

**MINUTES
CITY OF ST. CHARLES, IL
TREE COMMISSION
WEDNESDAY, MAY 11, 2011**

Members Present: Chair. Jim Nau, Vice-Chair. Suzi Myers, Bill Bangs, Ralph Grathoff, Pam Otto, Chris Scott, Ron Ziegler

Members Absent: Valerie Blaine, Phil Zavitz

Others Present: Ben Deutsch, Pat Konishi, Peter Suhr

1. Opening of Meeting

The meeting was convened by Chair. Jim Nau at 6:35 p.m.

2. Roll Call

3. Introductions of Visitors and Comments and Concerns

Resident Gerry Schroeder of 604 Jackson Avenue attended the meeting to address concerns and suggestions he had regarding tree care and replacement activities. He provided the following document *Subject: Tree Care & Replacement* outlining his ideas.

SUBJECT: TREE CARE & REPLACEMENT

TO: City of St. Charles Public Works Dept; District 303; Park District; Library District; Tree Commission; Kane County Forest Preserve; County Lands; and a few others involved with Trees.

INTRODUCTION:

This report is designed to inspire and promote the exchange of ideas on trees with each other, as well as provide thoughts on short term and long term (30 year) funding for our tree programs. At the very heart of this report is the challenge to our City Officials, Library District, School District, etc, to provide the leadership to identify and expose the problem of tree loss and care throughout our community, and provide the support required, based on our Tree Commission's recommendations, to solve present and long term tree challenges through a massive community effort.

Why a massive community tree effort? Because we can solve the tree problems if we make up our minds to do so. With all the negative news, problems with the economy, unemployment and underemployment of our citizens we need a program that looks to the future and inspires hope. One program that all our community can wrap their arms around and embrace. Why not make it a tree program?

THE PROBLEMS:

(1) At Langum Park (Camp Kane), Public Lands, Private Lands and many other areas throughout the City, we are losing more trees than we are gaining. This is because of old age, storm damage, disease, lack of maintenance, invasive ground growth, failed developments, some intentional destruction, and expansion for buildings and parking lots.

(2) It is apparent to all that our City needs a tree nursery if we are ever to start making any headway in solving the number one tree problem on an economical basis.

(3) Ben Deutsch, our City's Arborist, has done a wonderful job with selecting a variety of trees planted on City property to satisfy specific requirements, such

as under power lines and hiding fences. I have been concerned with the lack of Oak tree replanting at Langum Park ever since a big storm took down four large oak trees a few years ago. Now, after discussions with Ken Anderson and Drue Ullberg of our County Lands and Forest Preserve, I wonder about hickory, black walnut (wooded areas only) and other varieties of trees.

(4) Thanks to Ray Oshromowicz and Pam Otto of our Park District I now understand the City's and the Park District's approach to returning heavily wooded areas to the wild to provide habitat for wildlife and birds. I would contend that this approach is not encouraging new tree growth and harming older trees by invasive plants and falling branches trees. (I would encourage discussions with Drue Ullberg at the Forest Preserve who plants only 3 or 4 foot oaks in such wooded areas)

Citizens living close to Langum Park (Camp Kane) view the wooded areas as a "mess" and seem to desire a paved pathway through the woods to enjoy walking through the woods. A side note: The boundaries on the south side of the Park, as well as the entire north side of the Park are unclear as to where private lands begin and where the City's land ends. This leads to confusion who is responsible for the trees as well as the ground cover in those areas.

(5) Lack of maintenance and care of trees is a big problem in places like Langum Park. Many new trees are destroyed by invasive ground growth, mid-sized trees show huge cracks and bark problems, and mature trees show all of these problems.

(6) Lack of staff and funding are the two major items that hinder any progress in this area.

(7) Lack of a long term plan: A 30 year coordinated plan of what we want the trees in St. Charles to look like in the future. As Ken Anderson, who is in charge of the trees on County property, pointed out to me: Every unit of government has its own set of unique tree challenges and problems and each handles these as best they can. (Ken plants only Oak and Hickory trees of a certain ball size and height)

Thus we have our City, Park District, Scouts, Cemeteries, River Group, Downtown Business Association, School District, Library, Police and Fire

Departments all doing their own thing regarding trees, with very little exchange of ideas between each other. All seem to be on very tight budgets for tree replacement and maintenance of trees.

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS:

(PHASE 1) FUND RAISING AND TREE INVENTORY: Simply follow Elgin's example and form a nonprofit citizens committee and raise 2 million dollars by grants. (Grant writers needed) The money is then given to the City to decide how it should be spent.

