

**MINUTES  
CITY OF ST. CHARLES  
TREE COMMISSION MEETING  
RALPH GRATHOFF, CHAIRMAN  
DECEMBER 10, 2015**

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

**Members Absent:** None

**Others Present:** Chris Adesso, Tony Bellafiore, AJ Reineking, Isabel Soderlind

**Visitors Present:**

**1. Call to Order & Pledge of Allegiance**

The meeting was convened by Chair. Grathoff at 7:06 p.m.

**2. Roll Call**

Isabel Soderlind announced that Carol Riordian had resigned from the committee. The City Administration Office had received a resignation letter and she was no longer living in St. Charles.

**3. Introductions of Visitors:** None

**4. Minutes Review and Approval**

- A. Motion to accept and place on file the minutes of the September 10, 2015 Tree Commission meeting. Motion by Comm. Duerr, second Comm. Ziegler to accept and place the minutes on file.

Voice vote: unanimous; Nays – None; Absent: None

- Motion carried at 7:07 p.m.

**5. Old Business**

**A. Urban Forestry Management Plan (Draft) presented by Phil Graf and Steve Lane from Graf Tree Care**

Comm. Blaine reviewed the Urban Forestry Management Plan (hereafter referred to UFMP) draft and felt it was a very solid document. She felt however there were two distinct types of audiences to the document: (1) part of the document was geared to the general public and informative in nature; (2) the other, technical and analytical in nature with policies and procedures for the organization to follow. In order to improve the flow of the document, Comm. Blaine recommended editing the document.

AJ will make Comm. Blaine's edits to the document and then distribute to the rest of the committee members for their review. Any comments and questions from the committee members should be emailed directly to Mr. Reineking utilizing the "Track Changes" in the "Review" tab in Microsoft Word before the January 14, 2016 meeting.

The Commission felt there were a couple of portions of the document that were still incomplete. These included:

- GIS and visual drawings, etc.
- Wood utilization section

AJ Reineking explained that Graf was waiting for our feedback so they can get the 2<sup>nd</sup> and hopefully final version completed.

## **B. Reorganization of the Tree Commission**

The Commission resumed their discussion regarding its reorganization to a Natural Resource Commission from previous months. Chair. Grathoff gave a short synopsis of this discussion from the last meeting. A few of the commissioners recommended that further discussion was needed and a vote taken. Today's discussion would include:

- (1) specific roles and responsibilities of the committee members
- (2) the modifications the committee would need to make, and
- (3) the types of initiatives or projects the committee would undertake

Chair. Grathoff distributed a copy of three different mission statements from various Natural Resources Commissions (hereafter referred to NRC). The municipalities cited only had a Natural Resources Commission or "Committee"; the responsibilities of trees continued to remain part of the NRC. These commissions were similar to the current Tree Commission; they just had a broader scope.

There were several comments made by the commissioners:

Comm. Duerr: The Natural Resources Commission would broaden the scope of this committee. It could engage them in other natural resources initiatives e.g., salting practices, soil conditions, solar panels, bioswales, natural plantings, etc. He did question whether the City would embrace the engagement of this commission in such topics.

Comm. Ziegler: The Tree Commission has been active and he felt very hesitant regarding broadening the scope of this commission. He mentioned the transition would require a commitment in time and training in various aspects of natural resources and sustainability initiatives. Being in the final stages of the UFMP, he preferred to defer this initiative until the UFMP was finalized and passed by Council. He noted the following changes will need to be considered if the committee was going to broaden its scope:

- Increase the number of commissioners
- Increase meetings from 8 to 12 times a year
- Sub-committees may need to be established to review ordinances, policies, etc.
- Demonstrate to the City that we have the manpower and the commitment to move forward as a NRC.

Comm. Hauser: Expressed that he would prefer to conclude the UFMP and then move forward with this new initiative.

Comm. Blaine: Mentioned the committee would have the potential to attract more people that have a broader interest in natural resources. Initially, the Natural Resources Commission can limit the scope of their initiatives until the UFMP is completed. Having a passion for the environment and wanting to serve the community would make a person qualified to be on this committee.

