

**MINUTES  
CITY OF ST. CHARLES, IL  
TREE COMMISSION  
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2011**

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

**Members Absent:** None

**Others Present:** Ben Deutsch, Peter Suhr, Isabel Soderlind

**1. Opening of Meeting**

The meeting was convened by Vice-Chair. Jim Nau at 6:30 p.m.

**2. Roll Call**

Commissioner Otto not present for roll call.

**3. Introductions of Visitors and Comments and Concerns**

None.

**Omnibus Vote**

**4. Recommend approval of July 2011 Minutes**

Motion by Phil Zavitz second by Suzi Myers to accept the July 13, 2011 Minutes as presented.

**Voice vote:** unanimous; Nays – None; Absent: Otto      Motion carried.

**5. Old Business**

**A. Discussion on City Forestry/Ordinance Plan**

Vice-Chair. Nau recommended a meeting between the Tree Commission and the City to review the current research and their recommendations for this plan. Their assistance is needed to determine how best to proceed on this Urban Forestry Plan/Ordinance.

Vice-Chair. Myers recommended that an outline and structure be developed so the Commission can move forward on this initiative. Commissioner Grathoff indicated that he has been researching Urban Forestry Management Plans and has started developing a rough outline. It is a large undertaking so Mr. Suhr suggested the committee utilize the City's administrative resources for this aspect of the project.

The next step would be to present the outline and structure of the plan to the City Council at a Government Service Committee meeting. The consensus was to inform Council of the Commission's initiative sooner rather than later.

Commissioner Blaine recommended utilizing the website "iTree". The software suite is a comprehensive program which "incorporates an urban and community forestry analysis and benefits assessment tools". The tool could be utilized by the commission to strengthen their urban forest management and advocacy efforts. This tool is the precursor to the Urban Management Plan. It has an abundance of information and it may assist in explaining the needs of an Urban Forestry Management Plan to the community and the City Council. Commissioner Blaine distributed the information for the committee to view.

Vice-Chair. Nau, will set up a meeting in October between Commissioner Grathoff, Ben Deutsch, Peter Suhr and himself to review the research conducted, current outline, and establishing some goals to move forward on developing the Urban Forestry Management Plan/Ordinance.

#### B. Discussion of the Tree Care and Replacement Program Proposed by Jerry Schroeder.

Mr. Suhr indicated the City received an email from Mr. Jerry Schroeder this past spring regarding the City's tree management plan and his suggestions for a comprehensive Urban Forestry Management Plan. The Assistant Director of Public Works, the City Arborist and Mr. Suhr met with Mr. Schroeder back in June. At that time, they reviewed and addressed Mr. Schroeder's concerns and vision of the community's Tree Care program. The City representatives informed Mr. Schroeder of the City's extensive parkway tree database and work order program, which has been utilized for numerous years. It was a positive discussion in which the current program was discussed and all parties exchanged thoughts and ideas.

Mr. Suhr suggested the committee review Mr. Schroeder's recommendations carefully and determine which elements of his vision may be applicable to implement for the City's Urban Forestry plan.

Vice-Chair. Nau will contact Mr. Schroeder and thank him for his suggestions, which the commission will take into consideration when developing their plan.

#### C. Memorial Plaque for Peter Grathoff

Mr. Deutsch has received the memorial plaque and it will be installed this coming week. Restoration is needed in the designated area before it is installed.

#### D. Volcano Mulching

The issue of “volcano” mulching was mentioned and discussed at the last meeting. Volcano mulching is not permitted and is included in the City’s codebook, but it has not been the standard practice to enforce. Volcano mulching causes rotting of the tree. Residents receiving a parkway tree are given a handout regarding the proper care of the newly planted tree; this handout also includes the proper mulching technique. This information is posted on the City’s website as well as past versions of the City’s monthly newsletter.

It was suggested that educating efforts continue by: (1) including the information in the Urban Forestry Plan under “education”; (2) including this information at the Arbor Day festivities through flyers, a demonstration and/or the speaker’s topic; (3) sending formal letters to local landscaping companies informing them “volcano” mulching is against the code and requesting the correct technique be implemented, and (4) educating the Council members.