Elgin had neither the staff, time or complete expertise to conduct the tree survey and GPS mark the trees to track the health and growth of the trees, and then determine the value of the trees. Elgin hired Davey Tree from West Chicago to do the work using a free download program called i-Trees.

The i-Tree program is an adaptation of the Urban Forest Effect (UFORE) model, which was cooperatively developed by US Forest Service Northern Research Station, the USDA State and Private Forestry's Urban and Community Forestry Program and Northeastern Area, the Davey Tree Expert Company, and SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry.

Morton Arboretum partnered with the US Forest Service to conduct a 2010 tree Census by visiting nearly 1400 sample plots in the 7-county county Chicago metropolitan region. They now seem to have moved to a satellite program for tree identification and Census. This may be worth a look to determine the cost to utilize the program and determine how perfected the system has become. At this point it would seem the preferred program would be the i-Tree system as it has been revised based on newly available research from NRS and feedback from i-Tree users. Additionally the i-tree system is easy for anyone to use. One can download the program, plug in the types and number of trees in one's yard, and come up with the value of those trees.

(PHASE 2) NUMBER CRUNCHING AND PLANNING: Once we learn how much of the City's land is covered by the urban forest canopy, where the canopy is located, we will gain insight about the environmental functions that the urban forest performs, as well as its overall value. Planning would include:

exchange of tree problems and approaches (Ideas); The 30 Year Plan; Solving Present Problems - Tree Loss & Maintenance; Long Term Funding; Citizen Involvement; and the like.

EXCHANGE OF TREE IDEAS: I found that touching base with a large number people generated ideas that could be applied to St. Charles. I feel this was important.

Pam Otto, with Ray Ochromowicz of our Park District, updated me with the present program of returning wooded areas to wild areas to provide habitat for animals and birds. Pam also should be given full credit for engaging about 146 students from Haines to cleanup Langum Park for Earth Day.

Barbara Wajnicky, Chair of the County Energy & Environmental Committee, informed me that Campton Hills operated on a shoestring budget but had thousands of volunteers that planted trees and did others things to beautify the City and Park areas. Scouts going for Eagle Scout built wonderful park benches.

Drue Ullberg of the Forest Preserve has a wealth of tree information. Drue is in charge of the trees in over 15,000 acres, and operates from a shoestring budget. Drue plants only oaks in the wooded areas, and these are of a specific trunk size and height to give them a a better chance of survival. Drue buys thousands of seeding a year at 10 to 20 cents each. Of 10,000 seedling planted he is experiencing a 10% survival rate.

Drue has a tree nursery, but it is unlike a neatly groomed and arranged nursery that one would normally expect. Trees that are planted in the preserve, 500 hundred a year I believe, are raised in 5 gallon buckets until they are replanted at 3 or 4 foot high. When planted, workers are to water and fertilize the trees for four months but that doesn't always happen due to work loads. Everyone does the best they can.

Drew has hundreds and hundreds of volunteers helping out. He has given them a neat name and assigns a specific area of the Preserve to maintain. The feeling of ownership by the individuals and groups is key.

Possible Applications and Findings:

(1) The exchange of ideas and problems with Trees is so important that I would recommend the Tree Committee consider acquiring a "Have a Meeting" type computer programs. Then it would be easy for Tree personnel to get together two or three times a year, on an informal basis, and just exchange ideas and problems. I could see this expanding to include the Forest Preserve, The Morton Arboretum, Geneva and Batavia.

(2) The care and maintenance of trees after planting and during growth is a huge problem with everyone in the County because of funding and lack of personnel time. A conversation with Davey Tree personnel may provide some possible approaches to resolve this long standing problem.

(3) St. Charles has thousands of citizens ready to do volunteer work with trees as shown by the Forest Preserve and Campton Hills. Everyone, including our service organizations, scouts, school youth, etc, need to be shown the Problem and the long term plan to correct the problem; then educated on what they can do to help, and how to do it. (Elgin assigned Davey Tree the education responsibility. Its good to have Elgin as a model as we can check with them what went well, what didn't, and what they would do differently.)

(4) Drew's program of assigning adult and youth groups to specific areas really makes sense as it involves the volunteers and provides ownership responsibly. Could we apply this concept to all City lands such as our cemetery's, library and school property, fire and police lands?

(5) The survival rate of seedling in our Forest Preserve really surprised me. I absolutely had no idea it was as low as 10%. Here is a thought worth consideration: Why not issue volunteers containers with the proper seedling required. (Police lands might require 3 oak and 2 hickory trees for example)

The volunteers would then take the containers of seedling home to raise until they reach a specific size, to then be returned to the Police Department for planting, or to the Park District's or City's nursery for additional growth? The key points are that the seeding will have a high opportunity to survive given private care plus the ownership factor of knowing what they are raising and where it is going. The ownership factor is huge. The connivence of not having to get together in a group and drive to a wooded area favors this approach. The volunteers can also be given the opportunity to acquire a number of

seedling in containers for raising and planting in their own yards. (The City recommends 8 varieties) Bingo - we now helped solve the loss of trees on private lands. This appears to be a win-win-win situation from every standpoint.

SHORT & LONG TERM FUNDING:

The 2 million dollars raised through grants would give the City a firm starting point and an aggressive start. Unlike Elgin, which had to spend the money within a short time, St. Charles would have a longer time to apply the funds to the appropriate areas.

Once the grant money runs out the questions are: "Where do we get the funding to maintain a long-term program?" and "How much do we need each year for 30 years?"

Once the second question is answered we then can move to the challenge of finding the funds. Here are some possible considerations that I would offer.

(1) Find an area to grow a forest of high value trees. Apply the concept used throughout Wisconsin and as taught by "Trees for Tomorrow" in Eagle River, Wisconsin: For every tree used in the paper industry and wood plants another one is planted. This means the forest can be selectively harvested when mature, but the forest goes on forever. (FedEx Kinko insures that for every tree used to make their paper, another is planted.)

Once the amount needed each year is determined, that number will determine the size of the forest. If the wood value of say a black walnut is worth \$4,500 dollars today, one simply divides the \$4,500 into the dollar amount required each year to come up with the number of trees to be planted each year. (If \$100,000 dollars is required, 23 trees would be planted each year)

(2) Find a major benefactor who would fund the program forever.

Throw the challenge out to the community to come up with the answer. Have a contest? Award Prizes for the best answers? With all the talented youth and adults around us I would bet some possible answers would come in that none

of us would ever have considered. Again, this is putting the problem before our citizens, and asking them to help.

(PHASE 3) USE RESULTS TO HELP TREES AND PEOPLE

After our Tree Inventory is completed the data collected will help guide decisions about caring for the St. Charles urban forest. These decisions will impact quality of life in St. Charles for many years to come.

Thanks for considering this report,

Jerry Schroeder
Ph: 630-377-1361
E-mail: chat@elnet.com

"A Society Grows Great When Old Men Plant Trees Whose Shade They Know
They Shall Never Sit In." – Greek Proverb

PS: I have two photos from Camp Kane (Langum Park) along the Fox River that give a glimpse of what the forest looked like in 1861 when St. Charles entered the Civil War and in 1864 when the 8th Illinois Cavalry returned to St. Charles for a short furlough and re-enlistment.

If anyone wants to see these photos I will be happy to e-mail them to you.
They are best viewed on a computer screen.

He proposes an inter-governmental effort to support a large tree program, to combat the loss of trees for a variety of reasons. Points and comments:

- Plan for repair of trees does not exist. New growth trees have problems that are not being addressed.
- Each group or agency (i.e. Public Works, Park District, Library, Police Dept., Fire Dept., etc.) have their own individual plans. Would like to see a program that is from grass roots up, rather than from government groups down.
- Would like to see the Tree Commission take an independent initiative to bring the trees in the city to 2040's. Stated that Kane County had such a program.
- Indicated City of Elgin had received a \$20 million grant to establish a program and used an outside contractor to provide GPS mapping of trees.
- Indicated that other residents were willing to lend assistance. Key is to develop an ownership relationship with volunteer residents who could then be trained in proper care of trees. Feels if volunteers were requested, the response would be significant.
- One idea he borrowed from another municipality is to have trained volunteers go door-to-door instructing residents in the proper care of newly planted trees. Ben Deutsch indicated the City does provide care instructions for residents when new parkway trees are planted.
- Mr. Schroeder indicated once a program is established, he has ideas regarding funding. He understands that the current economic conditions present challenges. He would like to see a program that would not add cost to the City, but it would require direction and coordination possibly from the Tree Commission.
- Feels the Library and the Park District are very supportive of an inter-governmental program.
- Feels that money spent from City budgets would be better provided for through grants. Peter Suhr responded that Public Services is continually researching grant availability and applying when appropriate. This year the City applied for three grants for treatment of trees infested with Emerald Ash Borer (EAB).
- Mr. Schroeder is concerned about the loss of trees owing to development (such as at the Library) and also as trees age in established areas.
- Another related area of interest is Langum Park. He would like to see signage or explanations of who Mayor Langum was, recognition at the three entrances that it was site of Camp Kane during the Civil War, improvements to parking area to make it more presentable, etc. Suggestion made to enlist Civil War groups in these activities, including funding.

