

MINNEAPOLIS TREE ADVISORY COMMISSION

Meeting of September 19, 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 September 19, 2024, with the following Commission Members in attendance: Co-Chair Giuseppe Marrari (District 2), Mary Bolla (District 4), Carol Sersland (District 5), Barb Schlaefer (District 6), Billy Menz (MPRB Commissioner, District 1), Co-Chair Tim Keane (At-Large), Philip Potyondy (Sustainability Coordinator), Sydney Schaaf (Mpls Health Department City Trees Program Manager), Don Willeke (Mayor’s Representative), Curt Hartog (Public Schools Representative).

Not in attendance: Chris Linde (District 1), District 3 is vacant at this time, Peter MacDonagh (U of M liaison), Steve Nicholson (MN Shade Tree Advisory Committee), Katie Cashman (City Council, Ward 7), Danielle Schumerth (Forestry Outreach Coordinator), Steve Collin (Public Works).

Guests in attendance: Mitchel Hansen, Roxxanne O’Brien, Gudrun Lock

CALL TO ORDER AND MINUTES

Co-Chair Marrari called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm. Review of the **MTAC meeting minutes for July 18, 2024, were postponed until the September 19 meeting and were approved. The August 15, 2024, meeting minutes were approved**

MPRB FORESTRY DEPARTMENT UPDATE

Sustainable Forestry Coordinator Philip Potyondy

INTRODUCTION

Potyondy explained that he is the current MPRB Forestry Department liaison to the MTAC. Currently there has been no Director selected to take Ralph Sievert’s position. He gave the following update.

STORM RESPONSE

There have been more ‘damaging’ storms this year than average. The City has ‘lost’ 600 trees to storm events this year. Some statistics from past storms related damages: Last year (2023) 300 trees were lost, in 2022 100 trees were destroyed. But if one goes back further to 2013, there were 2,600 trees damaged and removed. This is a routine part of the Department’s forest management work, and they are prepared for the removal and cleanup process.

The takeaway from resulting storm damage is the importance of investing in pruning to give trees the best structure we can to lessen the damage susceptibility from wind events. They have also seen “full stem / full root plate failures” and the solution here is to prevent root damage, e.g. during construction activities.

The Department continues to respond to storm damage and there are debris piles to be removed and additional pruning to be completed. This most recent storm has highlighted the need for another site for storm debris. There is one site located ‘next to our north surface area’, close to the river in

conjunction with railroad equipment and it's too small. An additional site in another part of the City would be an improvement.

SURVIVABILITY STUDY

Robert Buck is collecting the tree survivability data. Buck is a volunteer statistician who served previously on the MTAC. This is a tree study in which a sample of 200 trees are randomly selected from the 8-10,000 trees planted each year. The trees are visited for 5 years in a row. Each year 200 trees are added to the study. Therefore, there are up to 1,000 trees studied each year. This provides information about how our trees are establishing. The data is collected late in the year when the tree has growth but not started dropping leaves. The University of Minnesota is a key partner in this study. Two professors will be publishing the results. They are Alicia Coleman and Deb Hilbert. The study was originally constructed by Chad Giblin and Gary Johnson.

Examples of the statistical attributes collected: tree condition, adjacent property type, and subsequently running statistical analysis of, e.g. significant relationships between features.

TREE PLANTING SEASON PREPARTIONS FOR 2025

Forestry staff is out finding as many planting locations as possible. The goal is to plant two trees for every one tree removed. Staff starts with the one-to-one replacement sites, with additional effort to determine additional locations e.g. a spot where construction has occurred and now has space for a tree.

Questions were raised about how boulevard locations are determined: previously property owners needed to make a request for a tree, but that is no longer necessary. Citizens, however, can make a request for a tree. How many requests for trees does the Department receive? Perhaps less than 100 in a year.

STAFFING LEVELS

Staffing levels have been difficult to keep at a level that corresponds to the work level. Close to 100,00 trees have been planted over the last ten years and they are getting to the point where they need pruning. There was more staff when the tree levy was in place.

TREE PRESERVATION WORK

Craig Pinkala continues to work with contractors and planners finding ways to preserve trees and direct work in a way that protects the most valuable trees in the area.

DIRECTOR OF FORESTRY POSITION

The Forestry Director's position is moving forward. Currently there is no interim or acting director.

OUTREACH

Outreach: Multiple events happening in September and in October. Danielle Schumerth is organizing events at a variety of locations responding to many requests for the Department to attend.

TREE DIVERSITY PLANTING GUIDELINES

Diversity is our biggest tool for resilience. As well as the on-site neighborhood tree inspectors evaluating site conditions for appropriate tree species.

Menz joins the meeting and introduces Gudrun Lock.

Question raised by Roxanne O'Brien: Is the City or Park Board planning on planting replacement trees for those who had forced removal of ash trees on private properties? Schaaf's response: the condemned tree assistance program provides free replacement trees planted on private property after their tree is removed.

Potyondy added that the Forestry Department is and has been responsible for ensuring that an urban forest pest doesn't spread across the entire urban forest so they have been tasked with condemning trees on private property to prevent the spread of the pest or disease.

O'Brien wanted to be sure that "we were separating the whole carbon credit situation from private property". Then she wanted to figure out how we were going to remediate the ecological issue of the Park Board's task to actually protect and save and care for our trees?" "do you have a percentage of like, how successful you are at that task?"

