

**MINUTES
CITY OF ST. CHARLES
TREE COMMISSION MEETING
RON ZIEGLER, CHAIRMAN
JULY 10, 2014**

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

Members Absent: Caroline Wilfong, Phil Zavitz

Others Present: Tony Bellafiore, Phil Graf, Steve Lane, Isabel Soderlind

Visitors Present: Kevin Kaschke

1. Call to Order & Pledge of Allegiance

The meeting was convened by Comm. Ziegler at 7:10 p.m.

2. Roll Call

3. Introductions of Visitors - Comments and Concerns:

The following visitors introduced themselves to the committee:

Tony Bellafiore, Public Services Division Manager for the City of St. Charles, was introduced. He is standing in for Chris Adesso who was not able to attend the meeting.

Phil Graf and Steve Lane from Graf Tree Care were invited to the meeting to offer guidance and suggestions on the development of the Tree Commission's Urban Forestry Management Plan (UFMP).

Kevin Kaschke, a Boy Scout with Local Troop 13, was attending this meeting to fulfill the requirements for his Communications badge.

4. Minutes Review and Approval

- A. Motion to accept and place on file the minutes of the May 8, 2014 Tree Commission meeting as revised. Motion by Comm. Myers, second by Comm. Grathoff to accept and place the minutes on file as revised.

Voice vote: unanimous; Nays – None; Absent: Caroline Wilfong, Phil Zavitz
- Motion carried at 7:16 p.m.

5. Old Business

A. Discussion on City Forestry Plan/Ordinance

Chair. Ziegler began this section of the meeting by reading the "Plan Summary" section of the "Urban Forestry Best Management Practices for Public Works Managers - Urban Forestry Management Plan" published by the American Public Works Association. (The entire document may be viewed at <http://www2.apwa.net/documents/About/CoopAgreements/UrbanForestry/UrbanForestry-4.pdf>.) This excerpt of the plan summarizes the purpose and basic steps required in creating an Urban Forest Management Plan (UFMP). See attached document "Urban Forest Management Plan Summary" for detailed information.

Phil Graf, ISA Certified Arborist, and Steve Lane were both present from Graf Tree Care to provide guidance to the Tree Commission on the Urban Forestry Management Plan initiative. Mr. Graf has been working with the City for the last two years. His focus has been the tree diversity/re-forestation plan due to the large number of ash trees remove here in the city. As a result, he has found the tree inventory data to be outdated and inaccurate; therefore he felt this was an opportune time to document and update the tree inventory. Developing an UFMP will be useful, regardless of the tree inventory information, but he suggested to the committee that both facets of the program could be ongoing at the

same time. Mr. Graf mentioned he would work with the Tree Commission to create a plan, but it would be a commitment that would take a couple of years to complete.

Comm. Blaine asked if it was just the data that was out of date or if the software system was also out of date?

Mr. Graf explained that the City has an existing GIS system that can be used to house the tree data. GIS has the advantage of utilizing other geographic features and is an all-inclusive system, versus TreeKeeper which is a stand-alone software program and currently being utilized by the City. The goal would be to build an accurate tree data layer to the existing GIS system, with an inventory that can be easily maintained.

Chair. Ziegler asked, besides the preventative treatment of diseases, e.g., the Dutch elm disease, how would the City be utilizing this information in the future?

Graf felt there were many ways to utilize this program in the future. The program could better track the following: tree diversity, removal program (after EAB), tree pruning program, etc. Overall, this system has the ability to assist with planning of routine tree maintenance schedules.

Comm. Ziegler asked if the City would be in charge of maintaining and utilizing this data. How is this going to be incorporated in this plan? Does the City have an idea of how they are going to use this and who will be charge? Who will make the decision regarding the pruning of trees, removal of trees, treatments and other various tree decisions? Who on the staff has this type of knowledge to make these decisions? He added that time, money and effort are made to collect all the data, but due to staffing issues, cost constraints, and outdated software, the information is under utilized.

According to Tony Bellafiore the City currently has a part-time administrative assistant who is maintaining this information on TreeKeeper. This staff member would remain in this capacity during and after the conversion. She would remain involved monitoring the program, updating the data and creating work orders through GIS with the City's arborist team. Mr. Bellafiore was very confident this system was one that could be handled and managed internally by the office staff in the future.

Chair. Ziegler felt this system could be a very valuable if it was utilized consistently. He requested the data collection and conversion to GIS be placed on the committee's meeting agenda on an ongoing basis.

Also discussed was the current treatment of City owned elm trees.

Chair. Ziegler asked how the City determined the type of treatment for these elm trees.

Graf is currently utilizing a fungicide to protect them from the Dutch elm disease.

Comm. Hauser asked how these trees could have survived without the treatment.

