

**MINUTES
CITY OF ST. CHARLES
TREE COMMISSION MEETING
RON ZIEGLER, INTERIM CHAIRMAN
MARCH 13, 2014**

Members Present: Valerie Blaine, Jon Duerr, Ralph Grathoff, Raymond Hauser, Suzi Myers, Pam Otto, Caroline Wilfong, Ron Ziegler

Members Absent: Phil Zavitz

Others Present: Chris Adesso, Nicole Wang

Visitors Present: James Sullivan, Dwight Sullivan

1. Call to Order & Pledge of Allegiance

The meeting was convened by Comm. Ziegler at 7:02pm.

2. Roll Call

3. Introductions of Visitors - Comments and Concerns:

Dwight and James Sullivan were introduced by Comm. Ziegler. James Sullivan is a Boy Scout (Troop #1) working toward his merit badge in Communication. He attended just to observe. He is a student at East High School. Comm. Duerr asked how he chose the Tree Commission meeting. Mr. Sullivan commented that our agenda seemed interesting. Dwight Sullivan, also in attendance, is his father.

4. Welcome Raymond Hauser!

Comm. Ziegler introduced Comm. Hauser to the group. All Commissioners and staff gave a brief introduction. Comm. Hauser provided his background of 38 years in the St. Charles area. He became interested in trees and tree care due to personal experiences on his property near North High School.

5. Minutes Review and Approval

- A. Motion to accept and place on file the minutes of the January 9, 2014 Tree Commission meeting.
Motion by Comm. Duerr, second by Comm. Otto to accept and place on file the minutes.

Voice vote: unanimous; Nays – None; Absent: Phil Zavitz
- Motion carried at 7:10 pm.

6. Old Business

A. Discussion on City Forestry Plan/Ordinance

Comm. Blaine provided additional verbiage for section 2c. History of St. Charles Trees. The Commissioners reviewed her draft for inclusion into the Plan document. Comm. Ziegler asked to add information on the number of City owned trees. Comm. Otto mentioned the verbiage provided does not need a specific segue into the next section as it is self-contained.

Mr. Sullivan asked how many trees make up the entire urban forest population in St. Charles. Ms. Wang commented there are 20,700 documented City owned tree sites. Mr. Adesso stated the City owned trees make up approximately 25% of the entire urban forest of St. Charles. Comm. Duerr commented this information was provided by Graf Tree Care.

Mr. Adesso reported the City is working through the budget process for 2014-15. He has requested monetary support for the Tree Commission to hire a consultant to assist in the assembly of the Urban Forestry Management Plan. Currently, he is working through the budget process and expects to have more information in the next four to six weeks. Comm. Myers asked if Mr. Adesso has requested to add an Arborist position to budgeted staff. Mr. Adesso stated the City has a Certified Arborist (junior level) already on staff and has contracted Arborist consulting services as well.

7. New Business

A. Ordinance Review: 12.20.90 Proposed by Commissioner Duerr

Comm. Duerr asked if the ordinance proposal would be an area for a consultant to review and work towards. Mr. Adesso asked for input from Commissioners per the January meeting discussion. Comm. Duerr included that the Ordinance numbering system of “Chapter 12” is the section for Trees and “20.90” is the next logical number to use. He explained the proposed ordinance provides a proactive way for the City to review trees in light of work done through the EAB program. His use of “20%” is based on the five sections of the City. Mr. Adesso commented that 20% would be approximately 4,000 trees per year. In terms of staff manpower, it may pose a challenge for the City to inspect 4,000 trees per year independently, without contractual assistance. Mr. Adesso stated 20% is not an unreasonable number. His comment was to give perspective on how many trees a review would actually include as the Commissioners consider the proposed ordinance addition. Comm. Ziegler asked what the definition of “inspection” refers to. Comm. Duerr stated the inspection would be a walking inspection to review each site. He stated 70-80 trees per day for an assigned staff member would be typical with as most sites should be growing properly. Comm. Ziegler stated this type of inspection could help to minimize costs in the future. Mr. Adesso suggested to revise the fourth sentence of the proposed ordinance to read: “...*inspections shall be conducted by a qualified arborist, or his designee, as assigned by ISA*”. Comm. Duerr stated his intent is to have a responsible staff member reporting under the ordinance. Mr. Adesso added the proposal would be given to a consultant in order for them to include the ordinance within the Urban Forestry Management Plan and work with City Council to approve the suggested addition to the current ordinance. Comm. Duerr stated the Urban Forestry Management Plan could be an appendix included in the ordinance.