#### E. Yearly Joint Meeting with Batavia Tree Commission

Last year’s joint meeting with Batavia was held in October at Batavia’s Public Works Garage. The City of St. Charles Tree Commission is scheduled to host the meeting this year. The agenda is informal but discussions typically revolved around common urban forestry issues. Vice-Chair Nau suggested this year’s meeting be held in October at Hickory Knolls Discovery Center. The facility is located at 3795 Campton Hills Road. If the site is not available the St. Charles Public Works Facility could be an alternative option. A “light” dinner is typically included at these joint meetings. Discussion.

Vice-Chair. Nau will contact Batavia’s Tree Commission to establish their interest and availability. Vice-Chair. Nau will then contact all the City’s tree commissioners to assess their accessibility. Once formalized, the City’s Administration Office would be notified to insure proper posting of the public meeting. Vice- Chair Myers will contact the City of Geneva to see if they would be interested in attending. The agenda will include common issues the cities share with a “light” supper included.

### 6. New Business

#### A. Update on the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB)

**Ben Deutsch presented.** Approximately 137 infected ash trees were proposed to be removed at last month’s Government Services meeting. The City is currently finishing the removals from the previous list. The number of trees needing to be removed is increasing, but the actual removal is taking more time since these trees are much larger. The proposed removal list has already been projected for September, October and November.

To be more cost effective, Mr. Deutsch has begun to group the removals by quadrant, but alternating the quadrants to reduce the impact on the community. The impact on the west side has been more significant, but it is evident the infestation has affected the east side, Surrey Hill, Hunter's Fields, Fox Chase, Dunham Road.

A purple dot indicates the tree is infested with the EAB, the pink dot means it will be removed. Pink dots are not placed on the trees until they have been presented at the Government Services meeting. Residents are then notified of the removal via letter within a few days of being marked with the pink dot.

Contractors are currently removing trees three days a week. This has kept the City within the budget allotted. The City has been grinding the stumps and black dirt. After the infected ash trees are removed, the City chips and double grinds the branches, as experts recommend. This is utilized as mulch and available to residents at no cost.

Commissioner Bangs questioned the safety hazards of some of these trees. Mr. Deutsch explained that the City is working quickly to remove the parkway trees before they become hazardous. City ordinance states that if a private tree presents a health or safety hazard, the owner may be required to remove it. While this is the policy, it has not been the practice. At this time, the City informs the resident and notifies them that the tree be removed. The City is always willing to work with a homeowner, but as Mr. Suhr indicated, when and if the City has to enforce this ordinance, the next step would be to present it to the City Council.

Mr. Deutsch stated that the EAB ash trees affected in the downtown area will be removed by next spring and replaced during spring planting. The trees will remain and be decorated for the holidays. A plan for the downtown area does exist, but will be revised and updated. Replacements will be no larger than 3 inches in diameter.

## **B. Fall Tree Planting for 400+ Trees.**

The actual number of trees being replanted this fall is over 500, but not all of the trees will be removed in time for the fall planting season, so the replacement estimate is closer to 400. Spring planting however is projected to be very high. There is a wide variety of trees being replanted, but not all trees removed will be replaced. Some of the trees removed had spacing issues, were in conflict with city utilities, streetlights, etc. Replacement on residential parkways will be the priority and not all of the trees removed will be replaced at the same time, e.g., Rocket Park.

Commissioner Ziegler questioned the success of chemical treatments. Mr. Deutsch indicated the success of chemical treatments for EAB has been varied. Safari was used in Surrey Hill and most of those trees are scheduled to be removed. There could be various reasons why the treatment was unsuccessful; the trees are very large and some had already been identified with

EAB when treatment began. Sedgewick Circle and the Timbers began treating the trees as soon as the City became aware of the insect and they have been successful with treatment. The trees along Langum Park and along the river are injected every year and so far, they are looking healthy. Any tree with a silver tag indicates the homeowner is treating the tree or the donated Safari is being used. Valent, the makers and distributers of Safari donated the chemical to the City for five years. We are currently in the second/third year of this program.

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

In November, Public Works may have the opportunity to host a Wood Utilization Workshop sponsored by ISA & the Morton Arboretum.

## **7. Committee Reports**

### **A. Education Committee**

**Langum Park Restoration Project in conjunction with 6<sup>th</sup> Grade students from District 303.** Vice-Chair. Myers was contacted by Lisa O'Brien, a teacher with the local District 303 School District, regarding the Langum Park Restoration program. She is interested in working on this project again with a group of 6<sup>th</sup> grade students. She also requested repeating the activity again in the spring.

Ben Deutsch felt last spring's program was a success and a positive experience for all. He would be very interested in having the students back to work on the restoration of Langum Park. The Commission agreed with Mr. Deutsch. Vice-Chair. Myers will contact Ms. O'Brien via email and determine a date for the event. Commissioner Blaine and Mr. Deutsch will be cc: on that email.

Since this was approved by Council last spring and the program was a great success, Mr. Suhr did not feel that this project needed to be presented to Council again. He recommended that the Commission set a date and move forward on this initiative. He reminded the Commission the same protocol would need to be followed and everyone involved in the project would need to sign a waiver form. If needed, copies of the forms were still available through the Public Works Department.

### **B. Publicity Committee**

Commissioner Blaine mentioned two programs/activities for community involvement and applicable in regards to EAB:

- (1) **Cerceris Identification and Awareness (CIA) Project sponsored by the Morton Arboretum.** Commissioner Blaine will be working with the St. Charles North High

School teachers and students regarding this project. This program utilizes a wasp that attacks the EAB beetle and more applicable for high school students. This program may be too late to implement since we are nearing the winter season.

- (2) **Collecting ash seeds for long term storage project.** This project is sponsored by the Forest Service, the US Department of Agriculture. This project involves the collecting of ash seeds for long term storage in attempt to ride the EAB infestation and the opportunity to save the gene pool, similar to the American chestnut. There is specific protocol for collecting and gathering of the seeds, which may be appealing to students who typically like to collect. There are mature white ash seeds all over the forest preserve trails during this time of the year. This project would need to take place sometime between October/November.

Commissioner Blaine distributed this information to the committee for their consideration.

**At approximately 7:10 pm Commissioner Blaine left the meeting.**

**At approximately 7:15 pm Commissioner Otto entered the meeting.**

#### **C. Arbor Day Committee**

Vice-Chair. Nau indicated that Rick Weals would be interested in providing the musical entertainment and Midwest Ground Covers has offered to donate free perennials again next year. He suggested that if there were any changes to the program they should be discussed now and approved at the November meeting. Arbor Day has included a photography and tree story contest, and a children's coloring entry.

Commissioner Ziegler recommended the Commission begin to line up a speaker and topic of discussion now. Volcano mulching, EAB and other issues that the community might be facing may be good topics for the speaker to address. Commissioner Zavitz said that he would speak with Jon Duerr from the Kane County Forest Preserve and see if he would be available as a speaker for the event next April.

#### **8. Communications**

##### **Electric Division/Tree Activity Reports**

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

**Voice vote:** unanimous; Nays – None; Absent: Commissioner Blaine Motion carried.

**9. Comments**

**A. Commissioners**

**Commissioner Bangs:** Last months meeting referenced a comment from Commissioner Blaine that “buckthorn” had not yet been declared a “nuisance” species by the state. Commissioner Bangs asked how that is determined and if there is currently a process to include it within the nuisance species. Commissioner Otto mentioned this may need to go through the Department of Agriculture, but suggested he call Commissioner Blaine, she may be aware of the process and protocol.

**B. Staff**

None

**10. Adjournment**

Motion by Phil Zavitz second by Ron Ziegler to adjourn meeting at 7:40 p.m.

**Voice vote:** unanimous; Nays – None; Absent: Blaine Motion carried.

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