

**MINUTES
CITY OF ST. CHARLES
JOINT TREE COMMISSION MEETING
RON ZIEGLER, CHAIRMAN
October 15, 2014**

Please note: These minutes are a summary of statements made at the meeting; it is not intended to be a comprehensive review of the entire discussion.

St. Charles Tree Commission Present: Chair. Ron Ziegler, Ralph Grathoff, Raymond Hauser, Suzi Myers, Pam Otto, Valerie Blaine, Caroline Wilfong

Batavia Tree Commission Present: Chair. Scott Haines, Robert Lootens, Kevin Summers, Kathy Vranek, Frank Saupp

Geneva's Natural Resource Committee Members Present: Chair. Jay Womack, Jeanine McMillen

City of St. Charles Staff Present: Chris Adesso, Isabel Soderlind

Visitors Present: None

1. Call to Order & Pledge of Allegiance

The meeting was convened by Comm. Ziegler at 6:55 p.m.

2. Introduction and Welcome:

Chair. Ziegler introduced himself and welcomed all of the committee members to the annual Joint Tree Commission meeting between Batavia, Geneva and St. Charles. Chair. Ziegler made general remarks, reviewed the purpose of the meeting and gave an overview of the evening's agenda.

3. Discussion Topics:

A. Budgeting Challenges within each of the Communities

Geneva's Natural Resources Committee: Jay Womack, the committee's chair, indicated their group's initiative is being "green". This committee has raised funds to purchase parkway trees after approximately 2,800 ash trees were removed in the City of Geneva. The group is comprised of volunteers that raise money to purchase replacement trees. Their committee receives approximately \$500 per year from the City of Geneva to conduct fund raisers. To date they have purchased approximately \$10,000 worth of trees for Geneva's downtown area.

Two different fund raisers have been very successful for this committee, "Rain Barrels on Parade" and "Wine, Cheese & Trees". The events include music, food, drinks and silent auction. Local Geneva businesses have been very supportive donating services and items for the events. Their proceeds have yielded approximately \$8,000 the first year and approximately \$16,000 the following year. Now that the Geneva's downtown core is populated, the committee is considering a parkway tree lottery system for residents "in need" or seniors that live in Geneva.

Mr. Womack mentioned that the City of Geneva now has a 50/50 Tree Program for residents.

City of Batavia: Scott Haines, from the City of Batavia, indicated that the EAB hit Batavia in 2007-2008. At that time, they had approximately 2,600 to 2,800 parkway ash trees. Today they are down to approximately 500 parkway ash trees to be removed. Some of trees still standing are being treated by residents.

Batavia's tree budget was increased during the EAB infestation, but is now reduced. The reduction in the budget has impacted routine maintenance tree work in particular maintenance pruning. City crews have been able to prune from the ground, but the city may require a contractor to prune the taller and larger trees.

This year, the City of Batavia is recommending a full city tree survey. The last survey was conducted in 1997 and it is outdated. Their recommendation is to update the tree inventory in GIS; the program will manage the infrastructure and maintenance of trees.

As for replanting, Batavia has a 50/50 Tree Planting Program. Trees are small in scale but the city has recently offered larger options to residents.

City of St. Charles: Mr. Adesso indicated the City of St. Charles is in a similar circumstance as Batavia but began with a population of approximately 7,000 parkway ash trees. Chris Adesso indicated the City Council has had a tremendous amount of respect for the city's Tree Commission and their recommendations. The city was fortunate and took the initiative to pass a \$3,000,000 bond to deal with the removal and replanting of ash trees due to the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) infestation. The bond is now complete and as of this summer had approximately 400 remaining ash trees remaining for removal. The rest of these trees will be removed and replanted through the general fund monies as they become available in the budget.

The City's tree general fund is not as robust as it has in past years. The city will need to address maintenance issues, the remainder of the EAB removals and replants, updating of the tree inventory and begin the process of creating an Urban Forestry Management Plan. Graf Tree Care has been budgeted to assist with this effort this year.

B. Tree Initiatives Endorsement from Public Officials

The 50/50 Tree Program is now available to residents in all three cities.

Mr. Adesso indicated the City of St. Charles has been fortunate and able to plant one tree for each removed. In addition, the city has had had approximately 150 residents participate in 50/50 Program every year. For those trees that were ordered but were not able to be replanted at the same site, due to utility lines, etc., have been planted in areas adjacent to city property.

Batavia has started to plant some trees outside the Right-of-Ways i.e., around retention ponds, as well as high profile areas that have become barren from the removals.

C. Tree Issues

- i. Several different pests have been noted in all three cities. Several commissioners have read articles documenting maples being attacked by a borer. Blue spruces are being attacked by a fungus called instant needle browning. Kathy Vranek read that the EAB has jumped to other species of trees, such as the White Fringe tree which is native to the eastern United States. Overall, pests will continue to be a constant challenge in the future.

Scott Haines indicated that Batavia's Tree Commission developed an approved planting list due to issues with particular species, e.g., flowering crabs and pear trees.

Kathy Vranek indicated that Geneva has a nice list of approved tree species on their website. It is a great resource.

ii. Vandalism

All three cities have had to deal with tree vandalism in particularly vehicle accidents. In a case where a parkway tree has been hit by a vehicle, the ticketed motorist is billed for the damage or its replacement.

Kathy Vranek also mentioned the vandalism caused by homeowners pruning the parkway trees as well as improper mulching.

All three cities have noted the increase of improper mulching which kills the tree. Volcano mulching appears to be done by landscapers and homeowners. Each city has had their challenges in dealing with this issue. Several ideas were discussed to increase the public awareness on proper mulching:

1. Leaving door hangers on the proper care and mulching of parkway tree when it is planted. (Please contact the City of St. Charles for a copy of the door hanger.)
2. Place a push pin with a label on those trees that have been improperly mulched.
3. Include an article and diagram on the proper mulching technique in the city's monthly newsletter.
4. Distribute flyers and promote proper mulching at Arbor Day.

D. Other:

Kathy Vranek wanted to recognize a committee of women in Batavia called "Value Our Trees". This group of women saved a local arboretum in Batavia. The site was being considered for an athletic sports field.

Jeanine McMillen suggested all three cities, local park districts and forest preserves promote the planting of a tree to commemorate a loved one that has passed away, "In memory of a loved one."

Suzi Myers suggested the cities be more proactive in re-utilizing the wood of dead trees, i.e., "adaptive reuse of trees". As an example, the Kane County Farm Bureau on Randall Road carved a dead ash tree into an ear of corn sculpture. Comm. Myers suggested those in attendance stop by and take a look at it.

Jeanine McMillen also reminded everyone to attend and support Geneva's "Wine, Cheese and Trees" event planned for March 22, 2015.

4. Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned by Chair. Ron Ziegler at 7:55 p.m.