

MINNEAPOLIS TREE ADVISORY COMMISSION

Meeting of June 20, 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 June 20, 2024, with the following Commission Members in attendance: Co-Chair Giuseppe Marrari (District 2), Billy Menz (MPRB Commissioner, District 1), Mary Bolla (District 4), Carol Sersland (District 5), Barb Schlaefer (District 6), Co-Chair Tim Keane (At-Large), Ralph Sievert (MPRB Forestry Director), Steve Nicholson (MN Shade Tree Advisory Committee), Sydney Schaaf (Mpls Health Department City Trees Program Manager), Peter MacDonagh (U of M liaison), Don Willeke (Mayor's Representative), Steve Collin (Public Works).

Not in attendance: Chris Linde (District 1), Katie Cashman (City Council, Ward 7), Danielle Schumerth (Forestry Outreach Coordinator), Curt Hartog (Public Schools Representative). John Kruse (District 3). Mr. Kruse has submitted his resignation to the Commission. A note has been sent thanking him for his service to the MPRB.

Guests in attendance: Philip Potyondy (Sustainability Coordinator).

CALL TO ORDER AND MINUTES

Co-Chair Marrari called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm. **The MTAC meeting minutes for May 16, 2024, were approved as delivered.**

You can copy the recording information below and share with others

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MPRB FORESTRY DEPARTMENT UPDATE

Ralph Sievert and Forestry Staff

2024 TREE PLANTING

Tree planting was completed by Memorial Day. Rain has been helping and there has not been a need for volunteer overtime watering (by staff). Future need will be reviewed based on conditions.

Sievert is planning for and working on his exit/retirement date of July 5th. Items that may be considered historic are being placed in a special bin for Angela the archivist.

The contracts for private tree removal and stump removal are being put in place. These are the contractors that will be used in the grant process. The wood processing contract (site located on the north side along the river) is about to expire and a new contract is being prepared. The previous agreement paid the contractor \$40,000 to grind and remove tree material. Used in biofuel, for example.

There needs to be a document summarizing the stump grinding process written for the department.

Sievert and Potyondy will assist in providing materials for the Annual Report.

Question was posed about a date that the new department director needs to start. Early August is the goal for an offer to be made. It is proposed that Heather White will serve as the interim Forestry Director. The job has been posted. It is posted on a number of forestry societies' job boards.

In Sievert's place for the MTAC meetings, Potyondy will be attending, as will Daniel Schumerth.

On behalf of the MTAC, Co-Chair Marrari expressed his and our gratitude for the 30 years of excellent service to the City of Minneapolis and the MPRB.

CITY TREE PROGRAM, DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH UPDATE Sydney Schaaf

The Health Department received ten applications in response to the posted Request for Proposals (RFP) for Public Outreach activities. The review panel met this past week. They will be notifying the organizations that have been selected. The organizations awarded a contract will be announced at next month's meeting. This is a part of the federal grant received. The plan is to begin accepting resident's applications for the Condemned Tree Assistance Program on July 1st.

Hiring for the Grant: Tree Outreach Coordinator was posted on May 17, for which 85 applications were received. The Department has been reviewing the applications. The Community Forester position is open now through July 12th.

Details for the Community Outreach awards include \$20,000 was the minimum award, and the maximum is \$100,000. There may be up to five organizations awarded. Contracts would start in mid-August and continue for one year.

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

The summarized recommendations were submitted to the MTAC and to the MPRB Forestry Department staff. A question was posed to Sersland and Menz regarding the acceptability of the staff modifications. Are the edits acceptable? Sersland replied that, yes, they are acceptable and are within the framework of the solutions discussed by the Subcommittee.

The points of the Recommendations were reviewed. Discussion around the inspection process included the number of MRPB's tree inspectors. There are 41 arborists of which 12 function as Tree Inspectors who are assigned districts and identify infested trees (EAB and Dutch elm). All forestry field staff have the MN Tree Inspector license, but within the Forestry Department, they are classified as Arborist.

Menz question: The arborists are doing all the regular work assignments, but the tree inspectors are also tasked with identifying diseased and infested trees. Sievert: if the work classifications could be "finalized" the department could have much more qualified tree inspectors than the people who are there now. The union has a role in this process. There could be a compensation issue in this process.

The criteria for infested ash trees are based on the Department of Agriculture protocol – symptoms and observations.