Comm. Myers: Stated most of the meetings she has recently attended have been by Natural Resource Committee members, not members from a Tree Commission. It appears this is the new model or trend utilized in other communities. She preferred the committee change its name to Natural Resources Commission, continue to focus on trees, but choose a natural resources project or initiative to focus on in the near future.

Chris Adesso mentioned the committee would need to agree on this initiative and then the concept could be presented to the Government Services Committee for feedback. The reorganization would require some work from the existing committee members, which would include minor modifications to the current ordinance. It however would broaden the scope and possibly attract more members that may have an interest in other natural resources issues beyond trees. This commission can begin on a

small scale on such items as sustainability efforts and bioswales but this will continue to be an advisory board for the City, as the Tree Commission has been.

If the committee preferred, Chris Adesso offered to present this initiative to Council at the January or February Government Services meeting. He could request feedback and recommendations from the Council members on this initiative. He would mention the Committee's interest in broadening their scope to a variety of natural resources initiatives and share the following examples of projects and initiatives:

- Woody invasive removal
- Naturalizing traditional landscapes
- Bring awareness to the public and children
- Clean up days
- Rain barrels
- Begin to change the City code from Tree Commission to Natural Resources Committee

Motion was made to have Chris Adesso present and request feedback and recommendations from Council in regards to the concept of reorganizing the Tree Commission to a Natural Resources Commission at the Government Service Committee meeting.

Motion was made by Comm. Duerr, second Comm. Ziegler. Approved by roll call vote. Motion carried.

Comm. Blaine: Yes  
Comm. Duerr: Yes  
Comm. Grathoff: Yes  
Comm. Hauser: Yes  
Comm. Myers: Yes  
Comm. Otto: Yes  
Comm. Wilfong: Yes  
Comm. Ziegler: Yes

## 6. New Business

### A. News and Concerns from Public Works

- i. **Tree Trimming and Removal Update:**  
AJ Reineking indicated the remaining 216 remaining ash trees were inventoried; fifty-four of the trees were in poor condition and slated to be removed this fall. Most of the trees being removed are likely to be replanted next spring.
- ii. **Fall Planting Updated:**  
  
Tony Bellafiore mentioned trees were planted later this year, due to the mild weather. Some were pulled late and making sure that they would survive winter. All have had plenty of water and pulled burlap. They have also been wrapped with craft paper for a year which will protect them from frost cracking. The trees were mulched correctly and efficiently by the new contractor, St. Aubin; high quality mulch was utilized.
- iii. **Other:** None

## 7. Committee Reports

- A. **Education Committee:** None
- B. **Publicity Committee:** None

**C. Arbor Day:**

Isabel Soderlind had contact with Ms. Tieche from Munhall School and she expressed an interest to participate again at the next Arbor Day, April 29<sup>th</sup>.

**8. Communications**

**A. Electric Division Tree Activity Reports**

Motion to accept and place on file the Public Services and Electric Services Tree Activity Reports for September and October of 2015. Motion by Comm. Myers, second by Comm. Blaine to accept and place on file the reports as presented.

**Voice vote:** unanimous; Nays – None; Absent: None

- Motion carried at 7:59 p.m.

**9. Additional Items – Comments**

**A. Commissioners:**

**Comm. Hauser:** He mentioned he is always making an effort to become better informed. He recently found an article in one of the local newspapers quoting Comm. Blaine. The article focused on the dwindling number of oak trees and the efforts to save them.

**Comm. Myers:** She wished everyone a very happy holiday.

**Comm. Blaine:** One of her New Year's resolutions is to walk and observe all the trees within the neighborhoods of St. Charles.

**Comm. Otto:** Glad to be here.

**Comm. Wilfong:** Wished everyone a happy holiday.

**Comm. Duerr:** Mentioned he was very impressed with the tree work being done.

**Comm. Ziegler:** None

**Chair. Grathoff:** Mentioned he was very glad to see that things were moving along in regards to the Natural Resources Commission.

**B. City Staff:**

**Tony Bellafiore:** Staff continues to work on tree related maintenance.

**AJ Reineking:** None

**Adesso:** None

**10. Adjournment**

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

**Voice vote:** unanimous; Nays – None; Absent: None

- Motion carried at 8:05 p.m.