

City of Urbana, Illinois

Minutes of the Urbana Tree Commission Meeting

Wednesday, December 7, 2011

Members Present: Jeff Dawson, Michael Stevenson, Darin Eastburn, Barbara Anderson

Members Absent: Frances Kuo, Larry Hanks, Thom Ferhmann

Staff Present: Michael Brunk, City of Urbana Arborist
Kevin Sanderson, LRC Supervisor

Introductions and Approval of Meeting Minutes

The meeting was called to order at 1:53pm.

The minutes from December 1, 2010 were presented for approval. Eastburn pointed out that his name was misspelled in two places. With that correction, he moved to approve the minutes, Anderson seconded, and the minutes were approved.

Brunk introduced Kevin Sanderson to the Commission.

Winter Tree Removal Program Update

Sanderson presented information on the Winter Tree Removal program. He said the number of removals was down from last year, and that there were 26 trees to be removed by a contractor and 24-25 to be removed in-house. Discussion ensued regarding some specific trees that were to be removed. Sanderson said there would be more removals completed in May/June. Stevenson asked how many ash trees were left in the City's inventory; Brunk said there were 499, but that the goal was to have less than 300. He said he would also be comfortable with an inventory of about 400 if none were poorly located or in decline. Anderson asked if the emerald ash borer had spread; Brunk reported that the closest confirmation of the insect's presence was in Rantoul. He said that Champaign County, along with many surrounding counties, is in a quarantined area, which means that firewood cannot be transported outside county lines.

2011 Tree Planting Program Update

Brunk presented information on the 2011 Tree Planting program. He said he had received a call from an area homeowners' association asking how they could get trees planted in their neighborhood. Instead of referring them to the tree coop program, which would have been costly

for the homeowners because of the large number of trees, crews planted the root bag trees that have been successful in the tree replacement program. In total, 22 trees were planted, and Brunk reported that the trees are doing well so far. Brunk also noted that the developer in that neighborhood agreed to plant and maintain trees that will be located in the center islands on the roads in that area.

Brunk also presented information regarding coop tree planting. He said that his spring list of trees to be planted are balled and burlap trees because citizens are requesting larger trees. He noted that these trees are more difficult to transport and plant. Eastburn asked if the root bag system could produce larger trees; Brunk said that so far, attempts he has made to obtain larger root bag trees have not been successful but he will continue the effort.

Brunk presented information regarding the tree replacement program. Brunk said there are 151 trees on the replacement list. He pointed out that this number was higher than years past because the program no longer requires the homeowner to request the tree, and that these trees are sturdier and have a higher survival rate, so it is favorable to plant more. Discussion ensued regarding the variety of trees on the replacement list and the benefits of planting native trees. Stevenson pointed out that when compiling these lists, staff might consider any projected climate change, and which trees would be able to withstand the effects of global warming.

Exceptional Tree Preservation Ordinance Research

Brunk said that City Council had approached him about a tree preservation ordinance which would protect rare or exceptional trees. He said that the ordinance would cover both public and private trees, and said he was in the process of defining “rare” and “exceptional.” He said other factors being considered are the tree's history, age, ecological value, location, and survivability. He said this program would hopefully include incentives for landowners and developers who agreed to preserve trees deemed exceptional.

Tree Inventory

Brunk reported that he is working on a Request for Proposals for a tree inventory. He said there is a company performing an inventory for Champaign's trees now, and they charge per tree. He said he hopes to be able to simply add Urbana's trees onto the work already being performed in order to get a “bulk” rate. He said that the trees will also be entered into a GIS database as part of this inventory.

Landscape Recycling Center 2011 Highlights

Brunk presented information regarding recent activity and changes at the Landscape Recycling Center. He presented photographs of the new delivery truck and pointed out that it is now equipped with GPS which helps employees make deliveries that are farther away. He also said that a dump trailer had been purchased; loading this trailer and hauling it behind the delivery truck will allow two deliveries to be made in one trip. He reported that material sales have continued to climb for the past several years, and pointed out that the site has been completely

self sufficient since 1992. Discussion ensued regarding processes used to procure and produce wood chips, mulch, and compost. Anderson suggested having the Commission tour the site sometime this year.

Old Business

There was no old business.

New Business

Brunk confirmed that the 2012 meetings would take place on the first Wednesdays of March, September, and December at 1:30 p.m. at Urbana Public Works.

Adjournment

There being no further business to discuss, Stevenson moved to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 3:11 p.m.

Femi Washington, Recording Secretary
Tree Commission