Following Mr. Schroeder's presentation Peter Suhr stated that the letter provided additional impetus to care for trees. Peter Suhr feels that the City has a robust tree program.

- City plants 300 trees a year in two (2) planting sessions, spring and fall.
- Five (5) Public Services staff members are dedicated to the tree program.
- The City maintains all City owned trees; this accounts for 20% of St. Charles trees that are primarily on parkways.
- Peter Suhr restated Mr. Schroeder's comments saying he hears Mr. Schroeder would like to expand current programs out from the City to include other governmental entities as well as private property owners and residents.
- Feels a number of issues could be covered under the Urban Forestry Plan.

Chair. Nau summarized the presentation saying he hears a request for a plan enlisting homeowners and residents to assume a more active role in the care of trees. The Tree Commission could provide a means of obtaining and disseminating information and education.

- Indicated the Tree Commission is currently in the development stages of creating an Urban Forestry Plan, one topic to be covered is legacy trees.
- Tree Commission recently conducted a cleanup program in Langum in coordination with a school program through the Park District. There is interest with both parties on conducting a similar program in the fall.
- Chair. Nau stated the Commissioners would review the document presented probably prior to the July meeting.
- Members of the Tree Commission have been meeting with Peter Suhr and Ben Deutsch in developing an Urban Forestry Plan. Issues and concerns raised in the presentation will be addressed where appropriate as the development of the Urban Forestry Plan continues.
- Jim Nau indicated the objective is to present the plan to the City Council as a total document, as opposed to approaching each subject individually.

Omnibus Vote

4. Recommend approval of October 2010 Minutes

Motion by Suzi Myers, second by Chris Scott to accept the October 2010 Minutes (Joint Meeting with Batavia) as presented.

Voice vote: unanimous; Nays – None; Absent: Valerie Blaine, Phil Zavitz - Motion carried.

4a. Recommend approval of March 2011 Minutes

Motion by Ron Ziegler, second by Chris Scott to accept the March 2011 Minutes as presented.

Voice vote: unanimous; Nays – None; Absent: Valerie Blaine, Phil Zavitz - Motion carried.

4b. Recommend approval of April 2011 Minutes

Motioned by Suzi Myers, second by Chris Scott to approve the April Minutes as amended.

Amend Section 6D New Commissioner, first sentence as follows: Delete the name “Peter Grathoff” and replace with the name “Ralph Grathoff”.

Voice vote: unanimous; Nays – None; Absent: Valerie Blaine, Phil Zavitz - Motion carried.

5. Old Business

A. Langum Park Follow-Up; Cleanup Project

Suzi Myers presented. The work day on April 21 to cleanup Langum Woods was successful. This project was done by students from Haines Middle School through a Park District Program. The students were divided into teams of 10 with two (2) adults per team. The work areas were sectioned off and teams assigned to each. Ben Deutsch added that the Park District and the naturalists did an excellent job in directing the students, explaining the objectives and what was to be done. The Park District provided all the safety supplies and tools for the teams and performed an Earth Day skit. Suzi Myers thanked the students for their efforts and felt that the students were pleased with the work as they were able to see the results.

Afterwards, Public Services sprayed the stumps of the invasive plants and will clear these stumps at a later date.

The sixth grade teacher expressed an interest in involving that grade level in a similar project at Langum Woods in the fall. If that were accomplished, Langum Woods would be cleaned up twice a year, in the spring and then in the fall. Ben Deutsch indicated this would be a great starting point to build from with the objective of reclaiming Langum Woods.

Based on the progress made during this project, Jim Nau questioned how long it would take to reclaim Langum Woods. Ben Deutsch responded saying this one day project was a great start, barely a quarter of the area was cleared and to reclaim the woods would take several years. A few issues to be considered during the process would be handling of trees that present a safety hazard, poison ivy, treatment for invasive species, etc.

B. Discussion on City Forestry Plan/Ordinance

Jim Nau presented. Public Works has gathered numerous plans from other entities that will serve as a guide for developing the City Forestry Plan. There is nothing new to present at this

time because the March and April meetings were dedicated to Arbor Day activities. Once a general plan is prepared, a presentation will be made to the Government Services Committee (GSC) with an outline providing ideas, suggested course of action and a schedule. This will not be the actual Forestry Plan; this presentation is to keep GSC informed as to what the Commission is working on. When the City Forestry Plan document is developed it will be presented to the City Council.

6. New Business

A. Update on the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB)

Ben Deutsch presented. At the present time, 61 additional ash trees are scheduled for removal. The majority of the removals will be in the northeast quadrant of the City; the City tries to group this activity as it is more cost effective for removals and re-planting.

