

September 18, 2025

MINUTES

Minneapolis Tree Advisory Commission

In attendance

Karl Kussow (Dist. 3)
Mary Bolla (Dist. 4)
Tim Keane (Dist. 5, and MTAC co-chair)
Barb Schlaefer (Dist. 6)
Erika Commers (at large)
Steve Nicholson (Minnesota Shade Tree Advisory Committee)
Don Willeke (Mayor Rep)
Peter MacDonagh (University of MN)

Shahin Khalili (City of Mpls. city trees program)
Noah Devlaminck, Tree Trust (non-member)
Chris McMaster (MPRB Director of Forestry)

Absent: Giuseppe Marrari (MPRB Dist. 2, co-chair), Meg Forney (MPRB Commissioner)
Katy Cashman (City Council), Drew Peterson (Dist. 1)

Director of Forestry Update, Chris McMaster

- Tree inspectors are out gathering locations for spring planting
- Attended the urban tree summit sponsored by Green Cities Accord 9/17
- Forestry is submitting proposals for two more DNR grants (how much and what are they for?)
- Met with City of Golden Valley forestry about oak wilt clusters found at Wirth Park. Decision to quarantine oak wilt sites.
- Tree stewards workshop with University of Minnesota to be held at McRae Park 9/27. Tree Trust event planting 30-40 trees 9/30.
- Responded to question about dead/dying elm trees observed. Forestry is prioritizing Dutch Elm diseased trees. 365 trees marked for removal of which 11 were of a disease resistant variety.

City Trees Update, Shahin Khalili, Community Forester for the City

- Tree sale happening 9/26 and 9/27 with 900 trees at Jim Lupient Water Park
- WSB Consulting firm of Minneapolis will meet with MTAC in October to get initial input. The city has contracted with WSB to write a new tree ordinance. (The ordinance under development pertains only to private property. Contract is \$1.5 million funded by the USFS grant to the city awarded 2024.)

James Shaffer, Natural Areas Supervisor

James was invited to present to MTAC. His position was created 4 years ago by MPRB. He leads a small unit, with 2 staff plus seasonal and volunteers, managing the ~1,000 acres of natural areas in the park system. He referenced the MPRB Phase 2 Natural Areas Plan as the guide for their work and discussed their strategies for tackling invasive species including buckthorn. James explained that their staff (with volunteers) is currently managing about 400 acres. Said his unit's growing partnership with Forestry has been beneficial. His presentation slides are included.

Members noted that it may not be necessary to plant new trees in some natural areas. Also noted that forests that are free from invasive and dense buckthorn inherently feel safer and are safer for all.

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Presentation by University of Minnesota Natural Resources Research Institute

Rolf Weberg, executive director of NRRRI, and Jeff Jackson of NRRRI gave a presentation on a fast-growing poplar hybrid tree they bred named InnovaTree. It is a cross between the native eastern cottonwood and European black poplar. They highlighted many potential applications. More information at <https://innovatree.umn.edu>

Subcommittee Reports

Time did not allow for subcommittee reports.

Adjourned 7 p.m.