Menz asked which department is responsible for the planting the new tree if the homeowner decides they want a replacement tree? Potyondy clarified: the Park Board is responsible for condemning the tree, the property owner is responsible for choosing the method for tree removal and/OR application to the tree removal funding process.

Schaaf explained: once the tree is removed, the Health Department's Condemned Tree Assistance Program is working closely with enrollees. Kari Umanzor, the new Project Coordinator, completes the application processing. She responds to the phone and email questions received. Umanzor is the contact for people as they're going through the fund application process. The Health Department continues to work on stump removal and grinding, and replacement tree contracts. Replacement trees are to be planted within a year. If owners are interested in receiving more than one tree, they will work with them on that and on tree species selection. It involves an individual site visit.

O'Brien is wondering about the trees already condemned and removed since 2000 (2020?). She has been emailing the Park Board to determine the dates of when the Park Board stopped or paused the assessments and when they re-started the [assessments]. They have not received the real assessment list since they were paused (around November 2023).¹ "...have addresses that don't have assessments but have very high bills like half a million dollars..."

Hansen is wondering who the contact for the Forestry Department is because there's no interim director. Co-Chair Marrari followed up with a request for someone to coordinate with O'Brien and Hansen. Potyondy mentioned that the City/MPRB has a data request process for this. O'Brien took issue with this process and demanded the data that she has previously communicated a request for, i.e. an accurate assessment list, be delivered.

Hansen mentioned an additional issue of property taxes being due on November 15th ² and his organization needs to do outreach for property owners who may have an assessment.

Discussion about the status of the Forestry Director disclosed that the Director position posting has closed, and the selection process continues. In the meantime, people can reach out to the Forestry Department with questions and requests.

¹ DATES: Resolution 2023-89 to delay assessments as of May 10, 2023 until November 15, 2023 public hearing

² Property taxes for Hennepin County are due October 15th. November 15th is a hearing date for appealing assessments.

Discussion continued about how to coordinate the information between the Park Board and the community organizers. **Menz offered to make the connection.**

DATA request form

https://www.minneapolisparcs.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/public_data_form.pdf

CITY TREE PROGRAM, DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH UPDATE

Sydney Schaaf

Updates from the City Trees Program as administered by the City of Minneapolis Health Department:

- New Tree Outreach Coordinator will start Monday September 23rd
- The offer to the new Community Forester has been confirmed and he will start at the end of October
- Schaaf thanked O'Brien who assisted on the interviews
- Residential low-cost tree sale is open through the end of September with 2,200 trees available and 1,800 sold.
<https://www.minneapolismn.gov/government/programs-initiatives/environmental-programs/city-trees/>
- Tree Preservation Ordinance RFP (Request for Proposal) is out now to identify a consultant who be leading this project (gathering the partners like community members, city departments, and government agencies) to develop an ordinance that preserves trees during construction on private property. The RFP closes on Wednesday September 25 with an expected contract by the end of 2024 and ordinance in 2025.
- Outreach: getting the department's certificate of insurance and other documentation that the City needs, hosted an event with Metro Blooms about emerald ash borer and share info about the community assistance program. 10 – 12 attendees. Two property owners submitted applications, and they are enrolled in the program to cover the cost of their tree removal.
- Continued community tree workshops: about tree planting and maintenance in Spanish and English. In November a workshop on tree pruning at Little Earth.
<https://www.minneapolismn.gov/government/programs-initiatives/environmental-programs/city-trees/tree-care-workshops/>

Question was raised about the two staff being added in the Health Department. Schaaf responded that the staff will add capacity and will lead the activities the Health Department has added because of the \$8 M. Funding for the positions is in the federal grant. The positions are funded for five years. The expectation/hope is that the City will continue funding.

ANNUAL REPORT PRESENTATIONS

Marrari

The Report is scheduled to be presented to the Public Health and Safety Committee on September 25th at approximately 1:30. **Marrari will send the info.**

MTAC GENERAL BUSINESS

Marrari

Marrari explained that this is the year that most MTAC members will need to reapply for the MTAC. **Marrari will post this link for application in the ZOOM chat.**

https://www.minneapolisparcs.org/volunteer-and-give/advisory_board_commission_appointments/

From the website: *No vacancies at this time.*

NOTE: it is anticipated that there will be two vacancies on the MTAC: District 1 and District 3.

Marrari asked the MTAC members to think about what issues and concerns the commission should discuss in 2025.

Willeke reported that he had a meeting with the Mayor and City Council President on August 29th at a press conference held in north Minneapolis regarding a company that is planting trees under the City's program. He is also submitting a letter to the mayor mentioning EVAPOTRANSPIRATION.

It was agreed that the minutes will be completed and submitted for review to the MTAC two weeks prior to the MTAC meeting. In this case the deadline is October 3rd.

Conversation continued around possible topics to address: consistent pruning techniques, mulching (e.g. rectangular in place of circular), and tree trunk protection (and removal) options.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Respectfully submitted: Carol Sersland – Commission Secretary

ACTION ITEMS FROM THIS MEETING:

Meeting minutes due to the MTAC by October 3rd.

Menz will be in contact with Harrison Neighborhood Association and others regarding outstanding assessments.

Marrari will send the link to the MTAC re-application process.

Photos of attendees, as received from Councilperson Katie Cashman with thanks for the Annual Report presentation to the MPRB:

