

**MINUTES
CITY OF ST. CHARLES, IL
TREE COMMISSION
WEDNESDAY, MAY 9, 2012**

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

Members Absent: Valerie Blaine, Phil Zavitz

Others Present: Fran Gilmartin, Jim Nau, Peter Suhr, Isabel Soderlind

1. Opening of Meeting

The meeting was convened by Vice-Chair Suzi Myers at 6:39 p.m.

2. Roll Call

3. Introductions of Visitors - Comments and Concerns:

Fran Gilmartin introduced herself to the committee as a current resident and the chair of the landscaping committee at the Brownstones. She is responsible for maintaining all the landscaping and trees within the subdivision.

She came to the committee requesting assistance to save several trees along the riverbank during the next phase of the Bob Leonard Walk project, which runs behind the Brownstones from the old "Erik & Me" restaurant to the Prairie Street Bridge. Mrs. Gilmartin has met with Jim Bernahl, the Public Works Engineer, working on this project. At this time, the plans call for all the trees to be removed. She indicated that some of the trees along the riverbank are not worth saving, but an attempt should be made to save some of the heartier more mature trees.

Mr. Peter Suhr indicated the River Design Committee initiated the concept and are the decision makers of the plan. The Bob Leonard Foundation also has input, with the City facilitating the actual construction. The project calls to redesign the riverbank with stone, natural grasses, and a walking path that will run along the river behind the Brownstone property. From his understanding, new trees will be planted every 10-15 feet along the corridor. Due to the scope of work and equipment needed for the project, the work will be extensive which may damage the existing trees.

Mr. Suhr offered the following recommendations:

1. He will speak with Mr. Bernahl regarding the extent of the construction. They will review the plans and determine if any of the existing trees can be salvaged during the construction.
2. Schedule a meeting between Mrs. Gilmartin, the Engineering Division, and Peter to discuss the project.

3. Have Mrs. Gilmartin attend one of the River Corridor and Design Committee meetings.
4. Have the tree commissioners visit the site and state their position.

Omnibus Vote

4. Recommend approval of April 2012 Minutes

Motion by Commissioner Grathoff second by Commissioner Bangs to accept the April 11, 2012 Minutes as presented.

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

5. Old Business

A. Discussion on City Forestry/Ordinance Plan

Vice-Chair. Myers and Commissioner Grathoff met with Peter Suhr to discuss the commission's initiative to create a Forestry/Ordinance Plan.

At that meeting, Commissioner Grathoff presented some of the research he has conducted on various urban forestry plans. After some discussion, it was determined that writing this plan would be a major undertaking. To move forward and make progress on this initiative the commission needs to consider the following:

1. The time commitment necessary to develop the plan. This can be accomplished by:
 - a. Increasing the meeting times to an hour and half.
 - b. Adding two additional meetings to the calendar.
2. Determine if this would be an entire group project or develop a subcommittee to create the plan. Their progress would be presented at the Tree Commission meeting.

Mr. Suhr indicated there are several Tree Commission objectives in the current ordinance:

1. Write an urban forestry plan and make necessary revisions, which are to be published.
2. Appointment of the Tree Commission.
3. Advise and consult the Government Services Committee on any matters pertaining to trees and its enforcement.
4. Writing policies and amendments to the chapter, and allocation of funds.
Peter Suhr indicated the best way funds can be consistently allocated to a project is to have an urban forestry plan with goals, objectives and long-term projects.

5. Develop, review and revise the tree and shrub ordinance.
This can be reviewed on an annual basis by the committee.
6. Inform the public of the Tree Commission's activities, which is accomplished through the meeting minutes and Arbor Day.
7. The City will issue permits. This item could include residents that have special needs or causes. The plan would provide this guidance. In turn, the permit process would allow residents with special needs or causes to make changes or alterations to their property.

