

MTAC DRAFT MINUTES

January 15, 2026

In attendance

Giuseppe Marrari (Dist. 2 and co-chair)
Mary Bolla (Dist. 4)
Drew Peterson (Dist. 1)
Erica commers (At Large)
Ahmed Ohmer (public works)
Don Willeke (Mayor's rep.)
Barb Schlaefer (Dist. 6)
Dan Goemann (Minneapolis Public Schools)
Chris McMaster (MPRB Director of Forestry)
Peter McDonagh (University of Minnesota)
Tim Keane (Dist. 5 and co-chair)

Non-members

Noah Devalminck (Tree Trust)
Eric Lopez (Birch Tree Care)

Staff

Shahin Khalili (City of Minneapolis City Trees Program)

Members absent

Karl Kussow (Dist. 3)
Dan Egelhart, MPRB Commissioner
City Council Representative

Co-chair Marrari convened the meeting at 5:30 p.m.

Department of Forestry Update, Chris McMaster

Chair McMaster has convened a group to update the city's [Urban Forest Policy](#). Included in the working group are Craig Pincalla, Shahin Khalili, Ahmed Omer, Erin Johnson, Isaac Prehall and Ethan Folley, representing a combination of MPRB and city employees. Objectives of the process are to prioritize the preservation of mature trees in private development and public works where practical and outline new processes relevant to that goal. He expects to have an initial revision of the current policy to review by the City's Capital Projects Task Force and MTAC by April.

Arbor Day celebration will be April 24 at Bethune Park. Dani Schumerth is accepting volunteers.

Completed purchase of 7,500 trees to be planted in spring 2026.

Interviews are underway to fill the position of sustainable forestry coordinator (occupied previously by Phillip Potyondy).

MPRB received one of the two grants for which it applied from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. MPRB Forestry received ~\$300,000 of the \$400,000 requested for its annual tree purchase and stump grinding. It also applied for \$500,000 for tree inventory software and tomography to improve its tree management, monitoring and maintenance capacity through data. This second grant request was not funded.

A brief discussion on how to fill the vacant positions on MTAC including Tree Expert and Business Development concluded with no resolution.

City of Minneapolis Tree Program Update, Shahin Khalili, Community Forester

The city is recruiting tree ambassadors for a new [City Tree Ambassador Program](#). Ambassadors in this pilot program will work with their own neighborhoods to identify opportunities to plant 40-50 trees on private property. Each receives a stipend for their advocacy and work.

Tree Ordinance: The team coordinating the development of a new tree preservation ordinance with local consulting firm, WSB, met recently with affordable housing groups and developers. They will meet with more groups in the coming weeks, including the city's community planning and economic development teams. Draft of the ordinance is expected by spring to review.

The City Trees Program has ordered 2,150 trees for its spring sale, May 29 and 30, ordered through the Tree Trust. Trees will be distributed citywide.

MTAC Annual Report Discussion, co-chair Giuseppe Marrari

Members agreed on presenting the MTAC annual report to Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board Commissioners and the City Council in May 2026. This means presentations should be added to schedules for the two bodies as soon as possible.

Members discussed content for the annual report. There was general consensus around keeping the messaging tight, specific and simple.

Focus on the importance of trees to the city's health, safety and economic vitality. Challenge the city's shifting funding priorities. Tell the story with data (consider Google Earth and [the free Tree Canopy website](#) per Erica Commers).

Ask for specifics in each of these three categories.

1. **Purchase and maintain trees** on boulevards and in parks (consistent \$\$ for annual tree purchase, watering, pruning, grinding. Technology. Show deficit, ask)
2. **Build healthy canopy on private property:** Pass the private property tree ordinance to generate more trees on private property?
3. **Build healthy native tree canopy in city's ~1,000 acres of natural areas.** Includes invasives management (2 more staff, equipment, planning, volunteer support)

An outline of the 2026 annual report will be presented at the Feb MTAC meeting.

Subcommittee Reports

1. Annual Report Committee, Giuseppe Marrari. See above.
2. Tree Preservation Committee will dissolve for now. The staff team that is reviewing/revising the 12-year-old Urban Forest Policy (along with the Tree Preservation Ordinance under development) may address the main concerns identified by this committee. (Barb Schlaefer, Erica Commers with expertise from Craig Pinkalla and Sydney Schaaf)
3. Natural Areas Committee will continue, led by Mary Bolla.

Meeting adjourned 6:55 p.m.