

**MINUTES
CITY OF ST. CHARLES, IL
TREE COMMISSION
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 2012**

Members Present: Co-Chair Bill Bangs, Valerie Blaine, Jon Duerr, Ralph Grathoff, Pam Otto, Phil Zavitz, Co-Chair Ron Ziegler

Members Absent: Suzi Myers

Others Present: Chris Adesso, Marcelline D'Argento, Peter Suhr

Speaker: Phil Graf, Graf Tree Care, Inc.

1. Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

The meeting was called to order by Co-Chair, Ron Ziegler at 7:00 p.m.

2. Introduction of Visitors - Comments and Concerns:

No visitors present.

3. Minutes - Review and Approval

A. Motion to accept and place on file the minutes of the September 12, 2012, Tree Commission meeting as presented. Motion by Commissioner Duerr, second by Commissioner Bangs. Voice vote: unanimous; absent Commissioner Myers; motion carried at 7:04 p.m.

B. Motion to accept and place on file the minutes of the October 9, 2012, Tri-Cities Joint meeting as presented. Motion by Commissioner Bangs, second by Commissioner Blaine. Voice vote: unanimous; absent Commissioner Myers; motion carried at 7:05 p.m.

4. Old Business

A. Wrap-up comments regarding the Tri-Cities Joint meeting.

The Commissioners and staff agreed the joint meeting with Batavia and Geneva was informative and productive. The Commissioners and staff will send a thank-you note to Andrea Dierich, the speaker from the Morton Arboretum.

B. Discussion of City Forestry Plan/Ordinance.

Mr. Suhr introduced Phil Graf, the owner of Graf Tree Care, Inc., located in St. Charles.

Mr. Suhr discussed the development of an Urban Forestry Management Plan ("UF Plan"), which is set forth as one of the core duties of the Tree Commission pursuant to City Ordinance 12.20.050. Mr. Suhr briefly described Mr. Graf's experience which includes developing UF Plans. Mr. Suhr explained UF Plans may include: Global Information Systems ("GIS"), tree inventory, Emerald Ash Borer ("EAB") management, reforestation, and diversification.

C. Presentation: *Urban Forestry Management Plan*, Phil Graf

Mr. Graf described his professional experience in arbor-culture which began in 1993 with tree pruning and removal. In 1999 he became a certified arborist, and later became knowledgeable in the areas of plant health care and diagnostics. As an urban forester, his focus is on the entire tree canopy.

Mr. Graf emphasized the importance of having an accurate tree inventory and a reforestation plan following EAB removals. A division of his business is Natural Resources Management and GIS. Mr. Graf explained the importance of managing the City's urban forest and having a UF Plan as a roadmap.

Mr. Suhr highlighted the importance of memorializing the City's forestry program through a UF Plan. Mr. Suhr informed the Commissioners the City has a good GIS already in use. He also reported the City's tree inventory is computerized and integrated into the City's GIS.

Mr. Graf explained how GIS mapping works in combination with other informational layers such as sewer lines, trees, and stop signs, for example. GIS can also include other tree-related data such as the species and diameter of each tree in inventory and the location of a specific tree in relation to power lines, for example.

Mr. Adesso reported all the City's trees are linked with GIS and we can locate and list all maple trees, for instance. Mr. Graf stated it is challenging to prioritize tree removals and plan for reforestation. He noted the importance of diversity to help avoid large scale tree-related natural disasters. Mr. Graf explained how chestnut blight, Dutch elm disease, and currently EAB have led to such natural disasters. He noted our global connectivity has caused the spread of more pestilence than in the past. However, correct reforestation and planning will result in less maintenance, less turnover, and a good canopy.

Mr. Graf explained diversity is a good starting point, but other important considerations include the types of trees best suited to grow in this area, different soil conditions within the City, and other criteria. He noted soil information may be obtained from the county and added to the City's GIS.

Mr. Ziegler inquired as to the type of relationship the City would have with a UF Planner. Mr. Suhr responded the UF Planner working with the City could be a consultant / contractor under formal agreement with the City. Mr. Suhr stated the goal will be to set up an agreement focusing on reforestation. Under the guidance of the Tree Commission, the City will work to develop an annual UF Plan.

Mr. Ziegler asked if the City has an Arborist on staff. Mr. Suhr responded there is no Arborist on staff currently, but there was in the past. Mr. Adesso noted he is responsible for the City's day-to-day forestry management.

