

MINUTES - UNAPPROVED
October 14, 2015
Joint Meeting of the
Batavia Tree Commission
St. Charles Tree Commission
Geneva Natural Resources Committee

PLEASE NOTE: These minutes are not a word-for-word transcription of the statements made at the meeting, nor intended to be a comprehensive review of all discussions. They are intended to make an official record of the actions taken by the Commission and to include some description of discussion points as understood by the minute-taker. They may not reference some of the individual attendee's comments, nor the complete comments if referenced.

1. Meeting Called To Order

Chairman Scott Haines called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. at the Peg Bond Center at the Batavia Riverwalk in Batavia, Illinois.

Batavia Tree Commission Present: Chairman Scott Haines; Commissioners Kathy Vranek, Robert Lootens, Kevin Summers, and John Dillon; City Arborist Frank Saupp

Members Absent: Commissioner Gary Holm

St. Charles Tree Commission Present: Chairman Ralph Grathoff; Commissioners Suzi Myers, Jon Duerr, Caroline Wilfong, Ron Ziegler, Valerie Blaine, and Pam Otto

Geneva Natural Resources Committee Present: Committee Member Tom Dickinson

Others Present: Isabel Soderlind, City of St. Charles

2. Introductions

3. Walking Tour of Batavia Riverwalk

The group took a walking tour of the Batavia Riverwalk and the current Houston Street streetscape improvement project.

4. Informal Discussion on Topics of Mutual Interest

Tom Dickinson reviewed the role of the Geneva Natural Resources Committee. It was formed about eight years ago to raise funds and provide the city with suggestions regarding tree issues. Geneva lost more than 2,900 trees from the Emerald Ash Borer infestation, but had no funds to replace those trees. Currently, Geneva will share the cost for replacement trees and special focus is given to replacing trees in high traffic areas. A list of 40-60 permitted tree species will help maintain diversity in the future. The group then discussed the shortage of suitable street trees. St. Charles has purchased trees from St. Aubin Nursery in Kirkland with good success.

Haines mentioned he had noticed some die back on hybrid elms that are about 10-15 years old and asked if anyone else had observed this issue. Vranek noted that the trees could be cultured to identify the cause.

Soderlind reported that Graf Tree Care performed an urban tree study for St. Charles and recommended more diversity. As a result of the assessment, trees in the poorest condition were

removed. Some St. Charles residents continue to treat their ash trees and are asked to notify the City when doing so. Haines reported that Graf Tree Care had also conducted the first phase of a tree survey for Batavia during 2015. The next phase will be done in 2016 and the survey will be completed in 2017. Haines said with the tremendous loss of ash trees, the percentage of maples is very large so he has limited the number of maples being planted. Myers recommended keeping the survey updated so it remains useful.

Haines told the group that in 2001 the City became responsible for planting parkway trees in new developments. He was pleased that the late Dr. George Ware, a noted tree expert, lived in Batavia and Dr. Ware's small neighborhood was home to at least 14 different species. In Batavia, parkway trees are paid through the building permit fee. Haines asked if anyone could recommend good parkway trees that were being used in their towns. Batavia has been planting hybrid elms, Marmo Freeman Maples, hackberries, locusts, Kentucky Coffeetrees, and lindens. Vranek noted that the silver linden is a nice alternative to the little leaf linden, and it is not as susceptible to Japanese beetles. The group discussed use of pin oaks and catalpas. Haines said he will consider trees not included on Batavia's acceptable species list on an individual basis. In new developments, it is difficult for trees to reach their full potential due to the poor quality of soil. He is very careful to protect existing trees when new sidewalks are installed.

Ziegler commented that tree commissions could teach the public how to better care for trees. For instance, pin oaks prefer acidic soil. The group then talked about the difficulty of preventing homeowners from using "volcano" mulching; many unknowingly over-mulch trees with the belief that it's beneficial. Another issue occurs when the planting contractor places the new tree too low.

Haines said that very few oaks were planted prior to 1998, but Batavia currently has between 1,000-1,500 oaks in the parkways. Batavia obtains its oaks from Possibility Place, and they are somewhat smaller and lower branched than the typical tree and some people don't like the form of the young oaks. Duerr commented that Bradford Pear trees were favored by developers in the past, but they turned out to be very weak. Haines said Batavia uses crabapples under power lines and also tried hop hornbeams this year.

Everyone agreed that the annual joint meeting offered a good opportunity for the tri-cities groups to exchange ideas, and they were pleased to see it continue.

5. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by Saupp and seconded by Dillon to adjourn the meeting at 7:45 p.m. All were in favor and the meeting was adjourned.

Minutes prepared by
Kathy Montanari