

# MINNEAPOLIS TREE ADVISORY COMMISSION

Meeting of December 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 December 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), 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), Billy Menz (MPRB District 1), Katie Cashman (City Council, Ward 7), Curt Hartog (Public Schools Representative).

Not in attendance: Chris Linde (District 1), District 3 is vacant, Steve Nicholson (MN Shade Tree Advisory Committee).

Guests in attendance: Kabir Mohamed (Health Dept), Gudrun Lock (citizen), Michaela Neu (Green Cities Accord), Shahin Khalili (Health Dept. Community Forester), Mitchel Hansen (Harrison Neighborhood representative).

## **CALL TO ORDER AND MINUTES**

Co-Chair Marrari called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm. Attendance was taken. Review of the **MTAC meeting minutes for the November 21, 2024, meeting were approved.**

### **FOR more information check out:**

<https://us06web.zoom.us/rec/share/4huMBOWGIZi0XTctHs0aWzwpEz5FQrJWZdfQw91egs1QC-YPdj4X68NAuoRGECQM.scZj78jtzueuCWuj?startTime=1734650344000>

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## **MPRB FORESTRY DEPARTMENT UPDATE**

### **Sustainable Forestry Coordinator Philip Potyondy**

#### Operational updates

- Nurseries to return their bids for trees for planting next spring. The bids are due tomorrow (December 20<sup>th</sup>) for review and selection.
- As discussed in the previous meeting (November) funding for trees was reviewed. The funding that has been obtained will cover the purchase of 8,600 trees. Normal capacity for trees is between 8,000 and 10,000 trees.
- Stump grinding – there are \$250,000 worth of stumps that need to be removed before new trees can be planted in those locations. Therefore, no trees planted in those locations and alternative locations will be used in 2025.
- Forestry Department Director hiring is ongoing.
- End of the year activities are ongoing, e.g. Tree City application, managing the cyber-attack repercussions (tree condemnation processing was put on hold during the repair).

- 5,000 trees (approximately) were removed from park lands in 2024; a mix of species.
- How to care for trees in the winter? Lower salt application.
- Budget for stump removal? E.g. cost per stump.

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

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

- Recently hired Tree Outreach Coordinator was introduced: Kabir Mohammed.
- Work planning for 2025: Tree planting bids are closed, as well as stump grinding bids for the removal of trees that are in the Condemned Tree Removal Assistance Program (From Regulatory Services) and finally, planting replacement trees bids. The bids (or applications) are being reviewed for decisions in February.
- Capstone class at the U of M – pilot inventory about city trees sales and mapping and surveying. Received final reports with lessons-learned and survivability to inform Best Practices improvements. (Alicia Coleman at the U.) **SHARE with MTAC?**
- Work planning – partnering with the Health Department’s Green Career Exploration Program and workshops to expose youth and young adults to career options in forestry and related fields.
- Jim Dotan (Biochar) was not available for this meeting.
- Tree Preservation Ordinance update and status. The city’s procurement process is holding up contract completion. The process will start early next year. The \$125,000 budget will come from Hennepin County Healthy Tree Canopy Grant and the city budget. Significant amount of time on the community engagement process.

### **GREEN CITIES ACCORD UPDATE** **Representative Michaela Neu**

#### Carbon Credits through Green Cities Accord

Green Cities Accord (GCA)’s “Carbon Offset Program” provides an opportunity for local organizations or individuals to take climate action by purchasing offsets from Green Cities Accord.<sup>1</sup>

GCA is “also pursuing private investments for urban forestry initiative on behalf of our tree planting partners. This is done through our urban Forest fund, where donations directly support our tree planting partners in additional tree planting and maintenance. For example, this spring the Minnesota Vikings donated \$10,000 to the Minneapolis Park and Recreation board through green cities, accords urban forest fund to plant trees and to date green cities. Accord has raised over \$18,000 in donations for the park board to plant trees.”

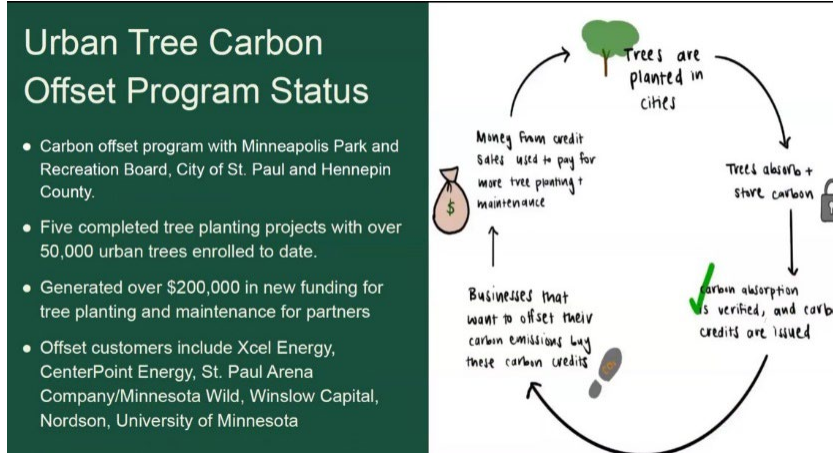
- Have registered 5 total projects between our partners, the Park Board, Hennepin County, and the city of St. Paul.
- Urban tree carbon offset program allows trees recently planted by our partners to be enrolled with the carbon registry. The carbon stock that the trees will sequester over the project. Duration is quantified, and the derived carbon offsets are then sold to entities who can utilize these offsets in their carbon footprint, reduction portfolios as they work towards environmental sustainability or net 0 goals.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://greencitiesaccord.org/work/carbon-offset-program/>

