

October 21, 2008 Tree Commission minutes

Present: Kelly Fleissner, Christine Penney, Jim Larson, Ethan Perry

Absent: Brian Allen, Rick Gitar, Margi Preus, John Doberstein

Call to order: 7:09

No quorum, so no minutes approved.

Trees in the News:

- A former Skyline tree cutting offender was in the paper for having permission to cut trees this time
 - This prompted discussion of another landowner. Kelly denied him permission to cut because removing the trees would not have improved his view. Neighbors turned him in. Kelly called the cops. Kelly says putting his tree cutting policy in an ordinance would make it permanent and not subject to political whims.
- David Ross article in Budgeteer about how the permit system in the Building Safety Office has been streamlined.

Forester's Report:

- Kelly is considering a grant (possibly to the Coastal Program) for more invasive species control
- Pruning will start soon. Possibly use Tree Commissioners (others?) as volunteers.

Tree Ordinance:

Ethan reported on his meeting with Roger Reinert.

- He thinks the Tree Commission should just go ahead and start a Heritage Tree program and not have it part of the ordinance. The drawback of course is that the heritage trees would not have any legal protection.
- When I described our goals of reducing tree loss and encouraging developers to take trees into account, and our idea of requiring replacement or deposit into a tree fund, Reinert was very supportive. He doesn't know whether the current administration is as opposed to dedicated funds as the previous one, but that he supports them.
- Reinert mentioned that it would not be required to seek approval from the Planning Commission, but that it would probably be a good idea to explain to them what we're working on. Any endorsement from them would be icing on the cake. He says we should talk to all the councilors before taking this to the Council, starting with friendly ones. He says Jeff Anderson is the liaison to the Parks and Rec Commission, and that he would be appropriate councilor to carry this proposal if he wants to. If he doesn't, then any other councilor who supports it could carry it.
- He says that the optimal time to bring a proposal to the Council would be in January or February. We could try to develop a timeline of all we need to do by calculating back from that.

Next steps:

- Meet with Jeff Anderson and Sharla Gardner (Ethan and Jim will arrange these).
- Design and print brochures (Christine is working on this)
- Meet with city staff, including city engineer (Cindy Voight), Keith Hamre of Planning, the Building Safety Office, and the city attorney.

Grants:

- Coastal Program grants are due in early December. We would like to apply for funds for a study of how fast we are losing tree cover and possibly also for invasive species control.
- Coastal program grants require a 50% match from non-federal funds, but each entity (i.e. City of Duluth) is allowed to apply for one grant under \$20,000 with 25% match. Ethan will try to get a cost estimate from NRRI.
- Coastal program grants must include a resolution of support from the City Council.
- Our match can be made up of staff or volunteer time on the project, so we could write the project to include some inventory work that we would conduct ourselves.
- Another match possibility is that MN ReLeaf (DNR) may have funds for 2009 with applications due in March. Kelly will investigate this. ReLeaf could match Coastal.

Low Attendance:

We need to reassess commissioners' interest and goals, and make sure the Tree Commission is doing what interests them. For example, Christine suggested the possibility of dropping the Treescaping Awards to concentrate on other things, such as the ordinance, or possibly pruning.