

Urban Forest Commission

Meeting Minutes February 17, 2018

Attendance:

Commissioners: Mike Pennington, Christine Penney, Beth Kleinke, Susan Stanich, Brandon Van Tassel

City Staff: Clark Christenson, City Forester

City Councilor Em Westerlund

Call to Order:

The meeting started at 6:05.

Minute Approval:

A motion was made to approve the minutes from the January 17th, 2018, Meeting. M/S/C.

Forester's Report

No report was given.

New Business:

Vice Chair Replacement

Vice Chair Liz Johnson's term on the committee has expired. A motion was made for Judy Gibbs to replace Liz Johnson as Vice Chair of the committee. M/S/C.

City owned pine plantings

Jim Shoberg from the City of Duluth gave a presentation on the health of City owned planted pine stands. These plantings require thinning or removal of trees to allow room for hardier native species to either be planted or to volunteer in their place. Pine stands on the east end of town that need thinning are located on three City properties; Hartley Park, Hawks Ridge, and along Seven Bridges Road. The presentation was given in part to notify the commission that the trees are due for maintenance and to collaborate with them on how best to perform public engagement to prepare for the process. The harvest would be completed three years from now. The first year would be used for public engagement. The selected areas for thinning would be put out for public bid. Once the bid is awarded there is a two-year lag time for the work to be completed;

which is typical in the Forestry Industry. Major topics and questions covered the following:

Reasons for thinning

The stands were planted in the 1940's & 1960's. The trees have been stunted from lack of previous thinning. Best forestry practice requires that the stands need to be thinned by 25% to allow for additional growth and to minimize disease or infestation.

Due to the density of some stands they are ecologically dead. They show very few signs of wildlife.

Trees that are thinned perform better in high winds. Thinning promotes the trees to grow stronger and are more resistant to high winds and gusts.

One stand located at Hawk Ridge is comprised of mostly Scotch Pine. This species will grow in this area, but is not native and is vulnerable to cracking/splitting under snow loads. The trees are not structurally able to handle snow loads. These trees would be thinned and the voids would be replanted with native trees that perform better in this climate.

Trees along Skyline Parkway may be selected to improve the view scape for better birding opportunities.

Recent work in Hartley Park

Hartley Nature Area under went thinning of some stands recently. The project was successful in minimizing environmental impacts to the park. The contractor that was selected made a concerted effort to achieve this. Problems that were encountered included; a public process that could have informed & engaged the public more effectively and vandalism to the logging equipment that belonged to the contractor.

St. Louis County has property in the NW corner of Hartley Park. This area has acres of blowdown. To reduce the fire hazard and to replant these areas the City has teamed up to bid out the removal of the blown down trees with the County. The process did not receive any bids. Lack of profitability and difficulties of

harvesting timber in urban areas (compromised trees, anti-forestry sentiment, and vandalism) are cited as the chief cause of lack of interest.

Means and Methods

The thinning/removals would be completed in the winter to minimize environmental impacts to the property and interference to park users. The Scope of Work would include that the contractor removes or chip on-site any tree tops or slash. Disturbed areas would be replanted with native species to prevent erosion and infiltration of invasive plant species.

Strategies for successful bid letting

The goal for thinning the pine stand is to improve the health of the stands. The work is not being completed to profit off of the sale; rather the scope of work would be selected to guarantee that the tree maintenance would not incur any financial burden to the City. For instance, the recent work at Hartley Nature Area netted a \$10.00 profit. The scope of work would be selected from the three sites. The scope of work will need to be fiscally attractive enough for contractors to place bid to complete the work.

Jim Shoberg will keep the commission apprised of the progress of the process and to get the commissions input on how best to engage the public through future meetings.

Old Business

No Old Business was conducted.

Adjournment

There was a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:59, m/s/c.