Photo documentation of the tree location and situation will be completed. A green ring will continue to be placed on the tree.

How are landlords and commercial property owners contacted? All property owners receive a mailing. A name will be replaced with the taxpayer aka property ID.

Treatment of an infested tree will be included as an action to mitigate the infestation, with further information on the website or through talking with the Forestry Department.

Finally, the recommendations include the potential financial assistance through the Health Department funding. It mentions the application process for receiving the funds and who to contact.

Question: shall this document be adapted to address a more general tree disease/infestation rather than be focused only on EAB.

Are these recommendations a discussion item presented to the MPRB? Or should the recommendations be submitted via 'petitions and communications', MPRB Commissioner Menz asks. Following discussion, Menz suggests that these be included in the Annual Report or in a separate 'petition and communication' so they go before the Board only one time.

Menz motion to include the EAB Subcommittee Recommendations in the Annual Report either as an addendum or as part of the overall report of action by this Subcommittee. Schlaefer seconds. Passed.

ANNUAL REPORT PREPARATION MTAC members Schlaefer and Marrari

Schlaefer and Marrari presented the progress of the development of the Annual Report development. The Report is scheduled to be presented to the MPRB and to the City Council. The script which will accompany the presentation is in the process of being drafted.

An enlightening discussion ensued on the cooling effects of trees and how that happens. Discussion continued with input from MTAC members regarding details to include to make the presentation as effective as possible. Comment proposed adding more emphasis on the battle against invasive species (both trees, shrubs, and plants) in the parks' natural areas and additional funding (beyond volunteers) is needed.

Schlaefer and Marrari are working to have the Report completed by MTAC's July meeting for review. Then the goal is to have the final version ready to present to the MPRB, and before the Budget planning process starts.

ADJOURNMENT

The Commission's Meeting was adjourned at 7:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted: Carol Sersland – Commission Secretary

OTHER NEWS PUBLISHED IN THE MPRB NEWSLETTER, JUNE 2024 EDITION

MAY 22 REGULAR MEETING

RESOLUTION 2024-104: Resolution Approving Contracts As Requested Per B.e. No. 3020 For An Estimated \$2,400,000 For Tree Removal And Estimated \$400,000 For Stump Grinding For An Estimated Total Expenditure Of \$2,800,000 For The Period Ending June 30, 2025, Pending Approval By City Of Minneapolis Purchasing & Procurement And Civil Rights Departments.

RESOLUTION 2024-113: Resolution Accepting Donations Through Donor Advised Funds At The Minneapolis Foundation Of \$200,000 To Provide Assistance For Private Property Tree Removal Assessments For Homestead Property Owners That Reside Within Census Tracts Defined As Disadvantaged By The White House Council On Environmental Quality Climate And Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST) In The City Of Minneapolis.

NATURAL RESOURCES STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS PLANT MORE THAN 800 TREES AND SHRUBS

2024 was a banner year for the Natural Resources Workgroup's planting efforts in natural areas across Minneapolis. With the help of many volunteers, we were able to plant a total of 804 trees and shrubs! Over 500 of those were planted by the volunteers themselves, which is a pretty incredible feat for just one week of planting. These plants will now be watered and cared for by staff and volunteers throughout the summer.

Planting sites were selected in areas where volunteers and staff have recently removed invasive species like buckthorn and non-native honeysuckle. Sites included Minnehaha Creek and Minnehaha Falls Regional Parks, Theodore Wirth Park, Roberts Bird Sanctuary, North Mississippi Regional Park, and many locations throughout the Chain of Lakes.

Perhaps one of the most exciting developments of the planting season was the installation of 55 tamaracks into the quaking bog. The last time that trees were planted in the bog was 1986, nearly 40 years ago. To plant those young tamaracks in the 80's, forestry staff "carried them in by stretcher after cutting a swath through the Buckthorn thicket." History repeated itself over the last five years.

Conservation crews have been removing buckthorn in the bog and as of last fall have removed nearly every adult buckthorn in the bog once again. This provided the sunlight and sphagnum moss to plant our new generation of tamaracks.

Thanks to all the staff who helped to assist with this year's natural areas planting. We are already seeing fantastic survival of the seedlings and are looking forward to next year's shovel season!



Above: Tamarack sapling being planted at the Quaking Bog. Below: native shrub being planted at Theodore Wirth.

