

December 18, 2025

DRAFT MINUTES

Minneapolis Tree Advisory Commission

In attendance

Members

Dan Goemann (School District Rep)
Karl Kussow (Dist. 3)
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)
Ethan Van Oflen (Public Works)

Staff

Shahin Khalili (City of Mpls. city trees program)

Non-members

Noah Devlaminck, Tree Trust
Eric Lopez, Birch Tree Care

Absent

Drew Peterson (Dist. 1), Meg Forney (MPRB Commissioner), Katie Cashman (Mpls City Council)

Co-chair Tim Keane called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

Due to inclement weather, the meeting was conducted on Zoom.

November minutes approved

Department of Forestry Update, Chris McMaster

Forestry operations staff is focused on pruning, removals. There is a shortage of bucket trucks. Outreach events have included the MNSTAC Forum (Minnesota Society of Arboriculture and a SPARK meeting (youth education). Minneapolis won the Tree City USA and Tree City USA Growth award. (Have won 46 of the last 49 years).

Dept of Forestry learned it has been preliminarily awarded \$400,000 from the DNR to supplement tree purchasing, stump grinding. Applied for \$500,000 in the fall.

The Sustainable Forestry Coordinator position at MPRB held by Philip Potyondy has been posted and will be filled.

City trees update, Shahin Khalili, Community Forester, City of Minneapolis

City Trees team and WSB consultants are meeting with community organizations about the tree ordinance under development, which will pertain to trees on private property. They have a member of Conservation Corp joining their team soon.

In 2025, Shahin reports the City distributed 2,373 free or discounted trees to private property owners, including 303 to commercial owners and 181 to residents in Green Zones (areas identified as disadvantaged).

Annual Report Discussion, Tim Keane and Giuseppe Marrari

Giuseppe Marari invited comments on the abbreviated draft annual report he distributed. He plans to submit it to the MPRB before the end of 2025 to meet bylaw guidance.

A broad discussion ensued about the city's tree canopy, its decline over time, technology tools that enable measurement, visualization and mapping of tree canopy and the importance of private property owner engagement in creating a more dense, healthy and consistent tree canopy across the city.

Chris McMaster questioned whether the MPRB's stated goal of planting two trees for every tree lost/removed on boulevards and in parks was still practical or attainable. He said, "the canopy cannot fully bounce back if we only look at public spaces." Minneapolis parkland represents roughly 1/6th of the City's land mass. McMaster indicated that, in the current budget climate and changing weather patterns, staff are unable to property care for all newly planted trees currently.

Consensus emerged that specific metrics on tree canopy are essential to make decisions and advocate for the budgets to maintain and grow the urban tree canopy.

Mary Bolla asked if it was possible to get a breakdown on canopy for different types of park uses, ie, neighborhood parks, ball fields, natural areas, boulevards.

Barb Schlaefer reminded members that the co-chair Giuseppe's annual report will be submitted in a few days and he welcomed specific feedback.

Beginning in January, MTAC will focus on scheduling and developing a robust presentation to the incoming Park Board and City Council in April 2026 to introduce the commission and share the current state vision for the City's urban tree canopy.

Adjourned 7 p.m.