

**August 21, 2025
DRAFT MINUTES**

Minneapolis Tree Advisory Commission

In attendance

Giuseppe Marrari (MPRB Dist. 2, co-chair)
Karl Kussow (Dist. 3)
Tim Keane (Dist. 5, co-chair)
Barb Schlaefer (Dist. 6)
Erika Commers (at large)
Meg Forney (MPRB Commissioner)
Steve Nicholson (Minnesota Shade Tree Advisory Committee)
Chris McMaster (MPRB Director of Forestry)
Don Willeke (Mayor Rep)
Peter MacDonagh (University of MN)
Shahin Khalili (City of Mpls. city trees program)
Noah Devlaminck, Tree Trust (non-member)

Absent: Katy Cashman (City Council), Mary Bolla (Dist. 4), Drew Peterson (Dist. 1)

Director of Forestry Update, Chris McMaster

- Ash stump removal contract was approved. Work begins.
- DNR/Met Council grant funding came through for \$454,000 to 900 new trees. Met Council grant is for stump removal and tree replacement in marginalized census blocks in Minneapolis.
- Forestry sponsored an 'Ask the Arborist' booth at several Open Streets events this summer.
- Completed a research planting at Stewart Park with trees native to zones to the south. Planted cucumber magnolia, black hickory, European hornbeam, tupelo, sycamore, bitternut and others. U of M involved.
- Working with U of M on tree stewards program at McRae Park.
- Catalpa trees are not thriving. U of M is studying. might be provenance issue.
- Looking at the tree list for 2026, MPRB will cut out species that have any invasive tendency.
- Historical oak wilt in Theodore Wirth noted. Everything is going to the lab. Some of it is anthrac and not oak wilt.

City Trees Update, Shahin Khalili

- Tree sale went live Aug 15 with 1,000 trees
- Tree preservation ordinance, contractor/consultant WSB is now reaching out to internal and external partners. (Reminder: this ordinance and professional contract will be focused ONLY on private property)
 - MTAC wants and expects to have input on the ordinance throughout the process
 - Steve Nicholson added context on current processes. Can't get a certificate of occupancy until requirements are met. This gets developers' attention.

Vacant MTAC Positions, Giuseppe Marrari

There are three vacant positions on MTAC representing Minneapolis Public Schools, business development and tree care professionals. No progress has been made to fill. Noah Devlaminck with Tree Trust and Erick Lopez with Birch Tree care have expressed interest. Steve Nicholson offered a link to the school forest program, to identify prospective new MTAC member representing schools.

Subcommittees Updates

- Natural areas subcommittee, no update
- Tree preservation subcommittee update: The subcommittee identified three priorities in June and will meet with Craig Pinkalla and possibly Chris McMaster to ascertain how best to move those forward. Barb Schlaefer
- Annual Report – Giuseppe Marrari will have draft sent with next agenda

Grants

Members expressed concern that budgets for new trees continue to shrink. The tree purchase budget is being supplanted by other one-time sources such as grants, since the ash tree removal levy expired. The carbon credits program is being relied upon for annual tree purchases. Those funds are not supplementing, they are replacing the annual tree purchase budget. There is a cross-division grant-writing committee within MPRB. Is there a need for more grant-writing horsepower within MPRB? Should that be a recommendation in the annual report?

Other

- Chris McMaster will be presenting to MPRB this fall.
- Commissioner Forney expressed interest in orchards on school property.
- Sept 6, noon to 3 p.m. Erick Lopez discussion on fruit trees and urban forests in conjunction with Resilient Cities.
- Next meeting, September 18, 2025

Adjourn