

# **MINNEAPOLIS TREE ADVISORY COMMISSION**

**Meeting of November 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 November 21, 2024, with the following Commission Members in attendance: Chris Linde (District 1), Carol Sersland (District 5), Barb Schlaefel (District 6), 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), Steve Nicholson (MN Shade Tree Advisory Committee), Peter MacDonagh (U of M liaison), Steve Collin (Public Works), Katie Cashman (City Council, Ward 7).

Not in attendance: Billy Menz (MPRB District 1), Co-Chair Giuseppe Marrari (District 2), Mary Bolla (District 4), District 3 is vacant, Curt Hartog (Public Schools Representative).

Guests in attendance: Jeremy Barrick (Asst. Superintendent for Environmental Stewardship), Juli Wiseman (MPRB Finance Director), Shahin Khalili (Health Dept. Community Forester), Mitchel Hansen (Harrison Neighborhood representative).

### **CALL TO ORDER AND MINUTES**

Co-Chair Keane called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm. Review of the **MTAC meeting minutes for the October 17, 2024 meeting were approved.**

### **MPRB FORESTRY DEPARTMENT UPDATE**

**MPRB Finance Director, Juli Wiseman and Sustainable Forestry Coordinator Philip Potyondy**

Juli Wiseman, MPRB Finance Director, provided an overview of the new funding for retroactive relief for ash tree removal provided to homeowners in disadvantaged neighborhoods by the Park Board. There are various funding sources providing relief for private property owners for ash tree removals. The federal grant is being applied to existing removals and going forward through a program administered by the Health Department. A new funding source for retroactive relief has been received (Margaret A Cargill Foundation, St. Paul and Minnesota Foundation, the Minneapolis Foundation, and the Mortensen Family Foundation). Black Visions Nonprofit offered \$140,000 for the last of the removal and refund assessments in disadvantaged areas of Minneapolis. Clearing assessments with Hennepin County to be paid in full by the end of the month is the goal. Full rebates will cover the 5-year assessments. Anyone who had an assessment starting January 1, 2020 through December 31, 2022 is eligible for the relief funding. 257 property owners so far. Congratulations and thanks to all who helped secure funding for retroactive ash tree removals. (The \$8 million USFS grant is available for current and future removals.)

A question was asked regarding the total dollar amount. Wiseman did not have the exact amount at hand but said it's over \$500,000. MPRB is using the climate and economic justice screening tool for the areas identified as disadvantaged. This does not include rental properties – it includes homestead residential properties.

It's important that the program is promoted, and the funders are recognized.

Wiseman listed the ways the program has been promoted to residents: 2 mailings to home addresses, in the North News, a spot on KMOJ radio, published on city's Facebook pages, social media, GovDelivery as well as Mitchel Hansen providing a listing to each City Council member where properties are in their ward to help them reach out. They'll be using a database with owners who have not signed up and call them. Black Visions has offered to do door knocking.

Wiseman was asked about the \$500,000 Margaret A. Cargill funding and whether it was separate from the original gift from 2023. She said, there was \$130,000 remaining from the original gift, and it went to pending AND then retroactively for the trees removed prior to the condemnation freeze.

Program goal is to pay off all the liens for the property owners within the disadvantaged areas, with a notice sent to verify that there is a rebate so it will be returned.

### FORESTRY DEPARTMENT REPORT – Philip Potyondy

#### Operational updates

- The recent rains are welcome! Staff transitioned from watering to pruning and removals.
- Downtown Improvement District (DID) was met with and are inspecting trees and improvements.
- Working with a class project U of M on environmental change at the wood debris processing site and shared about the operations.
- Partners in Community Conference in Chicago this week.
- Urban and Community Forestry Society –biggest honor to Ralph Sievert.
- Mn Society of Arboriculture. – Oct 24<sup>th</sup> Casey Snyder demonstrated a root collar excavation.
- Potyondy was in Madrid in October for the International Conference of Urban Tree Diversity – diverse resilient forest and interact with 23 other countries....etc. Doubled number of genera in past years. No Genus over 20%.
- Quality check process is ongoing to prep for 2025 spring planting including working with colleagues in the MPRB; Natural Resources Supervisor James Schaffer.
- 8,500 trees are open for bid – for which funding is now available (see below)

#### Tree Purchase 2025

One-time funds have been secured to enable Forestry to fully fund a 2025 tree purchase of 8,000 to 10,000 trees. The ~ \$828,000 tree purchase budget is comprised of:

- \$426,000 in base MPRB budget
- \$96,000 from the carbon offset program (Green Cities Accord)
- \$100,000 St. Paul and Minneapolis Foundation
- \$106,000 state grant, for the city's regional parks
- \$100,000 US Forest Service grant (forest resilience grant)

Keane suggested that MPRB gets a dedicated staff to write grants.

Schlaefer asked: In light of the struggle to secure funds for tree purchases, should MTAC members attend the December 4<sup>th</sup> MPRB budget meeting and advocate? When and how should MTAC be

advocating more effectively? Note that December 10<sup>th</sup> is the public hearing on the tax levy at the downtown public service center.

