

Urban Forest Commission

Meeting Minutes June 20, 2018

Attendance:

Commissioners: Christine Penney, Mike Pennington, Judy Gibbs, Brandon Van Tassel, Jim Lemmerman, Susan Stanich.

City Staff: Clark Christenson, City Forester; Diane Desotelle, City Provisional Natural Resources Coordinator (not present); Erik Birkeland, Ex-Officio (not present); City Councilor Em Westerlund (not present)

Call to Order:

The meeting started at 6:06 pm.

Minute Approval:

A motion was made to approve the minutes from the May 16th, 2018, Meeting. M/S/C.

Public Comment Period: None

Forester's Report (Clark Christenson – City Forester)

Park Maintenance City staff have been working diligently in the Lakeside neighborhood and have planted trees along East 4th street up to 22/23rd Ave. There was some mortality noted and these trees will be replanted next spring. It was reported that over ½ (97) of the Emerald Ash Borer trees have been replaced, depending on scheduling the group may be able to get a few more in this summer. The injecting of live Ash trees will begin in the Denfeld Area, along West 5th, 6th & 7th streets between 38th Ave West and 46th Ave West, commonly referred to as "Ash Alley!" The County led project along 4th street is expected to wrap in the next two weeks. Clark will be consulting with Tom Pfeffer from Engineering on the Woodland Project and other new construction projects to ensure boulevard soil conditions are improved using MnDOT planting specifications. The City's Geographic Information Systems department has been working on obtaining and testing new computer software to be used to collect tree inventory information. This system will be run from ARC GIS and is fully compatible with existing City software. Once this system is in place it will allow Park Maintenance staff to use iPads to document trees planted, soil conditions, and other pertinent information.

The full-time Forester job is currently being advertised online and closes on Monday, June 25th. Letters of support should be directed to Dale Sellner, Parks and Grounds Maintenance Supervisor at dsellner@duluthmn.gov with a carbon copy sent to Erik Birkeland, Property and Facilities Manager at ebirkeland@duluthmn.gov.

Christine reported that the City applied for two thirty-thousand dollar grants with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MN DNR). The first to create a management plan for Emerald Ash Borer at Hartley and the second to complete a city-wide tree inventory. The MN DNR indicated they would be limiting our applications to only one ask totaling \$30,000 and therefore these two efforts would have to be combined into one grant project.

Old Business:

UFC Transformation Sub-committee update

On June 4th the UFC Transformation sub-committee group met to continue discussions on the potential approach to convert the Urban Forest Commission into a Natural Resources Board or Environmental Advisory Commission. Jim Filby Williams, Public Administration Director, sat in on the meeting. Erik Birkeland led the group discussion on the importance of creating an effective commission with a broader Natural Resources focus. City Administration and department heads have a meeting scheduled in late July to discuss this internally.

Judy Gibbs suggested that it was possible the former Environmental Advisory Commission (EAC) bylaws were perhaps never rescinded and questioned whether it was possible to revise a city ordinance. The discussion continued and the group formulated some “wants” to be brought up to City Administration. First, and most important, would be that other departments would be required to bring projects to this groups attention prior to project initiation. Judy Gibbs posed the question, “but how do we insure things get sent our way so that we have the opportunity and responsibility to weigh in on natural resources items such as DNAPS, EAWs and EISs?” The group felt the best way would be to include specific language in the creation of revised bylaws. The group then discussed the EAC Bylaws and Susan Stanich volunteer to collect and incorporate language changes to the former bylaws prior to our next meeting.

The UFC Transformation sub-committee group will meet before our next month’s meeting to solidify the approach and consolidate our requests from Administration.

New Business:

Arbor Day Annual Convention

Christine reported that the Annual Arbor Day Annual Convention will be held on November 7-8 in California. Currently the Commission does not have a plan to send or sponsor anyone but discussed if it would be appropriate and/or a productive event for the new full-time City Forester. Jim Lemmerman shared that he is on the board for the Minnesota Shade Tree Advisory Committee (MnSTAC) and indicated there are several other local conferences that perhaps would be a better fit.

Arbor Day Celebration Report

Brandon Van Tassel reported that 605 trees were planted at the City’s Arbor Day Celebration held on Thursday, May 31st. Community Action Duluth will also be sponsoring weekly tree planting events on Wednesdays during the months of June, July, and August (not July 4th). For additional information please see: <https://www.communityactionduluth.org/whats-happening/>

Adjournment:

There was a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:04, m/s/c.