

MINUTES
MAYOR'S BEAUTIFICATION COMMITTEE
August 4, 2015
Aging & Disability Resource Center, 300 Adams Street
4:00 PM

Members Present: Paul Hartman, Bob Mongin, Lynn Austin, Mike Spencer, Jim O'Rourke, Alderman Dave Nennig, Muriel Austin

Also Present: Mark Freberg, Jim Sanderson

Chairman Paul Hartman called the meeting to order at 4:05 PM.

Mark Freberg, City of Green Bay Forester, explained that the Green Bay Parks Department manages the urban forest and is responsible for approximately 35,000 trees within the City of Green Bay. Mark is responsible for the east side of Green Bay, and Brian Pelot is responsible for the west side. The Parks Department cuts down and plants, on average, 700-800 trees per year. When the Emerald Ash Borer was discovered five years ago, within a one-and-a-half-mile working zone, the contaminated trees were replaced with trees such as pear, crabapple, and maple. The Parks Department was treating 20% of the ash trees within the zone, and trying to prevent the trees from dying out en masse. The contaminated ash trees were delivered to a separate wood "tub grinder," and left to sit for three weeks so the heat from the decomposing wood chips would kill the beetles. Mark said that private ash trees are the next at risk. Arborists can be hired to treat private trees. The ash trees can be treated with tree and shrub insecticides containing imidacloprid; the cost is about \$1-2 per diameter inch of the tree. Triazine is a non-toxic alternative.

It takes four to six years for the Emerald Ash Borer to kill an ash tree. The problem is widespread: in the Chicago suburbs, there are walls of dead ash trees in forest preserves and along the toll ways. Parasitic methods of control, such as wasps, are being tried, but without great success. Trees such as maples, lindens, and oaks (trees that are grown on three continents) are not ideal replacements, because of the increased traffic and higher exposure to disease and pests. Mark said that the Norway maple is considered invasive, but they're able to survive under conditions where other trees won't grow. The Asian Longhorn Beetle is a threat to Norway maples. The large-leaf linden is susceptible to the linden borer, and half of the tree will turn brown when afflicted. Trees can be planted too deeply and also can suffer from girdling roots. Trees also need good soil: bad soils include soils that have previously been underneath buildings and roads, as well as red clay, which does not properly drain and can cause the tree to drown. Drowning trees exhibit similar signs to drought, and are thus often overwatered.

The Parks Department prunes and removes trees when necessary, so that garbage trucks can drive underneath. Trees are often removed due to road construction, sidewalk construction, and sewer work. Pruning or removing trees that block stop signs or traffic lights is also a priority. Mike Spencer said that the tallest trees in Green Bay were removed due to interference with power lines.

The Parks Department has a backlog for grinding stumps (the average is 400-500 per year), because demand exceeds capabilities; they have had longstanding work vacancies, some of which have recently been filled, and 600 stumps have been removed so far this year. The Parks Department marks trees for removal in August through September; aboveground removal begins in December, and underground removal begins the following spring. The Green Bay City website's section on forestry has information regarding the status on tree-cutting, and contains links to other sites, such as the National Arbor Day Foundation and the International Society of Arboriculture.

Some Committee members asked if the Parks Department is underfunded. Members referenced a \$500,000 donation to a downtown brewery and expressed concern that tax dollars should primarily be directed toward public projects rather than privately-owned businesses. Mark said that the Parks Department has been short-staffed for several years. He said that tree removals take top priority, while scheduled pruning has lengthened from a cycle of 5-6 years to a cycle of 8-9 years, and stump removal is just aesthetic, at this point.

The subject of the yard waste disposal centers was discussed. There was general agreement that the sites are a great advantage to the community; Green Bay residents can drop off and pick up free leaf mulch, compost, wood chips, turf, and even perennial plants. The yard waste disposal centers could also be an asset in regards to biofuel, if businesses are interested in bidding for and buying burnable material in the future.

Paul Hartman asked Mark what people could personally do to preserve trees. Mark recommended talking to Vijai Pandian, the Horticulture Educator at the Extension Office. It was brought up that the Green Bay Historic Preservation Commission could look into protecting old trees as well as old buildings—possibly they could compile an annual survey of historic trees, as a tie-in with Brown County's two-hundred-year anniversary. Mark also mentioned that the Parks Department gave away trees—including redbud, ornamental pear, and honey locust—last year to the Neighborhood Association.

Lynn Austin observed that the City's approach to landscaping is often short-term. Once trees are planted, they are frequently removed before they grow to maturity. For example, the City Deck becomes very hot during the day, which discourages people from lingering there, since it's unpleasant to sit or stand in direct sunlight for very long. Shade along the river would attract more people. Another example is Leicht Park, which does not have many significant shade trees. Dave Nennig said that the City does not own a large portion of the property at Leicht Park, and is therefore unable to plant trees or landscape in that area.

Mark Freberg mentioned a set of completely healthy ginkgo trees that were removed along Main Street; he'd talked with Rob Strong about keeping the trees, but they were taken out anyway. Mark recommended that the Beautification Committee advocate trees within the City's planning and engineering processes. He said that trees are often overlooked in the initial planning, and that citizens need to become involved. Often, underground gas lines and other utility pipes interfere with tree-planting; it's possible, but more expensive, to put lines under the roads instead.

Committee members pointed out that trees soften the "industrial" atmosphere of a city, and draw attention away from the concrete and mortar. Lynn Austin said that the Committee should write a letter to the City Council regarding the underfunding of the Parks Department.

Jim Sanderson brought up the topic of the historic fort building on Maple Street. The owner of the building was willing to sell the building, but Heritage Hill did not offer an agreeable price for it and later built an approximate reproduction instead. Jim talked with Chris Dunbar from the Brown County Historical Society in an attempt to find out who owns the fort marker on Chestnut Street, but has not received any information as yet. Jim O'Rourke said that the Daughters of the American Revolution own the marker, and that there are about nine or ten similar markers that remain in this general area. Jim Sanderson indicated that the Brown County Historical Society will bring up the issue of relocating the Chestnut St. marker at their meeting on August 19.

Lynn Austin mentioned that she has some historic newspaper articles regarding sites within Green Bay. An archive in Michigan recently sent her a copy of several letters to General Jacob Brown, describing conditions of the fort at Green Bay. According to the letters, the southwest corner of the fort building was at times situated in water. Railroad maps show a creek running down to the Fox River near Kellogg Street, which is probably near the southwest corner of the fort building. She also said that there is evidence, not often considered, which shows that there were two different American fort sites established in that location, an early one and another on higher ground which was built after moving back from Fort Smith—as well as a military cemetery, described as being located underneath the Chicago Northwestern oil tanks. Lynn said that in 2014, while Brown County was funding the LaBaye.org Website Project, she and Jeff DuMez were able to work on a series of historic maps, which they overlaid with contemporary maps; several of the historic maps included the fort site. Since Brown County is no longer involved with the LaBaye Project, however, the map overlay was not completed.

The meeting concluded at 5:20 PM. Next month's meeting is scheduled for September 1.

Respectfully submitted,

Muriel Austin