Barrick explained the history of tree purchase funding. The budget process starts in March and the MTAC annual report has been synced with the process. He also explained that tree debris and eventually chips were additional funds from outside contractors but those funds have ended. Though Forestry can keep and use the chips that are needed. Wood waste discussion continued. (Permanent funds for 2025 trees are \$426 K. A little history: in addition to the general funds, there was a tax levy that provided an additional \$400 to 500 K per year for tree planting. There was \$500,000 of the \$1 M from ARPA, applied 2022, then the other \$500,000 in 2023. The levy expired 3 years ago.)

Cashman said the Health department may be interested in the wood debris for biochar. **She is willing to request the biochar person to present to MTAC.**

Willeke discussed the budget process that starts in March, but Forestry hasn't been invited to be involved. Forestry should be included in this process earlier in the initial discussions. When should MTAC be advocating?

### Carbon Credits through Green Cities Accord

In lieu of Green Cities Accord<sup>1</sup> (formerly Green Minneapolis) attending today's meeting, Potyondy shared a summary and overview for discussion.

High level overview:



Green Cities Accord is a “nonprofit registry that issues third party verified City Forest Carbon+ credits from tree planting and preservation projects in cities. Companies can buy credits from local projects and invest where people live, work, and play.”

### City Forest Credits<sup>2</sup>

Total Credits Issued: 4,887

- 2022: 4,887 credits issued

Total Credits Sold: 2,642

- 2022: 750 credits sold
- 2023: 150 credits sold
- 2024: 1,742 credits sold

Total Credits Retired: 1,629

- 2023: 150 credits retired
- 2024: 1,479 credits retired

Total Credits Cancelled: 0

2024 = \$96,000 for planting trees

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<sup>1</sup> <https://greencitiesaccord.org/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cityforestcredits.org/carbon-credits/carbon-registry/minneapolis-forest-carbon-offsets/>

**Secretary Sersland will invite Green Cities Accord representative to present to the December MTAC meeting.**

Forestry Department Director Hire Status – Jeremy Barrick

Barrick said the position was posted in July 2024. The first round was characterized as a “failed search” with about 9 applicants, 2 were interviewed. Reposted in October with 21 applicants. 7 invited for interviews. Applications were received from several local professionals and national professionals. The salary range is \$114,000 to \$144,000.

**CITY TREE PROGRAM, DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH UPDATE**  
**Sydney Schaaf**

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

- Shahin Khalili introduce – one month on the job. The Tree team is fully staffed. Planning for 2025 is taking place.
- Capstone class at the U of M – pilot inventory through city trees sales with lessons-learned and survivability to inform Best Practices improvements. (Alicia Coleman at the U.)
- Open bids for tree planting and for stump grinding.
- OATI<sup>3</sup> is contracted to assist with a soil moisture sensors program in conjunction with the Park Board and at 10 resident’s home to water or don’t water
- Urban Sustainability Director’s Network Conference (national) last month – community gardening and tree planting programs.
- Tree pruning workshops – English (Little Earth) and Spanish (arborist from Ecuador!)
- Finalizing contract with WSB Engineering<sup>4</sup> for the Tree Preservation Ordinance. How selected? Based on a rubric that they used for a previous contract plus an evaluation panel.
- Sale of 3,077 trees in 2024 with 267 trees at commercial properties.

**MTAC GENERAL BUSINESS**  
**Keane, Co-Chair**

Citizens appointed by the Park Board interested in continuing to serve on the MTAC need to reapply by December 16<sup>th</sup>.<sup>5</sup>

Co-chair Keane asked for input on the idea of sub-committees in 2025, created to advance the commission’s work, deepen our knowledge and utilize individual member expertise more effectively.

Subcommittee ideas:

- Budget
- Tree preservation in collaboration with Met Council, MnDOT, Hennepin Co
- Carbon credits
- Trees in MPRB natural areas
- Biochar potential

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.oati.com/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.wsbeng.com/>

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.minneapolisparks.org/volunteer-and-give/advisory\\_board\\_commission\\_appointments/](https://www.minneapolisparks.org/volunteer-and-give/advisory_board_commission_appointments/)

April 25 is the Arbor Day celebration at Kenny Park the last Friday in April. Be there! Contact Danielle Schumerth if interested in being on the planning committee.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

Motions were made and the meeting was adjourned at 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 December 1st.**

**Biochar presentation and materials for use for December 19<sup>th</sup> meeting. Schaaf to invite.**

**Secretary Sersland will invite Green Cities Accord representative to present to the December MTAC meeting.**

#### **ACTION ITEMS FROM THE OCTOBER MEETING:**

**A proposal was made by MacDonagh to have an education session on the proposed biochar facility, perhaps a report or a presentation. Schaaf and Cashman can help with the invitation to the December 19<sup>th</sup> meeting.**

**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**

**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:**

**TRANSFER TO 2025: Willeke reported that he had a meeting with the Mayor and City Council President on August 29<sup>th</sup>? Willeke will set up another appointment with the Mayor and the MTAC Co-Chair Marrari.**