



Springfield Urban Forestry Commission

June 10, 2020 Urban Forestry Commission Meeting Minutes

In attendance:

City Staff:

Nate Bottom, Director of Public Works

Jeff Reim, City Arborist

Urban Forestry Commission Members:

Susan Allen

Randy Belville

Amy McEuen

Rianne Hawkins

Ernestine Lawrence

Jan Von Qualen, Chair

Members of the Public:

Michael Clark, Sustainable Springfield & Springfield Jaycees

Mary Frances

Meeting Minutes:

The meeting was called to order at 2:07p.m. on Wednesday, June 10, 2020. First, Chair Von Qualen did a roll call of attendance. There were significant problems and technical difficulties to get into the Zoom meeting.

Dr.. McEuen made a motion to approve the minutes from the May 21, 2020 Meeting. Ms. Lawrence seconded the motion. The motion carried without objection.

Chair Von Qualen gave an update on the distribution of the oak tree seedlings. She stated that the distribution has slowed down in the last few weeks. She also gave an update on the distribution accommodations that have been made and how that could be used for future seedling distribution.

Next, the review of the Arboricultural Specifications Manual. Mr. Reim gave an overview of the manual. The Commission expressed its gratitude to Jeff for his hard work on the manual rewrite. Mr. Reim detailed some of the work that went into creating the manual and the supporting forms that all went into that. A comprehensive document will be put together and a final draft for the Commission's review before approval by City Council.

The next item on the agenda was the tree plan. Chair Von Qualen mentioned that she and Ms. Hawkins have put together a very short tree plan. She stated that she would submit a draft of the tree plan to the Commission for their review.

The next item on the agenda was community engagement around urban forestry. Ms. Mary Francis stated that it is her intention to pull together a website and that she is willing to include information from the Urban Forestry Commission. She also stated that she would like to see the City begin a memorial tree program. Ms. Lawrence stated that she likes the program, but expressed concern about the longevity of the trees. Ms. Susan Allen stated that she had purchased the tree through the Park District's program in the past. She stated that the Park District does replant the trees if they do not make it in the first year.

Mr. Randy Belville stated that it is a good idea to do the program, but he stressed the need to for the Commission to fulfill its assigned duties. Public Works Director Nate Bottom stated that he would agree that the Commission would need to focus on what they were created to do. Dr. McEuen asked if the intention is to expand the existing memorial tree program. Ms. Frances clarified that this would be a similar program, just focused on City of Springfield property. Chair Von Qualen stated that the idea should be tabled for now and that the Commission should focus on our current projects.

Chair Von Qualen stated that the Commission would like to have an update in the Mayor's weekly email. Director Bottom stated that the Commissions usually do not push those messages out, but he did say that we could partner with Springfield Green to push those messages out. Discussion ensued about what is allowed on the Mayor's email blasts. Director Bottom stated that he will work with Ms. Julia Frevert, the City's Communications Director to set up a standard for policy and procedures around Commission meetings. Discussion ensued around the scope of work for the Commission and how information is publicized.

Michael Clark with Sustainable Springfield and Springfield Jaycees asked for help from the Commission to plant fruit trees. Ms. Hawkins and Mr. Reim both brought up that there is some guidance around fruit trees in the Arboricultural Specifications Manual. Dr. McEuen stated that she would like to see fruit forests. Mr. Clark stated that they have been thinking about planting those kinds of forests in vacant lots. Director Bottom pointed out that this would be on private property, so some of the restrictions would not apply. Ms. Allen pointed out that there may be community interest in those kinds of activities. Mr. Clark gave further clarification about the intention of this program. Mr. Clark stated that his ask is that a portion of the tree budget be diverted to this program.

Next, the discussion shifted to the budget. There will be an impact to the tree budget for the coming year. Director Bottom reported that contracts are being delayed and reduced due to the continuing changes to the budget situation. He stated that they hope to have more information on the fall tree planting budget at our next meeting.

Ms. Allen stated that the Illinois Department of Natural Resources will be sending the City an application for Morton Arboretum tree planning program. She stated that she will stay in contact with IDNR to get more information.

For the fall tree planting program, Director Bottom stated that they would like to see a way for there to be tree coverage in all 10 wards. He also stated that he needs guidance from the Commission on what trees we would like to see planted. He stressed the urgency to get the Request for Proposal to go out as soon as possible. A discussion ensued about the types of trees that should be approved at this time.

Mr. Reim urged the committee members to give suggestions on 3-4 trees that they would like to see planted in the City this fall. Dr. McEuen asked for clarification on the sizes of trees that we would suggest to be planted. Ms. Lawrence suggested that everyone pick 2 trees per each category (small, medium and large). Dr. McEuen also suggested that the trees need to be different from the trees that were planted in the previous round. Mr. Belville expressed concern about this plan to haphazardly pick trees to plant. Director Bottom stated that there is some data that we could use to replace trees that had to be taken down due to disease. Director Bottom stated that the City can create heat maps to help guide the planting process.

There was no new business to discuss. Director Bottom stated that he had talked to Ms. Frevert that there is the ability to create a UFC page off of the Public Works webpage. He stated that the UFC needs to provide content.

There were no additional public comments. Chair Von Qualen stated that the date for the next meeting will be August 12th at 2pm.

Mr. Belville asked for an update on the open spot on our Commission. There was no update to report.

Mr. Belville made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Dr. McEuen. The motion carried without opposition. The meeting was adjourned at 3:11pm.