

MINNEAPOLIS TREE ADVISORY COMMISSION

Meeting of October 17, 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 October 17, 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 and liaison from the Forestry Department), Sydney Schaaf (Mpls Health Department City Trees Program Manager), Don Willeke (Mayor's Representative), Peter MacDonagh (U of M liaison), Steve Collin (Public Works), Katie Cashman (City Council, Ward 7).

Not in attendance: Billy Menz (MPRB District 1), Chris Linde (District 1), District 3 is vacant currently, Steve Nicholson (MN Shade Tree Advisory Committee), Danielle Schumerth (Forestry Outreach Coordinator), Curt Hartog (Public Schools Representative).

Guests in attendance: Roxxanne O'Brien (Parks and Power), Gudrun Lock (citizen).

CALL TO ORDER AND MINUTES

Co-Chair Marrari called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm. Review of the **MTAC meeting minutes for the September 19, 2024 meeting and August 15 (with edits) were approved.**

MPRB FORESTRY DEPARTMENT UPDATE

Sustainable Forestry Coordinator Philip Potyondy

Potyondy is the current liaison to the MPRB Forestry Department. Currently there has been no Director selected to take Ralph Sievert's position.

WATERING

Potyondy explained that watering trees continues – over 4,000 trees since August. The Park Board has sent alerts to get as much help with watering as possible.

ADDITIONAL WORK

Other tasks completed: routine pruning, preparations for 2025 planting and getting the bid packages prepared, there are 8,000 trees if funding is available.

SURVIVABILITY STUDY

Survivability study continues. Robert Buck is collecting the tree survivability data. Buck is a volunteer statistician who served previously on the MTAC.

OUTREACH

The Forestry Department hosted the Minnesota Society of Arboriculture Tree Climbing Event, and it went well. Potyondy encouraged us to look up their fall conference coming up on October 24th with the topic of 'roots'. Elmer attended the Twin Cities Marathon as well as the City Trees tree distribution. There were also 'Bio Blitz's' that the elm tree costume attended.

Forestry has been working with the Environmental Management Department to manage the city's natural areas. It is a step forward. "With the natural resources piece we now have in our tree inventory a layer that guides and shares all of the natural areas in terms of what native plant community we're aiming for in that area. So, for instance, down in the river gorge, maybe a floodplain forest. In addition to locations where we shouldn't plant trees. For example, areas that are being managed as prairie or a marsh are also designated. In addition to areas where we're not going to plant trees because it's stormwater infrastructure that might not be obvious from above ground".

MORE OUTREACH

The Department was on KARE 11 talking about tree removal because of Emerald Ash Borer. Partly because St. Paul just finished their removal and replacement plan (finally).

The International Urban Tree Diversity Conference (in Madrid¹.) will receive a presentation (by Potyondy) about MPRB's accomplishments by increasing the diversity and resilience of our urban forest.

STORM RESPONSE

The Department has been catching up on the storm debris cleanup and is essentially complete. Question was raised about an information session presented by the Mn Shade Tree Advisory Committee (MSTAC). Their monthly forum/webinar last week was on Wood Waste and Wood Utilization. The webinars are recorded. Potyondy shared that the Department's tree removal list is shared with Wood from the Hood² – who utilizes logs which contain enough lumber. Beyond that the trees go to a site where they are processed into wood chips for landscaping, or into biofuel.

It was mentioned that a Biochar facility is starting in Minneapolis.³ It's an effort led by the city's Health Department. MPCA has issued a million dollar grant to deal with wood debris because drought and storms are expected to increase wood debris.

A proposal was made by MacDonagh to have an education session on the proposed biochar facility, perhaps a report or a presentation.

In wrapping up this section, Marrari mentioned that the region is 6 inches below where we should be in terms of water in the ground. Therefore, watering trees needs to be a high priority.

CITY TREE PROGRAM, DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH UPDATE

Sydney Schaaf

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

- Biochar Site development – Schaaf can connect the MTAC with the project lead, Jim Doten....
- Onboarding Tree Outreach Coordinator Kabir Mohamed
- Community Forester, Shahin Khalili, starts next week (October 21st)
- Sold 2,140 trees – 3 day pickup went smoothly
- Tree Trust has a goal of 430 tree plantings on commercial sites
- RFP for Tree Preservation Ordinance, review panel met, questions submitted to consultants that applied and next month there will be more info

¹ <https://www.urbantreediversity.org/>

² <https://woodfromthehood.com/>

³ <https://www.minneapolismn.gov/government/programs-initiatives/environmental-programs/biochar/>

