will have people attending.

Is there a way to track what part of the City the requests for trees are coming from? They can follow from the applicants' addresses. This could be tallied (from Tree Trust) and reported at the May meeting.

Details regarding the newly hired staff:

The Project Coordinator is funded through the City's budget, and it will be a permanent position. The other two positions are funded for the Grant period (5 years through 2029), but they expect the City budget to cover them in the future following the end of the 5-year Grant period.

**REPORT TO MAYOR UPDATE**  
**Don Willeke, Mayor's Representative**

Mr. Willeke did not submit a report to the Mayor in 2023. The last report the MTAC has on record was in February of 2021.

When asked, Willeke said that he does not want to bother the mayor with things that are "working perfectly well", though he does submit comments to his aides from "time to time." Budgeting, however, should be monitored since trees may be the first item to be eliminated from the budget. He also suggested that the Annual Report that is presented to the Health and Safety Committee of the City Council be presented to the Mayor.

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

Sersland reported for the Subcommittee.

There have been four meetings (Zoom) with additional meetings scheduled between Commissioner Menz and myself for organizing and summarizing. In addition, Menz and I met with Mr. Potyondy to discuss preliminary recommendations. In addition, at the Shade Tree Short Course I attended presentations and discussed EAB status and mitigation around the Twin Cities Metro Area.

We are approaching EAB impacts in two scenarios: One is revising the communication process of the Forestry Department and private property owners, the second is how to get a notice out to residents with an ash tree before they receive a condemnation notice (or, notice of infestation).

There are field workshops held by the Mn Department of Agriculture to review what an EAB infestation looks like.

Example issues identified by the Subcommittee were staff coming on to property without prior notification and how to solve this. For example, is it practical for the Department to implement something like this. Another example is that subcommittee members believe there is a test for EAB, when there is not – it is a visual diagnosis. Another important issue is: notifying residents that treatment may be an option for the property owner for trees that are determined to be 'save-able'.

There may be a general consensus among tree professionals that all ash trees in Minneapolis are infested with EAB. Linde, however, described the 100 trees in the Anthony West Neighborhood that have been treated for over ten years with injections and they are surviving. Going forward there could be collaboration to determine which trees are treatable.

There is an additional option regarding tree removal and that is a possible application to receive funding.

Nicholson reminded us that a replacement tree(s) should be planted now – whether the trees are treated or not or removed.

Sievert asked who the Subcommittee members are?<sup>2</sup> He also requested that he be involved in future meetings. Sersland responded that the Subcommittee membership can be ‘widened’.

MacDonagh described the resolution by the City Council in 2010 in which they created policies that insecticides be discouraged for private owners and not used by City Departments. This was not a policy that other cities put in place. This delayed treatment for ash trees.

### **ANNUAL REPORT PREPARATION MTAC member Schlaefer and Marrari**

Giuseppe addressed the progress for the annual meeting report development.

There will be a field trip of the tree nursery for the April meeting.

### **DOWNTOWN IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT (DID) REPORT MTAC member Schlaefer**

Kassidy Swanson, AmeriCorps member – Climate Impact Corps  
Ella Graham, DID Sustainability Coordinator  
Michaela Taddeini, AmeriCorps member – MN GreenCorps

The DID

- Founded in 2009
- Covers 120 blocks of the downtown core
- Funded by special assessments on commercial property
- Overlaps all 5 downtown neighborhoods



The DID responsibilities include ambassador program, graffiti removal, rain garden program, tree inventory, monitoring, and watering and tree adoption program.

Tree Canopy work = Tree Inventory and Monitoring:

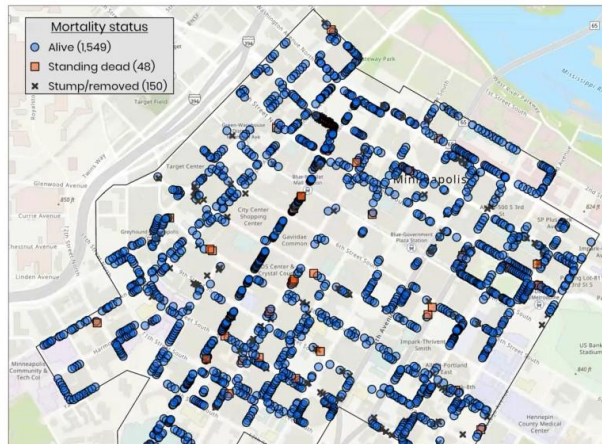
The goal was to do an annual monitoring of DID street trees to help MPRB Forestry achieve best possible outcomes for existing trees. They collected data on 1,773 trees. Outcomes:

- Added 123 trees not previously in the *TreeKeeper* database
- Reported tree concerns quickly (e.g. leaning trees, broken branches)
- Identified 139 trees needing maintenance and were pruned.

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<sup>2</sup> Billy Menz, Carol Sersland, John Kruse, Sydney Schaaf, Sashi White (University), Mitchel Hansen (Harrison Neighborhood Association), Roxxane O’Brien (Parks and Power)

## Street trees in the DID



Note the many healthy live trees!

A question was asked about the many streets that have no trees. Any potential for planting? The DID team advocates for adding trees and rain gardens during reconstruction.

Future opportunities include a) historic mortality rates at tree site, b) add a tab for tree health to provide narrative over time. Watering strategies: contracts with tree care company to fill water bags (approx. \$30,000). Are finding out that mortality may not be attributed to lack of water.

Adopt a Tree: An example - Christy is the lead volunteer for the North Loop Neighborhood, coordinates with property owners and residents to adopt as many trees as possible with “tons of outreach”. Elliot Park has received an environmental justice grant from Hennepin County. Loring Park area is in discussions with a neighborhood walking group.

The DID is looking to expand the programs beyond the downtown boundaries, expand the MPRB’s capacity to water trees, and continue education on the importance of watering and advocate for residents (including renters) watering capabilities.

Questions may be addressed to Ella Graham: [egramham@mplsdid.com](mailto:egramham@mplsdid.com)  
The PPT presentation was emailed to the Co-Chair and forwarded to

What happens to the “Gator” bags that are placed in spring? They are all removed in the fall (at least that’s the plan).

### **MTAC BUSINESS Co-Chair Marrari**

Ralph Sievert was honored by the Park Board for years of ‘significant contributions towards achieving the values of the MPRB’ with the Horace Cleveland Award. Congratulations!

Philip Potyondy received the Superintendent’s Award of Commendation “conferred on an individual for acts above and beyond the scope of their regular job duties.” For the work on getting the funding from the Cargill foundation. Congratulations!

Nicholson brought an update regarding the statewide quarantine for ash trees – and they are contemplating dropping the quarantine because the infestation is so widespread.

**ADJOURNMENT**

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

Respectfully submitted: Carol Sersland – Commission Secretary