Vice-Chair Myers and Commissioner Grathoff offered the following options to the Commissioners:

1. No Urban Forestry Plan.
The current Tree Commission has been functioning without a formal urban forestry plan; the committee would continue to function as it is currently under the tree ordinance. The initiative would be to delete the creation of a urban forestry plan from the current ordinance.
2. Create an urban forestry plan.
This will require a commitment and time from the Tree Commission.
3. Have an outside vendor write the urban forestry/management plan.
Davey Tree Care currently creates urban master plans. The plan created by an outside entity will still need to be reviewed and "tweaked" by the commissioners so it is specific to the City of St. Charles. This would be at a cost, but Peter Suhr indicated he could present this initiative to Council as: (1) an addition to this fiscal year's budget, or (2) establish the initiative and budget it to next fiscal year's budget, May 1, 2013.

Commissioner Ziegler expressed that the development of the plan is essential at this time for the following reasons:

1. Necessary with the removal of 5,400 trees.
2. Necessary to maintain the urban forest and its benefit to the city.
3. The City already had an urban forest; the commission just needs to maintain it.

After much discussion, the committee made the following recommendations:

1. Commissioner Grathoff will email a sample of one of the urban forestry plans to Peter Suhr. Peter will review and forward the plan to the rest of the commissioner for their review.
2. Peter Suhr will contact Davey Tree Care. He will try to schedule a presentation for the next Tree Commission meeting.

6. New Business

A. Update on the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB)

As mentioned at the last meeting, Council approved the monies necessary for the removal and replacement of EAB trees. Public Services is currently working with its current vendor on this year's plan. Peter Suhr will present this proposed plan to Council at the next Government Services Committee (GSC) meeting, Tuesday, May 29 at 7:00 pm. The presentation will also include a discussion on privately owned ash trees: a review of the current ordinance, past practices and options/recommendations from the GSC committee.

Commissioner Bangs asked if a press release has been written and published recently on the EAB situation in St. Charles. Most of his contacts have mentioned that they were never aware of the EAB issue until they were notified that their parkway tree(s) were being removed. In addition, the public is not aware of the commitment being made to maintain the City's streetscape.

Mr. Suhr indicated information is available through several sources. Newspaper reporters have picked up the story in the past. Tree Commission minutes and Council updates are published on the website on a monthly basis. Updates are published in the City's monthly Den publication. On occasion, there have been press releases initiated by the City.

Commissioner Bangs recommended that Commissioner Blaine or Otto submit an article to the local newspapers to increase awareness of EAB.

B. News from Public Works: None

C. Langum Woods Clean Up.

Peter Suhr indicated that the clean up was well organized. The project is running well and the students have accomplished a great deal. One section of the path appears to be complete and it looks great.

Vice-Chair Myers complimented the St. Charles Park District and their program. They have done an amazing job. It appears that with every session the students learn more. This time the Park District introduced replanting/plant rescue. The students took natural plants growing on the path and transplanted them to different areas of the woods. This part of the project introduced restoration/preservation to the students.

Commissioner Otto entered into the meeting at 7:30 pm.

Commissioner Otto stated that with every session they learn more about the property. It was a great session and the kids were great.

7. **Committee Reports**

A. **Education Committee:** None

B. **Publicity Committee:**

Vice-Chair Myers will request Commissioner Blaine to write an EAB press release and the City's initiative to maintain the city's streetscape. (See item 6A.)

C. **Arbor Day Committee**

The Arbor Day event was conducted on Friday, April 27. It was a chilly afternoon, but it was well attended with approximately 60 attendees. Mr. Nau indicated that he would be available if anyone has any questions regarding next year's Arbor Day set up. All items were initiated in January. Confirmation calls were made prior to Arbor Day.

The following items were suggested for next year:

Coloring Contest still appears to be popular with approximately 50 entries submitted this year.

Photo Contest: Entries should be limited to local trees.

Tree Story Essay Contest: Tree Story/Essay appeared to have more participants.

Donation Tree: This is typically taken care of by the City.

Free Perennials: Midwest Ground Covers has always been supportive, donating flats of perennials.

