

**November 20, 2025**

**MINUTES**

**Minneapolis Tree Advisory Commission**

**In attendance**

Members

Drew Peterson (Dist. 1)  
Tim Keane (Dist. 5, and MTAC co-chair)  
Barb Schlaefer (Dist. 6)  
Erika Commers (at large)  
Don Willeke (Mayor's Rep)  
Giuseppe Marrari (MPRB Dist. 2, co-chair)  
Mary Bolla (MPRB Dist. 4)  
Peter MacDonagh (University of MN)  
Chris McMaster (MPRB Director of Forestry)

Staff

Shahin Khalili (City of Mpls. city trees program)

Non-members

Noah Devlaminck, Tree Trust (non-member)  
Dakota Deringer, Kota Tree Care

**Absent**

Meg Forney (MPRB Commissioner), Katie Cashman (Mpls City Council), Dan Goemann (School District Rep), Karl Kussow (Dist. 3)

**Co-chair Tim Keane called the meeting to order at 5:35 p.m.**

**October minutes approved**

**Department of Forestry Update, Chris McMaster**

Forestry operations staff is focused on pruning, removals and stump grinding. All oak wilt has been removed from Theodore Wirth Park.

Forestry submitted two new grant proposals in November to the MN DNR. One is focused on tree planting and supplemental funding for tree purchases and stump grinding. Second grant proposal is for funding to upgrade technology including inventory software, tomography, drones and ebikes for tree inspectors and seasonal staff to care for young trees.

Tree purchase list for 2026 is being finalized and was shared with members. Included with November 2025 minutes.

Director McMaster has been engaged in outreach to high schoolers, 55+ programs and will present at the Lynnhurst Fall Forum.

**City trees update, Shahin Khalili**

The condemned (Ash) tree program is continuing and financial assistance is being provided to some property owners to offset the removal expenses per the geographic and income criteria. Waiting on ticketing system through 311.

Shahin Khalili is the Minneapolis “president” of Bee City USA.

### **Annual Report Discussion, Tim Keane and Giuseppe Marrari**

Giuseppe Marari will write and submit an abbreviated annual report for 2025 by the end of Dec.

MTAC members expressed concern that MTAC missed an important opportunity by not delivering an annual report to the Park Board and City Council early in 2025. Presenting to MPRB, the City Council and the Mayor in person is a critical avenue for influencing policy and budget decisions, and advocating for a robust urban canopy.

For 2026, MTAC aims to present its report to MPRB and the City Council in May, with opportunities for review at March and April meetings.

### **Tree Preservation Committee Update, Barb Schlaefer**

The committee has been in contact with Craig Pinkalla, Tree Preservation Coordinator, to identify ways to advance two initiatives:

- Compulsory Tree Preservation Priority Reports: Committee seeks to require Tree Preservation Priority Reports for all development projects by Met Council, MnDOT, Hennepin County and other agencies. Engaging the tree preservation coordinator is currently optional. Because the Tree Preservation Coordinator is a member of the City Projects Task Force, which approves projects within city limits, he is often able to initiate tree preservation efforts through his own diplomatic channels; however, Tree Preservation Priority Reports are not compulsory.
- Prioritize Trees in Storm Water Improvement Projects: The city’s current storm water ordinance specifies that stormwater upgrades take priority over tree preservation. And yet, trees serve to improve water quality and reduce storm water run-off and erosion.

Director McMaster and Craig Pinkalla agree that updating the [Urban Forest Policy](#), which has not been reviewed for 14+ years, will be the most effective avenue for advancing these efforts. The Urban Forest Policy is a living document, referred to often by staff. Dir. McMaster will set a process in motion soon and MTAC will be involved.

### **Budget Question/Discussion, Tim Keane**

Co-chair Tim Keane highlighted budget concerns, specifically lack of stable funding for the annual tree purchase. The tree purchase budget has been supplanted in recent years with one-time grants and revenue from the carbon offset program (which was initially adopted to supplement, not supplant, the tree purchase budget.) Co-chair Keane said he has observed too many young “buggy whip” trees suffering from lack of care and watering. Maintenance is not keeping up.

The Park Board has set a stated goal of replacing every tree removed with two new trees, but the budget does not support that.

Director McMaster agreed that the budget for Forestry has retracted. He said Forestry now needs the carbon offset program to replace a shrinking Forestry budget.

Peter Macdonagh: “We are in deep hole. Minneapolis was 50% tree canopy in the 1950, and now is at 30%. Over 90% of the canopy was once Elm. 250-300,000 lost to dutch elm. Many gaps opened in the canopy. Watershed Districts could/should contribute. 75-80% of the canopy was on private property. (At least 70% of Ash were on private property).”

Members chimed in on the economic and public health benefits of trees.

### **Open Positions**

- Shade tree advisory position, Noah will send contact info to Giuseppe, so that he can contact the chair and ask for a new representative
- Director McMaster said two staff from the city will share the Minneapolis public works position on MTAC. Ethan Van Offelen, Transportation Engineering and Design, and Ahmed Omer Transportation Maintenance and Repair. Please send future meeting notices to both.

### **New business**

Tim Keane asked about the applications for the Innova Tree from the University of Minnesota that was presented at the September meeting. (Innova is a hybrid cottonwood/poplar that grows quickly). Dir. McMaster says he envisions it could work in specific settings such as companion trees and in some natural areas.

Giuseppe Marrari wished Council-member Katie Cashman well. She will no longer serve on the commission after December.

**Adjourned 6:37 p.m.**