- To date the program has enrolled over 50,000 newly planted trees that are now legally protected, maintained, and monitored for the project duration of 25 years.
- GCA, on behalf of our partners, markets and sells these carbon offsets, less a nonprofit administration fee for both GCA and City Forest Credits, about 80% of the proceeds are returned to our partners for continued tree planting and maintenance. So far in total, we have generated over \$200,000 in new funding for tree planting and maintenance through the sale of offsets.

Figure 1. Urban Tree Carbon Offset Program Status



NOTE: 7 offset customers listed, the total number of customers is 15

Regarding park board projects. Specifically, there are 3 registered projects in partnership that include trees.

Table 1.  
**MPRB Project Updates**

- Three registered projects in partnership that include trees planted from 2019-2023
- To date, \$181,000 in proceeds for tree planting and maintenance realized
- Local market continues to develop as more entities develop net zero goals
- Exploring additional project to include trees planted in 2024

Project	Years	Offsets Issued	Offsets Sold to Date	Proceeds to Date	Remaining Offsets	Projected Proceeds	Total Proceeds
1	2019-21	4,887	3,812	\$131,100	1,075	\$37,625	\$168,725
2	2022	1,788	1,428	\$49,980	360	\$12,600	\$62,580
3	2023	1,412	0	\$0	1,412	\$49,420	\$49,420
<b>Total:</b>		8,087	5,240	\$181,080	2,847	\$99,645	\$280,725

Details regarding each project, “in an urban tree carbon offset program batches of offsets are issued over time, and only issued after sampling of the project trees has been completed, and this is to confirm the ongoing health, growth and carbon sequestration of the trees”.

- The proceeds realized by the Park Board for tree planting and maintenance, which is over \$180,000.
- Anticipating future sales of the remaining offsets from these projects, and considering an average sale price of \$35, we project an additional \$99,000 for a total of \$280,000 in proceeds from the offsets issued to these projects so far.

Table 2. MPRB PROJECT UPDATES – “This table shows one project over time.”  
**2019-2021 Planting Project Proceeds**

Year	% Credits Issues	Total Credits	Price/Credit	Total Proceeds	CFC Fees	GM Fees	MPRB Proceeds
2022	10%	5081	\$35	\$177,821	\$20,782	\$17,782	\$139,257
2024	40%	20322	\$35	\$711,284	\$102,112	\$71,128	\$538,044
2026	30%	15242	\$35	\$533,463	\$107,693	\$53,346	\$372,424
2046	20%	10161	\$35	\$355,642	\$37,564	\$35,564	\$282,514
<b>Total:</b>							<b>\$1,332,288</b>

**The project will provide \$1,332,288\* in proceeds to the MPRB over the next 25 years**

*\*proceeds projection over 25 years is estimated based on current pricing of \$35 per credit*

Ms. Neu: “We can compare our 2022 projections that we brought to the board when we received approval for our first project. At that time, GCA estimated proceeds around \$139,000 from the first 10%. That first batch of credits in the first project, and I'm excited to report that we're on track to meet or even exceed that projection. For this first project the next batch of credits is scheduled for release, following the sampling process that will take place early this coming summer, and once sampling is complete, we anticipate a significant batch of credits to be released.

“As mentioned earlier, we do work with other partners in the metro which helps us expand our impact and our offset options. We've received in the past city specific requests for offsets, and we accommodate those requests the best we can, but we do prioritize the sale of offsets as they are issued, and I'll note to date that the park board is our largest tree planting partner, and generates most of our carbon offsets as demonstrated by this project.”

Question: How does the \$96,000 the MPRB received in 2024 fit with the table above?

Ms. Neu: “The year that the carbon offsets are issued is demonstrated here in 2022 (Table 2) over the past couple of years. 2020-22-2023 and 2024. We've been working to sell those offsets, and if we can sell out the total batch of offsets, we predicted that the park board would see proceeds close to \$140,000. Now this was our projection at the time. Now going back to my project chart (Table 1), and if we're looking just at project, one proceeds to date, which include 2024, and the years prior, we have already seen \$131,000. We expect to sell the remaining offsets at that \$35 price mark or higher, expecting another projected \$37,000, seeing \$168,000 total for that 1st batch of credits from Project 1.”

Question: Explain more about the administrative fees

Ms. Neu: “When we sell carbon offsets, we get gross proceeds, and from those proceeds Green Cities Accord, and at the time we were Green Minneapolis. We retained 10% of those proceeds as an administrative fee. City Forest Credits obtains a percentage of those fees which is close to 10%. There are project application fees, third party verification fees, and nonprofit administrative fees that are involved in the calculation of these fees here resulting in nearly 80% of growth of net proceeds going to the park board, and in our contracts, as defined, those proceeds go directly to supplement the forestry budget in tree planting and maintenance.”