Entertainment: Rick Weals enjoys providing the musical entertainment.

Tent: Tent and music set up appeared to be very fitting this year. A-1 Canopy continues to set up the tent every year.

Art Activity for Children: A few children were active with the leaf rubbing activity.

The Public Services division ran out of the coloring books they were distributing.

Planting of the Tree of the Year: The "Tree of the Year" is planted on a different site in St. Charles every year. While the tree is not planted at the Arbor Day celebration site, Lincoln Park is centrally located and provides consistency from year to year.

Speaker: Having a speaker appears to be popular.

Recognize Organizations that support Arbor Day. The organizations should be recognized during the ceremony, not just on the program.

Increase attendees. Chris Scott will distribute invitations to all the clients/homeowners he works with during the month of April.

Prizes: The prizes donated by the St. Charles Park District were greatly appreciated. The Moonlight Hayride was a great prize!

Please remember that City vehicles are not to be driven on the park property.

Overall, the event continues to improve and get better every year.

8. Communications

A. Electric Division/Tree Activity Reports

April 2012 Communications-Electric Division/Tree Activity Reports were presented. Motion by Commissioner Ziegler second by Commissioner Bangs to place April 2011 Electric Division/Tree Activity Reports on file.

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

B. Time Change for Monthly Meeting

Due to the new building security measures at the municipal building, the start time for the Tree Commission meetings was moved to 7:00 pm.

9. Nominations & Elections for Chairman

As a mentioned at the last meeting, Jim Nau resigned from the Tree Commission. Nominations were made for chairman. Commissioner Ziegler and Commissioner Bangs were nominated as co-chairs.

Motion by Commissioner Scott second by Commissioner Otto to accept Commissioner Bill Bangs and Commissioners Ron Ziegler as Co-Chairs of the 2012-2013 Tree Commission.

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

10. Comments

A. Commissioners

Commissioner Otto: With the new start time, she hopes that she will be able to make the meetings on time.

Commissioner Ziegler: Complimented Jim Nau as the Chairman of the Tree Commission these past few years. He enjoyed the visits to Ball Nursery and hopes that Jim will come back to visit.

Commissioner Scott: It will be sad to see Jim Nau leave the commission; they both started on the commission at the same time. He also understands and empathizes with the Fran Gilmartin. Trees sometimes have to be removed, but he admires her passion to save the trees. Commissioner Scott hopes the City/committee can save at least a few of the trees.

Commissioner Grathoff: Thanked Jim Nau for his work on the commission. He can also empathize with Ms. Gilmartin. He hopes that the commission will be able to assist her with her cause.

Commissioner Bangs: He would like to see more information being released on EAB, it is important to inform the public. In addition, the public and landscaping contractors need to be educated on proper mulching. He has seen the improper mulching on some of the newly planted parkway trees, park district property and at some of the schools. Commissioner Bangs will begin to distribute pamphlets displaying the proper technique. Commissioner Bangs is also interested in conducting a joint meet between the Tri-Cities, Batavia, Geneva and St. Charles. A joint meet is typically scheduled for the fall. Isabel Soderlind will email Kathy Montavari at Batavia and copy Commissioner Bangs and Commissioner Ziegler to set up a joint meet in either September or October. The joint meet can be conducted at Hickory Knolls. The City will offer a light dinner for all the guests.

Vice-Chair Myers: No comments with the exception that Jim will be missed.

Jim Nau: It has been an interesting day, his ash tree(s) and locust were removed on his property today.

B. Staff :

Peter Suhr: The City is currently in the middle of tree planting. Approximately 600 trees are being planted this season, 300 of those are already in the ground. There have been some minor issues, but the City has been trying to accommodate residents as much as possible.

Isabel Soderlind: Thanked Jim Nau for all his assistance the past few years. He has been her contact to the Tree Commission and has appreciated all his guidance with Arbor Day, joint meets, minutes and agendas.

11. Adjournment

Motion by Myers to adjourn meeting at 8:10 p.m.

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

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