

**MINUTES  
CITY OF ST. CHARLES  
TREE COMMISSION MEETING  
RALPH GRATHOFF, CHAIRMAN  
JULY 9, 2015**

**Members Present:** Valerie Blaine, Jon Duerr, Ralph Grathoff, Raymond Hauser, Suzi Myers, Carol Riordan, Caroline Wilfong

**Members Absent:** Pam Otto, Ron Ziegler

**Others Present:** Chris Adesso, AJ Reineking, Isabel Soderlind

**Visitors Present:** Michael and Jonathan Dufresne, Vanessa and Makayla Stack

**1. Call to Order & Pledge of Allegiance**

The meeting was convened by Chair. Ralph Grathoff at 7:03 p.m.

**2. Roll Call**

**3. Introductions of Visitors**

Jonathan Dufresne was attending the meeting to qualify for a Communications badge. It was also a pre-requisite for a camp that he would be attending this coming week. His father Michael accompanied Jonathan to the meeting.

Makayla Stack, a student at Richmond School, was attending the meeting with her mother, Vanessa. This year, Makayla's teacher challenged her students to make a difference in the community. Makayla explained her interest in deforestation, which led to her establishing an arbor club. Her goal was to educate others on the importance of trees. She has held several Arbor Club meetings this summer at Discovery Knolls; her last meeting was held earlier today.

The Commissioners introduced themselves to the visitors.

**4. Minutes Review and Approval**

- A. Motion to accept and place on file the minutes of the May 14, 2015 Tree Commission meeting.  
Motion by Comm. Duerr, second Comm. Hauser to accept and place the minutes on file.

Voice vote: unanimous; Nays – None; Absent: Comm. Otto, Comm. Ziegler

- Motion carried at 7:06 p.m.

**5. Old Business**

**A. Urban Forest Management Plan Update**

AJ Reineking, Public Works Manager, has received a draft of the Urban Forest Management Plan (hereinafter referred to as the "UFMP") late last week. Tony Bellafiore and AJ have been reviewing the draft and would prefer to have it at a "semi-final" stage before presenting it to the Tree Commissioners. Mr. Reineking explained he would prefer to review the operational components of the plan before sharing it with the Committee. A draft of the plan will be emailed to all the Commissioners sometime before the next meeting for their review. The Commissioners will be able to ask questions and provide feedback directly to Mr. Graf at the September meeting.

Once the UFMP is approved by the Commissioners, Mr. Reineking and Mr. Adesso will present the Urban Forestry Management Plan to the Government Services Committee and then to Council for final approval. Timeline is estimated at approximately 6 to 9 months before the UFMP will be a “living breathing” document.

A purchase order has been written for Phase 3 of the Urban Forestry Management Plan; therefore further implementation of the plan will continue to move forward in FY15/16.

## **B. Reorganization of the Tree Commission**

The Commission continued its discussion from last month to convert the “Tree Commission” to a “Natural Resources Committee”. Mr. Adesso felt expanding to a Natural Resources Committee made sense given the City’s trend toward naturalizing areas and sustainability. The following points were made during the discussion:

Overall, the Commission’s mission would remain essentially the same, providing guidance to the City. As a Natural Resources Committee however the scope of the committee would broaden to other areas than just trees, e.g., or creating (building) bioswales. The Committee could consider expanding the number of members, but funding would remain essentially the same.

A few of the commissioners expressed an interest in broadening the scope of the commission. Comm. Blaine promoted the move towards a Natural Resources Committee. A broader focus of this committee would also include, water, herbaceous plants, soil quality, etc. Overall this would be an asset to the City.

Comm. Duerr mentioned he recently attended a park district workshop regarding the future of the Fox River. The purpose of this Task Force leading this initiative is to (1) update and modernize the River Corridor’s 2002 Master Plan; (2) leverage the river to modify the active lifestyle in St. Charles; and (3) promote the economic development of the city by constructing rapids, pedestrian walkways and bike paths that extends from Ferson Creek to the Geneva property line. The plan presented at the meeting was to turn the Fox River to worldwide water recreational area. This plan is just at the concept stage, but this type of an initiative could be an area the Natural Resource Commission could engage in.

Comm. Wilfong also mentioned Natural Resources Committee could also be involved in other City initiatives, e.g., America in Bloom, which will be taking place this coming week.

Creating a Natural Resources Committee may bring a substantial change to the structure of the Tree Commission. If there was a genuine interest from the commissioners, Mr. Adesso suggested the members start to brainstorm and write their ideas during the next two months. The ideas can then be discussed at the next meeting and compiled into a short document or charter that he could present to the mayor and the city administrator.

The committee considered Mr. Adesso’s suggestion and deferred further discussion of this agenda item until the September’s meeting.

## **C. Proper Mulching Public Relations Campaign**

Comm. Blaine mentioned she wrote an article for the Daily Herald regarding property mulching, but felt the timing would be more effective for March or April of next year.

## **6. New Business**

### **A. News and Concerns from Public Works**

- i. **Tree Trimming Update:** AJ Reineking summarized the Public Services division tree activity reports for the last two months. Public Works trimmed approximately 600 trees in May while

June focused mostly on service requests from residents. In addition, a total of 198 trees were planted this past Spring/Summer; 172 were replacement ash trees and 26 trees were warranty trees that had failed to thrive this past year.