B. Update on the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB)

Mr. Adesso updated the Commissioners regarding the “extreme cold effect on EAB” question that was asked at the March meeting. Mr. Adesso explained he spoke with a professional at the state level and was told there would likely be no effect on the borer this winter.

Mr. Adesso explained he presented to the Government Services Committee two months ago regarding the EAB program. Mr. Adesso expects to continue with the same plan, which is to inspect the remaining 425 ash trees in the spring of this year. A majority of these trees were reported to be in good condition last fall after ocular inspection. The ash trees have been identified as having EAB but not a danger to public safety. The White Ash is especially in good condition. Comm. Blaine asked if the City has had any issues with sycamore trees. The Commissioners discussed sycamore and maple species trunk “splitting” issues that can happen at the end of winter.

C. News or Concerns from Public Works

Comm. Blaine asked about winter plowing efforts. Mr. Adesso reported it has been a long and busy winter for the Public Services plowing fleet. Comm. Duerr asked about the City salt supply. Mr. Adesso reported the City currently has salt and has not had to add any sand to salting operations this winter. Comm. Ziegler asked if the City is still using a beet preparation for brining during ice events. Mr. Adesso stated the City has been using brine successfully for four years. He stated Public Services have increased brine usage every winter. He also explained the optimum temperature to use brine is above 15 degrees. The further below 15 degrees, the longer it takes for salt to melt icing conditions.

The City Administrators office has invited all Commissioners to an Orientation Meeting. Mrs. Wang explained the meetings are information in nature and not mandatory. Two sessions are available: April 14, 2014 (5pm) at Century Station or June 2, 2014 (5:30pm) at the Municipal Center in the Council Chambers. Please let Mrs. Wang know by April 1, 2014 if you would like to attend. Mr. Adesso explained there will be twelve different Commissions and boards attending and there will be a review of the most recent FOIA guidelines.

Mr. Adesso let the Commissioners know the *Tree City USA* application was approved. St. Charles has been a *Tree City USA* participant for 15 years.

D. Langum Woods Clean Up: None

8. Committee Reports

A. Education Committee: Comm. Myers has some ideas she is working on. She is trying to obtain more DVD's for teachers and school libraries.

B. Publicity Committee: Currently this chair is open. Mrs. Wang explained if any Commissioners are interested in taking on Publicity efforts for the Commission please let her know. This committee is responsible for assisting with writing press releases and information for Den articles or the City website.

C. Arbor Day Committee:

Comm. Ziegler asked to review the Arbor Day Celebration Checklist. The open action items reviewed were:

Tree of the Year: Persian Ironwood. Discussion about the species revealed it is very close to the American Ironwood. The City has eleven ironwood species planted in City right of ways. Comm. Duerr explained it is named for the strength of its wood. Comm. Grathoff also mentioned it is slow growing. Comm. Ziegler asked to keep the Persian Ironwood as the species to highlight on the Arbor Day Invitation.

Tree Raffle: Commissioners are still interested in raffling a container tree. Mrs. Wang will contact Pedersen Company for arrangements.

Perennials: Comm. Grathoff contacted Midwest Groundcovers for the donation. He will pick up the perennials and deliver them on April 25th.

Speaker/Topic: Comm. Otto has been working with Mrs. Tieche at Munhall School. The teacher has two ideas, a play/drama (team of 3 students) and a game show regarding tree facts. The Commissioners unanimously accepted these two activities as the topic of the celebration. Comm. Blaine asked about plans in the event of rain? Mr. Adesso explained Lincoln Park has a gazebo that can be utilized. In the event of rain, the performance could be performed under the gazebo. Comm. Otto asked about microphones or sound system for the students. Mr. Adesso asked to have the teacher notify us of their sound needs and the City will organize with the sound consultant.