Mr. Duerr commented on the policy portion of Mr. Graf's written materials, especially the basic care and private tree ordinances, and noted the Tree Commission's role in making ordinance recommendations to the City Council. Mr. Suhr explained there is a hazardous tree ordinance pertaining to private trees, but it is seldom used. Mr. Duerr stated

enforcement of a private tree ordinance would be important, especially if a private tree presents a danger to the rest of the tree population (i.e. pestilence / spread of disease).

Mr. Bangs inquired about public ash trees versus the number of private ash trees. Mr. Suhr responded there were 5,400 City ash trees, and estimated about 20,000 private ash trees.

Mr. Adesso stated residents often look to the City for guidance on trees and a UF plan written by a professional and approved by City government would be a good resource. Mr. Ziegler noted the UF Plan and the City Council should emphasize community involvement since 75% of the City's urban forest is private. Ms. Blaine asked what the next step would be with regard to writing a UF Plan.

Mr. Graf noted the City has already completed some important basic UF Plan components such as the inventory of trees, but he could guide the City in its plans. Mr. Suhr suggested a first step might be to have Mr. Graf help to develop an outline for a five-year UF Plan. The Commission could then use the outline to prioritize its focus. Mr. Suhr noted any UF Plan would be an ongoing process / living document.

Mr. Zavitz noted the City could influence and control private trees and pass an ordinance for new building and tree planting similar to the City's ordinances for sewer and water.

5. New Business

A. Update on the Emerald Ash Borer

Mr. Suhr reported the City is 1/3 finished with removal of ash trees. A bond in the amount of \$3 million was written for the EAB program. Thus far, 850 replacement trees have been planted, and next 1,000 trees have been approved by Council for removal and replacement; 900 tree replacements will be planted in spring 2013.

Mr. Bangs noted Gray Street was a great example of the City's progress with EAB removals and replanting, and complimented the City Council's commitment to fund the EAB program.

B. News or Concerns from Public Works / Revised Letter to Residents for Tree Selection

Mr. Suhr reported the City has taken steps to ensure the diversity of the City's parkway trees. The standard letter sent to residents regarding tree removal and replanting was initially changed and removed maple trees from the list of trees from which to choose. The letter was subsequently changed and eliminated residents' choice of parkway trees altogether. Mr. Suhr reported approximately 350 such letters were sent out this fall, and only 17 special requests for specific types of trees were received from residents. Mr. Suhr explained special requests for certain types of trees provide an opportunity for him to talk to residents directly and guide them away from requesting maple trees to replace ash trees. Mr. Suhr noted our goal would be to have a policy in place for spring 2013 planting.

Mr. Zielger shared an informational poster showing trees that are alternatives to ash trees. He suggested a publication of this type could be included with letters to residents as a means to provide education on different types of trees. Mr. Suhr reported 900 trees will be planted in spring 2013 and it might make sense to have Mr. Graf, or a similar consultant, help the City to make a tree diversity plan.

C. Langum Woods Spring Clean-Up

Ms. Otto reported the spring clean-up is an outreach program that is part of the curriculum for middle school. Planning is in progress but no date has been set, although April is a popular time for this project in connection with Earth Day.

5. Committee Reports

A. Education Committee: None. Ms. Myers not present.

B. Publicity Committee: Ms. Blaine no report.

C. Arbor Day Committee: Mr. Ziegler noted there is no Arbor Day Committee in place yet. Mr. Bangs and Mr. Duerr agreed to work on Arbor Day 2013.

8. Communications

A. Electric Division / Public Services Division Tree Activity Report for September and October 2012

September and October 2012 Electric Division / Public Services Tree Activity Reports were presented. Motion by Commissioner Duerr, second by Commissioner Grathoff, to place September and October 2012 Electric Division/Tree Activity Reports on file. Voice vote: unanimous; absent Commissioner Myers; motion carried at 8:10 p.m.

9. Comments

A. Commissioners:

Co-Chair Bangs: Great information; liked Mr. Graf's overview.

Commissioner Blaine: None.

Commissioner Duerr: Great work in the removal of a 16" green ash tree by Skyline from the parkway in front of his home, the stump was removed and the parkway was cleaned-up as well. Great work everyone.

Commissioner Grathoff: Thank you to Mr. Graf.

Commissioner Otto: Liked Mr. Graf's overview; thank you.

Commissioner Zavitz: None.

Co-Chair Ziegler: Good information from Mr. Graf. He also noted a ninth Commissioner is needed to complete the Tree Commission since the departure of Commissioner Scott. A resident of St. Charles Township is required.

B. Staff: None.

C. Visitors: n/a

10. Adjournment

Motion by Ms. Blaine to adjourn the meeting, second by Co-Chair Bangs. Voice vote: unanimous; absent Commissioner Myers; motion carried at 8:15 p.m.

/md