The damage to trees in the City is extensive, with 80 more trees being confirmed as EAB infected. As the trees are budding out, our crews are identifying additional infected trees. Skyline Tree Service, a new contractor for tree trimming and removal, also notifies Public Services of infected trees they identify. Of the City's 5,400 ash trees, approximately 4,000 remain.

A purple dot painted on a parkway tree indicates it is infected with EAB, a pink dot indicates the tree is scheduled to be removed. If a resident requests an infected parkway tree be removed when it is confirmed (purple dot), the City will remove it. If a resident notifies the City that a parkway tree scheduled for removal is being treated, we will work with the resident to determine the effects of treatment before removal.

If an ash tree on private property is confirmed as infected with EAB and it poses a safety hazard, the resident will be notified that the tree must be removed and provided a time frame. This process is similar to private trees with Dutch elm disease. If requested the City will provide the resident with contact information for three services; this information is not a referral. The City also recommends that several services be contacted for quotes. The first of these letters for trees infected with EAB will be sent in the next week or two.

B. Spring Planting Update

At this time, all residential parkway trees removed are being replaced. In the spring 240 trees will be planted; in the fall approximately 300 trees will be planted.

C. News and Concerns from Public Works

None

D. New Commissioners

Chair. Jim Nau officially welcomed two newly appointed commissioners Ralph Grathoff and Bill Bangs, Jr. to the Tree Commission. Both were appointed on 5/2/11 by the Mayor.

7. Committee Reports

A. Education Committee

No report.

B. Publicity Committee

No report.

C. Arbor Day Committee

Presented by Jim Nau. Take this opportunity to review the Arbor Day activities and look for possible improvements or changes.

- The day went very well with approximately 75 people including children in attendance.
- May want to consider getting a list of speakers created rather than relying on Morton Arboretum every year.
- Suzi Myers preferred the table with donated plants from Midwest Groundcovers positioned outside of the tent. She felt it was more accessible.
- The aerial tree rescue presentation involving the Boy Scouts was very well received.
- The involvement of the Boy Scouts with the veterans for presentation and retiring of the flags was also well received.
- It was agreed that Suzi Myers memorial presentation for Peter Grathoff was an excellent remembrance. Ralph Grathoff expressed his and the family thanks for the tribute. The memorial tree will be planted on the Freedom Walk and a plaque installed.
- A display case on the second floor of the Municipal Building was created after Arbor Day with the coloring contest drawings, the photo event entry, and a variety of information and plaques on trees and Arbor Day.
- Thank-you letters will be sent to all who made donations (perennial plants, sundae gift certificates, trees, musician, speaker, etc.) or assisted in some way. The pictures submitted for the coloring contest will be signed by the Mayor and returned to the child with a gift certificate for a sundae from Colonial Ice Cream.
- Because of the changes with Weekly Wire and the Den, being combined and made electronic, discussion was held regarding publicity for Arbor Day in general and specific events. A deadline date will be obtained and the timing of submissions determined. This will be done in an effort to make the best use of resources available.

8. Communications

Electric Division/Tree Activity Reports

Motion by Suzi Myers, second by Chris Scott to accept the January/February 2011 Communications-Electric Division/Tree Activity Report as presented.

Voice vote: unanimous; Nays – None; Absent: Valerie Blaine, Phil Zavitz - Motion carried.

Motion by Suzi Myers, second by Pam Otto to accept the March/April 2011 Communications-Electric Division/Tree Activity Report as presented.

Voice vote: unanimous; Nays – None; Absent: Valerie Blaine, Phil Zavitz - Motion carried.

9. Comments

A. Commissioners

Suzi Myers welcomed Ralph Grathoff and Bill Bangs to the Commission, and discovered that Bill knew both Peter and Ralph Grathoff for a long time. Bill has always had an interest in trees and following a recent move into the City limits applied to be commissioner.

Ralph Grathoff thanked the Commission for its welcome and reiterated his interest and willingness to participate and help.

Bill Bangs indicated that another reason for his interest in trees was that the founder of Arbor Day, J. Sterling Morton, was his great-great-grandfather.

Guest Jerry Schroeder thanked the Commission for allowing him to make his presentation and asked if anyone identified errors in the content to advise him. He also complimented the Arbor Day celebration.

B. Staff

None

10. Adjournment

Motion by Chris Scott, second by Pam Otto to adjourn meeting at 7:35 p.m.

Voice vote: unanimous; Nays – None; Absent: Valerie Blaine, Phil Zavitz - Motion carried.

/pjk