Question: What is the formula to quantify like the rate of emissions, and how much to charge these companies for the rate of emissions.?

- Ms. Neu: “we are selling the offsets, and one offset equates to one metric ton of carbon.

- When a company comes to us interested in offsetting a portion of their footprint. They have calculated what that footprint is.
- We are not involved in calculating their carbon footprint. We simply equate their purchase of offsets to the footprint that they're looking to offset.
- Now the quantification of carbon on our side relates to city forest credits and their quantification of projects. They're the ones taking project data, project application information and generating the carbon sequestration calculations.
- That then relates to the amount of offsets that are issued to a project over time.
- We work with entities who are hoping to offset a portion of their footprint, and we sell them the equivalent of offsets related to their CO2 emissions.

Question: how is Excel Energy showing that it's trying to reduce its carbon footprint when 1.2% of their portfolio is using offsets.

Ms. Neu: "Besides their use of offsets, there's sustainability measures, and operational reductions that excel energy is utilizing. We have sold to the local excel energy entity."

Further discussion regarding the retirement of carbon offsets and tracking these credits, using City Forest Credits and a "ledger account" that shows if an offset is sold. **City Forest Credits does have a platform that would allow that [viewing the registered offset credits and their status], and Ms. Neu will investigate that and understand how the public can get that.**

Question: Does GCA look at other models to inform those models have been doing well? Neu: that is their goal and what they are doing as they try to expand their program.

Question: Would GCA anticipate using offsets for the treatment of trees (e.g. EAB) or biochar? Karen Zumac of Tree Trust presented recently, and she could be contacted for additional info. GCA is focused on the urban tree canopy with no plans for biochar.

Question: Is there an agreement with MPRB to guarantee that we get the credit first? Neu: no agreement to place MPRB in priority over other municipalities or other tree partners.

Question: What does "sampling of trees" mean? Neu: per the Registry's requirement, before an issuance of offsets in the upcoming years, a project operator must sample trees, and for the registry that means a geotagged photo of a tree, and there'll be a sampling pool that's drawn out from the project, a sampling pool of trees that we will need to physically visit over time. Take a geotagged photo and a status picture of the tree's health. This data will help GCA and CFC understand the survivability of that tree pool. They'll then utilize it to understand the survivability of the trees and the project as a whole. If we can demonstrate that trees are surviving and have not yet exceeded a mortality rate that has already been baked into the project from the beginning, we will then get an issuance of credits, and at every issuance there is another sampling expectation.

It's a way for the registry to have checks and balances in the program so that project operators are not selling offsets that demonstrate carbon sequestration when there are no trees to represent that carbon sequestration."

Question: Does GCA have an idea of the number of top CO2 producers in the metro region? Neu: this is a component of GCA's marketing strategy as they go forward.

Menz remarked the MPR Board will be discussing whether the Carbon Offset program will be continued and there was much valuable info in this presentation.

Potyondy emphasized that funds from GCA for 2025 enabling 1,000 trees to be planted. Funding from the GCA program help to make up the difference between previous planting budgets and current planting budgets because of the tree levy deletion and no ARPA funds in this year or the next. Going forward the Department will need to secure funding outside of the City budget to continue planting at 2-trees for every 1-tree removed rate.

#### **MTAC GENERAL BUSINESS**

##### **Marrari, Co-Chair**

Co-Chair Marrari noted that this is the last meeting of current MTAC member's 2-year appointment. Potyondy mentioned that the MPRB will be extending the application deadline to December 26th to encourage more citizens to apply.

Schlaefer: She brought up ideas for possible subcommittees and proposed that there be a more formal process for prioritizing issues at the January meeting.

April 25 is the 2025 Arbor Day celebration at Kenny Park, the last Friday in April.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

Motions were made and the meeting was adjourned at 7:03 p.m.

Respectfully submitted: Carol Sersland – Commission Secretary

#### **ACTION ITEMS FROM THIS MEETING:**

**Stump grinding is underfunded and the backlog continues to grow. Funds to catch up?**

Reports from Health department with the final capstone studies. DONE. Attached.

**Green Cities Accord sends MTAC a copy of the presentation.**

**Subcommittee discussion at next meeting in January.<sup>2</sup>**

#### **ACTION ITEMS FROM THE NOVEMBER MEETING**

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

**NOTE: He was invited but not available for the December meeting and will be invited to the January meeting.**

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<sup>2</sup> Topics that have been mentioned previously: What problems are there to be solved? And solutions:  
Tree preservation ordinance and strategies, working with outside agencies to protect quality trees  
Budget development for planting trees (perhaps earlier preparation of Annual Report)  
Budget for stump grinding  
Invasive species  
Decompaction in parks that experience intense use by the public  
Micromanaging the Forestry Department and their tree protection and maintenance strategies

**ACTION ITEMS FROM THE OCTOBER 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.**