

Tree Commission Meeting
November 4, 2024
7:30-9:00 PM

Attendees: Judy Alba, Gabe Popkin, Lester Scheuerman, Barry Stahl, MaryLee Haughwout (observer), Chris Van DeMoortel (resident)
Facilitator: Andy Doyle
Minutes: Jackie Sabath

Minutes:

1. Introductions of commissioners and resident attendee, Chris who has landscaping and horticulture background and interested in helping out.
2. Minutes approved from September 16, 2024 meeting with no changes.
3. Chair persons filling in during MaryLee's break. Judy made a motion to nominate Lester Scheuerman and Jackie Sabath as Co-chairs of the Tree Commission. Barry seconded the motion. Motion unanimously approved by the commissioners.
4. Watering during fall drought. Lester contacted Victor about the water alert and DPW said they would continue watering. Victor bought several dozen gator bags and attached to trees. Lester added the gator bagged trees to Goggle map. Concern raised about **all** the new city trees that need to be watered. ACTION ITEM: Lester and Jackie will compile a list of new trees locations. Lester will talk with Victor about watering these trees throughout the drought.
5. Casey Trees planted 10 trees on October 31. ACTION ITEM: Jackie will email a water alert to these residents and other residents who adopted a public tree in the past 2 years and signed a water pledge agreement.
6. AUTI tree box walks and laptop/software procurement
 - a. Lester reported 85% of city has been assessed and notes entered into AUTI.
 - b. ACTION ITEM: Lester will send list of tree maintenance needs to Victor, and send pruning notes to Gabe and Barry.
 - c. Vote to approve laptop and software for AUTI. Lester made a motion for the Tree Commissioners to approve the purchase of a laptop and software to run the AUTI program. Judy seconded the motion. Motion unanimously approved by the commissioners.
7. Newton Street project. Lester wrote an email to city officials and engineer regarding the Tree Commission's concern about the care of trees during construction, and received positive response from Mr. Kamali and the Mayor. As of last Friday, 11/1/24, no notices had been posted on trees. We don't know the time line for the project or the list of trees which will be affected. MaryLee noted 2 important things to follow up on with the city. The Tree Commission would like to be informed about: 1) what trees will be affected and 2) the tree protection plan that the city's consulting arborist develops. ACTION ITEM: Lester will contact the engineer, David Miller?, for a status update and list of trees to be removed and follow up with the city regarding the above concerns.

8. Gabe and Judy are coordinating the door hanger initiative, an informational/educational outreach to residents regarding the protection of city and privately owned trees, written in English and Spanish. The text has been finalized. The city's communication staff will do the layout, graphics and printing. (The cost will be covered in the city's budget?) Gabe suggested we wait until Spring to distribute when people are paying more attention to trees as they are leafing out, so as to have maximum impact. The city and Tree Commission will work together to distribute. A vote was taken to approve this project. Judy made a motion for the Tree Commission to approve the production and expense of the door hangers. Barry seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.
9. PG County Stormwater Grant Program. Gabe reported it has five tracks – he highlighted two that he thought most appropriate for Mt Rainier: training for city staff and invasive and tree management practices. Discussion included: the possibility of partnering with Brentwood for training city staff track; the idea of hiring UMD students to canvas neighborhood to educate and remove invasive vines; helping with the removal of nuisance trees like mulberry; maintenance of rain gardens. ACTION ITEM: Gabe will explore with Rocio the possibility of pursuing writing a grant proposal, possibility using the city grant writer.
10. Winter Tree Pruning – Gabe and Barry will take the lead. Pruning will begin when it gets colder, after leaves have dropped and dormancy has begun.
Decided pruning workshop date would Jan 4 or 5 in the morning. Reviewed city-owned equipment: 3 pair of loppers, pruners and handsaws and 1 electric pole saw. Question raised about where to store tools. Lester said he could store pole saw at his house. Not sure we made a decision about where to store other tools. They are all at DPW office now.
 - a. Gabe made a motion to request from DPW 4 safety cones, 4 safety helmets, and 4 safety goggles. Barry seconded it and it was approved unanimously by commissioners. Lester will make a request to Victor for these as well as chain saw oil and additional battery for the electric saw.
 - b. When we go out to prune, we should check the AUTI map to determine what areas of the city have or have not been done. When finished, let Lester know what we covered, so he can make changes on the map,
 - c. Guideline from Steve McKindley-Ward: 14' clearance over street and 10' clearance over sidewalk.
 - d. Chris would like to be kept in the pruning loop.
11. No city updates, as Victor was not at meeting.
12. Next Tree Commission meeting set for January 13, 2025 from 7:30-9:00 pm, via Zoom.