



Springfield Urban Forestry Commission

November 4, 2020

Call to Order;

Attendance;

Present: Susan Allen, Rianne Hawkins, Randy Belville, Ernestine Lawrence, and Jan Von Qualen, City Arborist, Jeff Reim, and Director of Public Works, Nate Bottom.

Guest: Matthew McLaughlin, the City's Building and Zoning Administrator

Matt McLaughlin appeared to answer questions about the City ordinances regarding Landscape, Screening, and Lighting Regulations (Art. XVII of the Code of Ordinances § 155.480, et seq.). Matt stated that the Landscaping requirements were determined on a point basis determined by the overall length of the lot frontage. He confirmed that the ordinance requires that the landscaping is required to be planted and maintained. Dead landscaping must be replaced.

The Landscaping Ordinance went into effect in 2001 and has not been updated. For new developments or remodels of 20% or more, it requires that landscape plans be reviewed and approved by Building and Zoning. It was agreed that the City Arborist could be involved. Jeff will be added to the list of individuals reviewing the plans. Building and Zoning was not aware of the updated Arboricultural Specifications Manual (ASM). The ASM only applies to City trees and the Landscaping Ordinance applies to private landscaping, so the ASM is not directly on point. The ASM could inform Jeff regarding concerns or suggestions he may have regarding landscape plans.

Matt said enforcement of the Landscape Ordinance is based upon complaints. He suggested that if anyone becomes aware of properties that are not maintaining landscaping, complaints should be made to his office. Once a complaint is made building & zoning will review the landscape plan and follow up with the property owners. Matt said that there is a provision for fines, but that in his experience once contacted, landowners correct violations. Matt encouraged us, to the extent we become aware of violations, to contact him (matthew.mclaughlin@springfield.il.us).

Motion by Ernestine Lawrence to approve the 9-9-2020 Minutes; seconded by Randy Belville and approved unanimously.

Congratulations were given to Susan Allen for being appointed to a new 3-year term;

Susan Allen announced that Springfield was rated number 1 of 2 in its region for the Morton Arboretum Urban & Community Forestry Grant. The dollar figure of the grant will be announced in November. There was discussion of being aware of future grant opportunities. Nate Bottom said the City has hired a grant writer, who can help as needed with future grant applications.

City Arborist, Jeff Reim confirmed that the UFC website is up and running and that he has requested that City tree work applications & permits be put on the website.

Jeff indicated that due to budget issues related to the COVID 19 pandemic, there will be no Fall tree planting. There was a discussion of maintenance of downtown trees. Many of them are

outgrowing the grates surrounding them. In order to avoid girdling, which would kill the trees, Jeff & Nate indicated that a City crew will be dispatched in early December to remove the grates.

It was noted, again, that in the downtown, there are 77 empty places where trees could be planted. Randy Belville suggested that in the future, when the budget allows, the City should consider purchasing equipment that would ground down the stumps and dig out the roots and dirt from the pits and parkways to allow tree planting. Randy will send specific information about the suggested equipment to Nate & Jeff. Susan Allen asked about the possibility of placing container trees over some of the spots that have been cemented. She noted that once the trees had outgrown the containers, they could be planted elsewhere. Nate agreed that is a possibility. He said another strategy is to create a new box 5' – 10' away from where the tree had been removed and place a new tree there.

Nate suggested that \$50,000 be requested for trees in the 2021 budget. That is 50% of what was budgeted last year, but the COVID 19 pandemic has decimated the City budget. Under these circumstances, Nate thinks that a reduction is pragmatic.

There was a motion by Susan Allen, seconded by Randy Belville that Jan update the City Council on activities of the UFC over the past year, including: the spring oak tree grant and giveaway; the Tree Plan; the updated ASM; the Morton Arboretum Grant; and plans for participating in the Big Read. The motion carried unanimously. Rianne suggested, and Nate agreed, that Jan should shoot for the Committee of the Whole meeting on December 8. Ernestine, Randy, and Jan will collaborate. Rianne offered to provide a dot point of accomplishments.

Jan has accepted an invitation to speak about 10 minutes about the role of the Springfield Urban Forestry Commission and its activities and plans at a Civic Club event related to the LLCC Academy of Lifelong Learning's Big Read program. The City Arborist and someone from the Morton Arboretum have also been invited. It will occur via Zoom from 5:30 p.m. – 6:45 p.m. on either March 30, March 31, April 13, or April 14, depending on the availability of speakers.

Ernestine has spoken to the Boys and Girls Club about an Arbor Day 2021 event. She said that the UFC is on the books for an event on April 27, 2021. There has been talk of a separate children's book being included in the Big Read. Ernestine suggested that may be included in the Arbor Day event. Randy suggested that a ceremony and the planting of the memorial tree for Mike Pierce could be part of the Arbor Day or Earth Day event.

Susan Allen moved, and Randy Belville seconded, a motion that in March or April 2021, the UFC sponsor an educational program given by Amy McEuen or her designee in conjunction with the Big Read program. The motion was conditioned upon there being no objections from the Mayor's Office.

Rianne offered to get information about the Park District's Memorial Tree Program. Jan offered to help Jeff and Nate with putting the program together.

Jeff announced that he had prepared the City's Application for a Tree City U.S.A. designation, and that the Mayor had signed the Application, and it had been delivered to Mike Brunk at D.N.R.

Rianne Hawkins moved, and Ernestine Lawrence, seconded a motion that in 2021, the UFC will meet the second Wednesday of every other month, beginning in January 2021. The motion was approved unanimously.

Jeff asked that we make best efforts to quickly put our signatures on the ASM approval form.

Randy Belville, moved and Jan Von Qualen seconded, a motion to adjourn. The motion was approved unanimously.