Graf could not determine why these trees survived. He stated there were approximately 30 to 40 elm trees that have survived, most of them located in isolated pockets throughout the city. After recently discovering an elm with Dutch elm disease, it was determined to treat twelve of these large diameter trees, approximately 80 to 100 years of age.

Steve Lane was then introduced. He is an ecologist, arborist and GIS coordinator that has worked with Phil Graf for the past five years. Mr. Lane explained the process of creating an Urban Forestry Plan. The plan has three phases with various goals incorporated in each phase; it would take approximately two years for the plan to be completed.

Phase 1 "Policy and Data Review"

Phase 2 "Urban Forestry Management Plan Outline"

Phase 3 "Trial Period Review/Final Draft" which would require approval from the City.

(See attached document "Project Understanding and Approach" for detailed information.)

Chair. Ziegler complimented Mr. Lane on his presentation. He however felt that the majority of the processes discussed in the presentation fell on the responsibility of the Public Works Department. Funding, budgeting and presentation to Council were typically the responsibility of the Public Works department. *He asked how the Tree Commission could assist and be involved in this process*

Mr. Lane explained that the process and plan would need input from everyone and should be developed through a mutual consensus with all the parties involved.

Comm. Duerr pointed out that the commissioners were appointed by the mayor to represent and uphold what is best for the city of St. Charles. The role of the Tree Commission is to review tree related matters and the requests of the City staff. The role of the Tree Commissioners is to endorse those needs to the aldermen and mayor. The Tree Commission first needs to agree with the procedures, policies and recommendations made by the City staff and then the Commission would take more of the political role.

Chair. Ziegler indicated that in the future, as this UFMP is developed, the Commission should schedule a meeting with the mayor to endorse the significance of this plan and/or attend Council meetings to support the Public Works staff. Chair. Ziegler requested further discussion on this topic be placed on the next meeting agenda under "Old Business".

Mr. Bellafiore added the impact of developing a UFMP is even more important at this time now that City is turning its focus away from the EAB and more towards an Urban Forestry program. Establishing a UFMP will assist the City to be more proactive than reactive when dealing with tree related processes and policies. All that Mr. Bellafiore was requesting at this time was the support of the Commission to move forward on developing a plan.

Comm. Hauser asked what the next steps would be to move forward on this UFMP.

Mr. Lane indicated reviewing and funding Phase I, "Policy & Data Review", of the program would get the plan underway. This would include the following: a review of all City Ordinances pertaining to trees and Urban Forestry, perform a full species and condition analysis on the City's tree inventory, review all community outreach programs, and an introduction to the City's in-house forestry operations. After this review, the findings and rudimentary suggestions would be presented to the Tree Commission and the Public Works staff. Graf Tree Care would need to know the project was funded to move forward on Phase I of this initiative. (See Phase I of Project Understanding and Approach".)

Chair. Ziegler recollected a conversation by Mr. Adesso regarding some budget constraints regarding the tree program this fiscal year. Chair. Ziegler requested this topic be added to the next meeting agenda under "Old Business".

- B. Review of the Historic Portion of the Urban Forestry Plan**
Comm. Blaine was complimented on the "History of St. Charles" section she wrote for the UFMP. No other suggestions or comments were made on the document.

6. New Business

A. Update on the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB)

Tony Bellafiore indicated Public Services had completed the assessment on the 425 remaining ash trees. Each tree was assessed and categorized with a rating of 1 to 3, with "1" being considered "Very Poor Condition" to "3" which indicated the tree showed no signs of being affected by EAB. Approximately 125 of the 425 ash trees have been determined to be removed this fall with replanting occurring in the spring.

Chair. Ziegler asked how many ash trees were saved by utilizing chemical treatments.

Being new to the division, Mr. Bellafiore did not have an actual count. Mr. Graf knew that the City had a Legacy treatment program since these trees had been tagged throughout the city. He did not know how many trees had been initially treated or how many had been removed. This program was initiated before his involvement with the City.

The Legacy program was not a treatment program, but funded by a chemical company. Graf did not feel the treatment was very effective; it was more of a promotion to utilize their treatment. Comm. Duerr did indicate that it was an attempt to save some of the trees.

There was a short discussion on the effectiveness of the treatment program versus the cost of removing of all the affected ash trees.

Comm. Hauser asked if there had been any success of other treatment programs.

Phil Graf stated that some treatment programs had been very successful. The success or failure rate depended on the following factors:

1. When the treatment program was started.
2. How early in the infestation was that program implemented.
3. How quickly decisions were made and implementation began.

From Mr. Graf's perspective there have been effective treatment programs, but they have been more of the exception rather the norm. Those programs that were successful were very selective on how and when the trees were treated.