Press Release: Comm. Myers asked if a press release could be sent. Mrs. Wang notified the Commissioners a press release just went out promoting Arbor Day and the Tribute to Trees. Comm. Myers asked to have another release sent closer to the event. Mr. Adesso stated we can request the City liaison to reach out to the community through social media as well. Mrs. Wang also has the Arbor Day publicized on the website and in the Den.

Presentation of Colors: Comm. Zavitz was not available to comment. Information regarding presentation of colors was given to Mr. Sullivan as he is with Boy Scouts Troop 1. Mr. Sullivan stated Troop 1 was established in 1915.

Tree Demonstration: Comm. Grathoff confirmed Chris Scott will perform.

Musician: Comm. Myers confirmed Rick Weals will play guitar for the event.

Tribute to Trees: It was determined awards will be provided to all participants. Mr. Adesso suggested the Public Services staff can create slivers of tree clippings for the awards. Comm. Blaine called them "tree cookies". The Commissioners all welcomed "tree cookies" as the award for all participants.

Stewardship Award: Comm. Myers explained this award does not have to happen every year. Comm. Blaine asked for the criteria for the award. Comm. Myers explained a person or group that has performed above and beyond regarding trees is considered. The criterion is very broad. Nominations were requested. Comm. Grathoff asked if the City of St. Charles can be nominated. Mr. Adesso stated he would need to find out. The Commissioners discussed the City's efforts for trees. Comm. Myers asked to have a plaque for the City and modify the verbiage to fit the nomination. She also asked to have the past Mayors invited to the celebration.

Motion to nominate the City of St. Charles for the Stewardship Award at Arbor Day *pursuant to approval by the City Administrators office*. Motion by Comm. Grathoff, second by Comm. Duerr.

Voice vote: unanimous; Nays – None; Absent: Phil Zavitz
- Motion carried at 8:20pm.

District 303 Tree Award: Comm. Otto stated Munhall School would accept the tree award. Mrs. Wang will contact John Baird to organize the award, Pedersen Company for ordering a White Oak and organize planting efforts. The Commissioners were asked to attend the celebration. Comm. Otto will communicate with Munhall School for organizing the celebration.

Davis School: Comm. Wilfong has been working with the Principal and Library staff at Davis Primary School regarding Arbor Day. They are willing to have Commissioners come and read with the students at holidays. The Library staff will schedule time during Arbor Day week if any Commissioners would like to participate. Contact Comm. Wilfong directly if interested in participating. Comm. Otto volunteered to participate.

9. Communications

A. Electric Division/Tree Activity Reports

Motion to accept and place on file the Electric Division/Public Services Division Tree Activity Reports for January 1, 2014 through February 28, 2014. Motion by Comm. Duerr, second by Comm. Blaine to accept and place on file the reports as presented.

Voice vote: unanimous; Nays – None; Absent: Phil Zavitz
- Motion carried at 8:35pm.

B. Review of the Tree Species Requests Report for January 1, 2014 through February 28, 2014. - No requests for this time period to review.

10. Additional Items – Comments

A. Commissioners:

Comm. Myers: Ralph's suggestion for nominating the City for the Stewardship Award is excellent.

Comm. Blaine: She explained that she attended the Forestry Stewardship conference last week and the sessions were very informative. Also, the forest preserve is finalizing a new nature exhibit based on the white oak tree scheduled to be completed by the end of October.

B. Staff:

Mrs. Wang: Encouraged participation in writing for Den articles. Comm. Blaine asked to participate and will write for an upcoming Tree Spotlight article.

Mr. Adesso: Regarding the Tree City USA Growth Award, the City has almost completed the reforestation of the EAB program. Therefore, it may be difficult to achieve the requirements necessary for the Growth Award in 2015.

C. Visitors: No Comments

11. Adjournment

Motion by Comm. Myers to adjourn meeting, second by Comm. Grathoff.

Voice vote: unanimous; Nays – None; Absent: Phil Zavitz
- Motion carried at 8:40 pm.