**Remaining Ash Inventory Update:** Tony Bellafiore gave an update on the remaining ash tree inventory. Phil Graf inspected the remaining 245 standing ash trees and it was determined 54 trees would need to be removed this year. Residents living adjacent to the 54 trees will receive tree removal letters. The remainder of the ash trees appear to be healthy and but not necessarily tagged; therefore a questionnaire will be mailed to the remaining 191 residents living adjacent to these sites to see if they are treating the trees.

Tony Bellafiore distributed samples of Mr. Graf's report for the committee to view. The replacement of ash trees are now funded by the City's general forestry fund. Considering the forestry budget, the 54 trees slated to be removed will most likely be replanted next spring.

Residents may call the City at anytime and request an inspection of a parkway tree whose health may look suspicious. If the tree is determined to be dead, a work order is created to remove the tree. Once the tree is removed, a work order is created for replacing the tree.

- ii. **Fall Planting Update:** Public Works anticipates planting approximately 200 trees this fall. A new species list has been established, which will assist in determining a firm cost. A planting bid package will be going out soon for both the fall and spring planting. Taking diversity into consideration, there will be some unique species being planted this fall. This tree species list will be shared with the committee at the next meeting.
- iii. **Other:** Overall the arborist team is currently focusing on work orders generated by the residents instead of zone trimming. With the assistance of the Urban Forestry Management Plan (UFMP), the division is currently determining the proper maintenance trimming schedule throughout the city over the next several years.

Tony Bellafiore also mentioned Jeremy Craft, who is also an arborist, has been promoted to crew leader within the division. He has continued to educate himself and is very close in completing his Municipal Arborist Certification. He is currently supervising the arborist team and conducting the majority of the tree inspections.

Comm. Duerr mentioned he was very impressed by the tree trimming crew that came through his neighborhood recently.

## 7. Committee Reports

### A. Education Committee:

Comm. Myers passed around a "teacher's nature kit" she had recently received in the mail. She was wondering if any of the Commissioners had any experience with the materials and if they would be worth ordering in the future. Comm. Blaine mentioned she had the exact same materials but did not use them often. The materials contained mostly non-native species and not very representative of our area.

Ms. Soderlind gave an update on the delivery of the books ordered last February, "Why Would Anyone Cut a Tree Down?" by Roberta Burzynski. Per the U.S. Government Bookstore, the books were to be shipped out the week of July 20. She will continue to monitor the delivery of the books.

Comm. Blaine mentioned the hazards of "volcano" mulching may be a good initiative for the Educational Committee. Utilizing social media may be more effective educating the public. She added that the committee should consider focusing on this initiative in the spring, when everyone has the mind set to plant trees.

*Ms. Vanessa Stack asked if residents could volunteer in planting city trees?* It was explained that contactors were hired to plant the trees, but there were many other volunteer opportunities through the Tree Commission: Langum Park Clean Up program which is typically conducted in the spring and fall and also Arbor Day. These were typically advertised through press releases from the City.

**B. Publicity Committee:** None

**C. Arbor Day:** None

## 8. Communications

### A. Electric Division Tree Activity Reports

Motion to accept and place on file the Public Services and Electric Services Tree Activity Reports for May and June of 2015. Motion by Comm. Myers, second by Comm. Duerr to accept and place on file the reports as presented.

**Voice vote:** unanimous; Nays – None; Absent: Pam Otto, Ron Ziegler

- Motion carried at 7:50 p.m.

## 9. Additional Items – Comments

**A. Commissioners:**  
**Comm. Riordan:** None

**Comm. Hauser:** None

**Comm. Myers:** Complimented the City's arborist team. A stop sign on the southeast quadrant of town was blocked by a tree branch and she meant to call the City to report the safety hazard. As she drove by the next day, the crews were already trimming the tree!

**Comm. Blaine:** Mentioned the forest preserve was almost ready with the Kane County Big Tree Program. She passed around a draft of the program and proceeded to discuss the program and its purpose. Its intention is to get people aware and involved with trees making this a fun, competitive and educational experience for everyone of all ages.

**Comm. Wilfong:** Comm. Wilfong shared her idea to create a list of favorite trees or natural areas brochure here in St. Charles. It would be an opportunity for residents to view and experience the beauty of local trees and naturalized areas. Comm. Blaine mentioned to look at the Kane County Forest Preserve website which had some similar information.

**Comm. Duerr:** Complimented the St. Charles Public Services arborist crews again. He was very pleased with the proper trimming that was conducted in his neighborhood. In addition, he mentioned a beautiful Sugar Maple located on the corner of 3<sup>rd</sup> and Oak Street, on the north edge of the dentist's parking lot. The tree is actually located on private property, but explained trees were typically planted on the inside of the tree bank back at the turn of the century. He added there were quite a few Sugar Maples along 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Street, but the one on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and Oak is just a beautiful Sugar Maple.

**Chair. Grathoff:** Mentioned that the improper "volcano" mulching message had started to spread. Apparently a customer called to make sure Comm. Grathoff's crews would not "volcano" mulch the trees.

### B. City Staff:

**Chris Adesso:** Mr. Adesso mentioned he had the Active River Committee concept plan on his computer if anyone was interested in viewing it after the meeting.

**Tony Bellafiore:** Mentioned there was also a beautiful oak tree at the St. Mary's Park. Comm. Myers mentioned that it is her favorite tree!

**AJ Reineking:** None

**10. Adjournment**

Motion by Comm. Myers to adjourn meeting, second by Comm. Blaine.

**Voice vote:** unanimous; Nays – None; Absent: Comm. Ziegler, Comm. Otto  
- Motion carried at 7:59 p.m.

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