Steve Lane also explained that Chicago was the first major city to be hit with EAB. The area was surrounded by tree removal services recommending that the trees be removed. Treatment was the riskier thing to do. Now years later, we know that treatment was indeed effective.

Overall, the UFMP will be used as a guide to be more proactive in managing the tree program and it will assist in guiding the City through another tree infestation when it occurs.

B. News or Concerns from Public Works

Tony Bellafiore indicated that he did not have any additional news and concerns at this time. He felt the department was moving forward in a positive direction with the tree program.

C. Langum Woods Clean Up:

As mentioned at the last meeting, Comm. Otto indicated the Langum Woods Clean Up was postponed until the fall due to a scheduling conflict with the school district. She will follow up with the teacher later this summer to propose some other options. "Make a Difference Day", which is toward the end of October, may be an opportune time to schedule this event since it is at the end of the growing season. Comm. Otto will propose this change or inquire if another teacher may be interested in continuing this educational opportunity. Comm. Otto will continue to work on this initiative.

7. Committee Reports

A. Education Committee: None

B. Publicity Committee: None

This chair is currently open. The committee member would be responsible for writing tree related and Arbor Day publicity articles for the Den and/or the City's website.

C. Arbor Day Committee: None at this time.

8. Communications

A. Electric Division Tree Activity Reports

Motion to accept and place on file the Electric Division/Public Tree Activity Reports for May 1, 2014 to June 30, 2014. Motion by Comm. Duerr, second by Comm. Myers to accept and place on file the reports as presented.

Voice vote: unanimous; Nays – None; Absent: Caroline Wilfong, Phil Zavitz

- Motion carried at 7:57 pm.

B. Public Services Division Tree Activity Reports

Motion to accept and place on file the Public Services Division/Public Tree Activity Reports for May 1, 2014 to June 30, 2014. Motion by Comm. Duerr, second by Comm. Otto to accept and place on file the reports as presented.

Voice vote: unanimous; Nays – None; Absent: Caroline Wilfong, Phil Zavitz

- Motion carried at 8:00 pm.

9. Additional Items – Comments

A. Visitors:

Kevin Kaschke: Kevin indicated he was always aware of all the parkway trees in the city, but did not realize the amount of effort and time needed to care for these trees. He now realizes the amount of work that was needed to remove, grind and replant these trees.

Phil Graf: Mr. Graf indicated he doesn't usually sit on any Tree Commission meetings, but feels that this committee was doing well. Everyone seems to get along well and it was nice to meet the committee members.

Steve Lane: Thanked the committee for listening to his presentation and inviting Graf Tree Care to the meeting.

B. Commissioners:

Comm. Houser: Had nothing further to add.

Comm. Otto: Had no further comments.

Comm. Grathoff: Had no additional comments.

Comm. Duerr: In reviewing the Public Services Tree Activity reports, most of the work was done "in house". Does "Trimming Request" on the report indicate the homeowner requested the trimming?

Tony Bellafiore indicated the City received most of the trimming requests from residents. It was explained that these types of requests were recorded in the TreeKeeper software program thus generating a work order for the staff.

Comm. Duerr has noticed how many of the 10 to 12 year old trees are in need of "limbing up". Once the trees are head height they are difficult to trim. The City will need to establish a pruning program as these newly planted trees begin to mature.

Steve Lane added that it is more cost effective to prune trees to good form when they are young. This is the type of planning that should be included in the UFMP. For example, the City could include an "establishment pruning" as part of the UFMP when these trees hit Year 5. Overall, pruning a young tree will assist in the correct architectural development that will continue through the lifetime of the tree.

Comm. Myers: Expressed how excited she was that the UFMP was finally moving forward. She supports this initiative 100%, so if there is anything she could do, she would like to help.

Comm. Blaine: Asked if there were any plans or programs to repurpose the ash wood from the trees that had been removed. For instance, Geneva Park District has been repurposing wood to create park benches, etc. Is the City trying to salvage any of this wood?

According to Mr. Bellafiore, the City did not have any such program. Phil Graf did indicate the Geneva Park District had a wood reclamation program, but at this time he had not seen many of these large ash trees left in the city.

Chair. Ziegler: Comm. Ziegler thanked Phil Graf and Steve Lane for attending the meeting and their presentation. He welcomed Tony Bellafiore to the committee. He added how much he enjoys

the lively and stimulating discussions during the meetings. He also appreciated everyone's input during the committee meetings.

C. Staff:

Tony Bellafiore: Thanked the committee for welcoming him to his first Tree Commission meeting. Tony hopes to attend more of these in the future. He hopes to gain more knowledge and have more input in the future as he gains experience in his new position.

11. Adjournment

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

Voice vote: unanimous; Nays – None; Absent: Caroline Wilfong, Phil Zavitz
- Motion carried at 8:22 pm.

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