- Cashman highlighted the acceptance by the City Council of the grant from Hennepin County to fund the Tree Ordinance preparation
- Cashman discussed the Boulevard Ordinance ([2024-01121](#))⁴ that will come before the Council. It's the creation of a boulevard ordinance. From the link : *Pursuant to notice, motion by Palmisano, Chowdhury and Jenkins to introduce the subject matter of an ordinance amending Title 17, Chapter 427 of the Minneapolis Code of Ordinances relating to Streets and Sidewalks: In General, for first reading and referral to the Climate & Infrastructure Committee, amending provisions related to boulevards.*
- (2) *Trees. Planting trees in boulevards is allowed only upon obtaining a permit as required by Chapter 10 of the Park and Recreation Board Code of Ordinances.*
- Lock has much interest in **boulevard trees**.....and system strategy for planting and maintenance and consistency throughout the city....planting and coordinating with soil structure....tree pruning – parameters around what not to do document, thinking about the change in the climate and we're in a new time period....the tree wraps need to go! (she has photos) and they need to be removed at a certain ageetc.
- **Bldv ordinance** to be addressed and passed next month by the City Council. Next Thursday October 24th gets a first reading and the Council will set a public hearing for November 7th. Cashman requests working with the Forestry Department on the wording.
- **3 points with which the MTAC could start to study and try to improve boulevard tree maintenance: tree pruning, protective wraps, and soil condition variability throughout Minneapolis with relation to climate and with relation to the property owners' responsibilities to the tree**
- Coordinate this subject matter with the City Council's Boulevard Ordinance efforts

REVIEW RESULTS OF REPORT PRESENTATION TO PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

Marrari

General review and comments from Marrari about the presentation is that it went well, and the group listened and understood that the Forestry Department should be supported for the \$500,000 every year to plant the 10,000 trees the Park Board wants. Therefore, permanent funds should be set up. Highlighting the Met Council cutting down trees for transit projects without consulting the City was also discussed.

- Follow up on Council Person Palmisano's inquiry on the extra budget sent to MPRB and where it went.
- Follow up on Council Person Cashman's comment that newer projects (Hennepin Avenue) are a good example of how to consult with tree preservationists and to continue that work.
- -Follow up with Council Person Rainville when it comes to doing extra work in keeping parks healthy after heavy use.

Cashman commented on the Park Board budget and that the budget presentation will be presented next week. Is this when the budget will be addressed for trees? Yes.

⁴ <https://lms.minneapolismn.gov/File/2024-01121>

Schlaefter addressed her 'takeaways' from the meeting: a) Were we late in presenting the need for the half a million dollars to fully fund tree planting to the Council and/or Mayor?

b) Working with other agencies in tree preservation on projects: Keane spoke on tree preservation and was well received by council member Rainville and MPRB Commissioner Schaffer. This could mean that Tree Preservation Coordinator, Craig Pinkalla has greater access to other agencies (Met Council, MnDOT, etc.).

Need to get this conversation going and being effective in not having the quality trees removed.

An example: The rationale for removing a large tree at a street corner under construction was that: It's too expensive to work around a tree for utility work – if so, then show us the dollar numbers. (Met Council and Public Works). An evaluation is needed when a tree will be impacted.

The Park Board has requested an increase in the tax levy for funding the MPRB, but the tree funding was not addressed in the request. (MPRB Commissioner is not present at today's meeting.)

Keane meant that funding for trees should not be discretionary, funding for trees should be a funded line item. Marrari noted that the line item was \$500,000 and the MTAC representatives requested funding be increased to \$1 million (for example).

October 23 is the budget review. There are opportunities for public comment. ⁵

MTAC GENERAL BUSINESS

Marrari

Co-Chair Marrari will not be at the November 21st meeting. Co-Chair Keane will preside.

Other business: MacDonagh presented the data that shows the major killer of trees in the last half century has been 2 epidemics: Dutch elm disease, and emerald ash borer. The point being that if we don't put them back, we won't have their benefits.

ADJOURNMENT

The Commission's October 17th Meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted: Carol Sersland – Commission Secretary

ACTION ITEMS FROM THIS MEETING:

Meeting minutes are due to the MTAC for review by November 1st.

A proposal was made by MacDonagh to have an education session on the proposed biochar facility, perhaps a report or a presentation.

3 points with which the MTAC could start to study and try to improve boulevard tree maintenance: tree pruning, protective wraps, and soil condition variability throughout Minneapolis with relation to climate and with relation to the property owners' responsibilities to the tree

⁵ <https://www.minneapolisparcs.org/about-us/budget-financial/>

Need to start the conversation (demand/request) that quality trees should not be removed within the City by other agencies without consultation. Create a Sub-Committee to tackle this issue.

Develop a process for MPRB tree budget and management be presented earlier and more forcefully. Perhaps in conjunction with the Annual Report.

ACTION ITEMS FROM THE SEPTEMBER MEETING:

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. (here it is)

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

Willeke reported that he had a meeting with the Mayor and City Council President on August 29th? Willeke will set up another appointment with the Mayor and the MTAC Co-Chair Marrari.