**MUNICIPAL TREE COMMISSION MEETING**

**February 13, 2018**

**Department of Public Infrastructure Conference Room**

**MINUTES**

Commissioners Present:  Chairman Todd Holschbach, Vice Chairman Nic Levendusky, Glenn Pfeffer, Alder. Steve Czekala

Staff Present: Chad Scheinoha, Alvin Rehme

Others: Kevin Crawford, David Dahleen

Excused: Al Schema

**Call meeting to order**

The meeting was called to order at 4:30 p.m. by Chairman T. Holschbach.

**Annual Election of Officers**

N. Levendusky made a motion to nominate T. Holschbach as Chairman. G. Pfeffer seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

T. Holschbach made a motion to nominate N. Levendusky as Vice Chairman. Ald. Czekala seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

**Approval of the minutes**

A motion to approve the minutes from the November 14, 2017 meeting was made by Ald. Czekala and seconded by N. Levendusky. The motion carried unanimously.

**Public input session**

K. Crawford spoke in favor of using rebar when pouring sidewalks in order to help prevent upheaval of sidewalks from tree roots, especially now that there are more types of boring equipment available.

**Report on tree maintenance since last meeting**

City crews have:

* Performed work at approximately 113 locations,
* Removed three trees,
* Trimmed 88 trees,
* Responded to one callout of a tree down plus 22 calls of limbs down and one additional tree down all on Dec. 5th,
* Delivered 1 load of firewood,
* Planted 0 trees, and
* Reviewed 0 tree planting & removal permits.

Current forestry service requests for:

* 114 “4-D” trees to be removed and
* 75 trees to be trimmed.

Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) has not been found on any additional trees since the original five in July.

The Engineering Division is preparing a request for stump removal for six trees removed next to sidewalks and five EAB infected trees. The goal is to have the EAB infected trees and stumps removed before the trees begin to bud in April in order to help prevent the spread of EAB.

The Parks Division is taking quotes for removal of 16 4-D trees that are near wires, since the Parks Division is not certified to trim within 10’ of wires. The Parks Division is also taking quotes for the Maritime Bluff project which consists of removing undesirable trees, such as Boxwood, Cottonwood, Silver Poplars, and Willow, as well as invasive honeysuckle, buckthorn, etc. A. Rehme stated that most of the trees that are there are large enough that they could fall on Maritime Dr. The City has been working with Woodland Dunes on the project. The three main goals of the project are to preserve the right-of-way, to preserve the view of the lake for residents on top of the bluff, and to encourage native wildlife habitat in order to stabilize the bluff. Some of the trees will be saved, but they are aiming for low-growing vegetation which provides a good bird habitat.

**Update on the forestry fund**

The balance of the forestry fund is approximately $7,200. The plan is to use some of the remaining funds for tree planting in 2018.

**Urban forestry grant opportunities**

We received two grants - one from the American Transmission Corporation and the other is an Urban Forestry grant from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR). For the grant from the DNR, the City will need to spend $50,000 and will then get reimbursed $25,000. This grant will primarily be used for EAB removals, tree plantings, and treatments. The Parks Division will treat and attempt to save some of the more visible ash trees, such as along the lakeshore. The DNR recommends not moving the EAB infected wood; however we will probably need to move it in most cases. The bug typically does not survive, however, when tree limbs are put through the chipper. Anything larger than 12” in diameter will not be able to go through the chipper and will probably be buried at the City’s gravel pit. Another portion of the DNR grant will include updating the City’s EAB policy. Also included is a new Christmas tree exchange program which is part of the educational portion of the grant. Citizens will bring in their evergreen Christmas tree to the Manitowoc County Recycling Center and get a voucher for a whip tree (approximately two to three years old) to plant on their private property. It is estimated that 50-100 people will take advantage of the program. C. Scheinoha stated that staff will be applying for the same grants in 2018 for use in 2019.

**Tree Planting for 2018 & beyond (planting program)**

Forestry staff have a started a list of locations to plant new terraces where some trees were previously removed. Some of the locations are by request and some are due to the City Forester’s recommendation, but a formal program is not in place yet.

**Revisions to Tree Maintenance & Removal Policy**

The Commission agreed that the City Forester will make the decision on when a tree should be removed. T. Holschbach suggested that sidewalks could be adjusted to go around healthy trees as long as there is room for 48” of sidewalk and that adjustments should be made in writing in the policy that moving the sidewalk could be a potential alternative. Further discussion could take place at the next Municipal Tree Commission meeting. T. Holschbach feels that if we do not allow moving the sidewalk as an alternative, then otherwise healthy trees could be removed.

C. Scheinoha said that the City is looking at some proposed language that would allow homeowners to remove a healthy tree if they agree to plant a new tree within 180 days. T. Holschbach suggested that we add in language stating “with the approval of the Municipal Tree Commission,” as he feels this leaves the fate of older, healthy trees on the City’s right-of-way in the hands of citizens.

D. Dahleen stated that he was not allowed to remove the tree on the terrace adjoining his property, even though he feels removing a limb which is currently in violation of the City’s ordinance will cause the tree to fall onto the street, and he offered to replace the old tree with a new tree from the City’s list of suggested trees.

K. Crawford likes the idea that a professional makes the decision regarding the removal of a tree rather than a private citizen.

T. Holschbach made a motion that he should discuss and direct the City Attorney to consider adding language to the policy that an alternative to tree removal would be to pave around a healthy tree. Ald. Czekala seconded the motion, and the motion carried.

**Review of charges for tree damages**

C. Scheinoha stated that we have a current flat fee of $400 for damages when a vehicle hits a tree. There is no easy way to determine the costs, since species, aesthetics, etc. play into it. Generally when bark is removed, it leads to premature death of the tree. The Commission did not recommend any changes at this time.

**Utility/contractor trimming guidelines**

C. Scheinoha passed out a copy of the City’s guidelines that utilities and contractors should follow when trimming trees. The law currently gives Manitowoc Public Utilities the authority to trim around power lines. N. Levendusky made a motion that City staff should meet with Manitowoc Public Utilities to discuss tree trimming. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

**Tree ordinance violations over the street & sidewalk**

The current ordinance states trees must be at least 10’ over the sidewalk and 14’ over the street. Enforcement has been complaint, concern, or detour based. Most of the streets in the City have trees that don’t comply. The goal is to get all trees in compliance by either staff or a contractor enforcement. C. Scheinoha stated that City staff will compare what other cities do and report back to the Commission.

**Arbor Day 2018**

A. Rehme suggested replacing a dying tree on Jay St. C. Scheinoha recommended replacing a tree near the Wisconsin Maritime Museum. T. Holschbach made a motion to proceed with replacing the tree near the Wisconsin Maritime Museum. Ald. Czekala seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously. Izaak Walton will donate two trees up to $300 in total value for the Arbor Day Celebration.

**Adjournment**

A motion was made by N. Levendusky to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded and carried unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 5:45 p.m.

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