

URBAN FORESTRY TREE BOARD PROCEEDINGS
November 12, 2020
ZOOM Virtual Meeting

Members Present: Ruth Ludwig, Justin Holmes, Robert-Jan Quene, Jane Anklam, Richard Kaufman, Nick Nelson

Also present: Linda Cadotte, Russ Behlings

Chairperson Justin Holmes called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

1. Approval of the August 20, 2020 and October 22, 2020 meeting minutes.

MOTION by Ludwig, second by Quene and carried to approve the minutes with the updated footer and Council Meeting dates.

2. Approve the 2021 Brush Pickup Schedule.

This year the schedule groups areas together instead of individual streets. This should be easier for residents to follow.

MOTION by Anklam, second by Ludwig and carried to approve the 2021 Brush Pickup Schedule.

3. Davey Tree Software.

Building Inspection just got new software that has a module for Asset Management. Cadotte and Behlings did a demo of that software and it was more robust than what is needed for our inventory and the cost reflected that. Cadotte received direction from her supervisor to go forward with looking at tree specific software as there is currently no plan to implement city-wide asset management.

This software is made by a national tree company. It is used by several different cities in Wisconsin, including Wausau. It is a very nice tree specific software made by tree people, for tree people. It is very user friendly. It can also produce shape files which can be converted back into GIS. This would be an interchangeable file set should software be changed in the future. Pricing for this software is a set, flat rate for a one, three or five-year subscription. The Parks Crew has demoed it several times. Davey does offer the ability to come in and do an entire asset update by their Arborists. That would include risk assessment on trees. They would then hand us a product at the end of that with a plan for what needs to be done with the trees and gives a starting point. That is above the initial subscription but is something that would be good to look at in the future.

Holmes asked about collecting way points. Currently the Parks crew does not have anything like that. There is an inventory on GIS that Behlings can access but the crew in the field does not have that access so it is all done on paper. This would allow them to update the software right in the field. The Department would need to purchase tablets for this. The data would be stored in the cloud. That data can also be uploaded to the DNR so

that they can update their inventory as well.

Ludwig asked about how the initial data would be input. To start with, there is a current database that, while out of date, can be transferred into the software as a start. It has up to the 2017 plantings. As administrative staff and crew are able, the information after 2017 would be updated in the software. The cost to have Davey do this tree by tree with tree assessments would be about \$83,000. This is something that could be done in the future and could potentially be partially funded by a grant. The software can also setup a tree pruning schedule, produce work orders and track park assets such as benches and trash cans. We are not limited by the number of assets unlike other software. If we were to purchase the total package with Davey coming in to do the inventory, the first year of the software would be free. Without that inventory, the software is \$6,250 for three years or \$10,000 for five years which is equal to buying 4 years and getting the fifth year free. The software does have the ability to generate a variety of reports.

There is the ability to use the current GIS software to track this, however there is a County server upgrade that would need to happen before that could be done. This software gives us the ability to start tracking now and either keep using it or eventually move over to another software in the future. The proposal is to move forward with the five-year subscription at this time.

MOTION by Ludwig, second by Quene and carried to approve the purchase of the Davey Tree Software for a five year subscription.

4. SNA Boundary Drafts for review and approval.

The Comprehensive Outdoor Rec Plan (CORP) was intended to combine previous Municipal Forest plans, including the Dwight's Point Management Plan from 1997 which is why it had the guiding visions for the forest. Paul Helena suggested, in an email prior to the meeting, doing a full management planning process for the forest. Eventually, the SNA plan would be nested inside the Superior Municipal Forest Management Plan/Stewardship Plan/Master Plans. If the desire of the City Council or Tree Board is to do an actual comprehensive plan, that could be a recommendation. Consolidating all of the individual plans was a recommendation from Northwest Community Regional Planning. There is great value in having a separate plan as well. There are certain elements from the 2010 plan that were not pulled into the CORP. The stewardship plan is what we are proposing instead of the 2010 Municipal Forest Master Plan. Ryan Magana had recommended that the stewardship or management plan should be finalized and then SNA plan follow that.

Ludwig does not see a compelling reason to shrink the SNA boundaries. She met with the Mayor on November 12th. He was surprised as he indicated he did not know anything about this. She discussed this with him and brought up the 2010 master plan. They came to the agreement that maybe it would be good to have a consultant come in and do this master study again. She believes the obligation of the Tree Board is to think about the health of the trees, over recreation. It is hard to separate that as the Municipal Forest is a wonderful place for people to recreate. She thinks that we do need a master plan for the forested area. That plan should include a plan for recreation and how the SNA and stewardship as a whole fit in to that.

MOTION by Ludwig, second by Kaufman to table these items and ask that the City recommend going forward with a consultant to go forward with a formal Municipal Forest Master planning process.

Upon further discussion, Holmes does not believe that there has been a big push. We had an Ecologist come in and gave them some of the parameters we were looking at. The Ecologist set the boundaries.

According to Cadotte, almost two years ago, the Mayor called several people in the office to look at what potential management would be. Further discussions have happened over the past two years. She feels that it may make sense to have a consultant come in and guide the City through recommendations. The same conclusions may be reached, but then the consultant can lead the process. A consultant cost would range between \$30-50,000, it could be less, but the process that Cadotte is envisioning would have them help with getting community involvement and stake holder engagement.

Anklam came back to the question of what can't be done to reach the objectives of the plans that are out there now because the SNA is there. After looking at even the draft plan, which is similar to the 1997 plan, it still does not seem like there is a conflict there. There has been a lot of work that has been done within the SNA that the DNR has never come back against. Then she looked at what is allowed and she couldn't find how the SNA was stopping the objectives that are already planned for the forest under the various plans. She does like the idea of having a comprehensive plan and having someone come in and take all of the work that has been done and put it together in one combined document. For everything that we have gained in having an SNA, she believes that it would be awkward at best to now say we are going to narrow the boundaries.

Quene asked Cadotte if she would be comfortable with an outside Consultant coming in. She agreed it would be great, however she would not want to have to give up a comprehensive tree inventory for this due to budgets. If the money is available, it could be helpful to get everyone on the same page. Holmes agreed, however, is not sure the cost will be justified and so feels that the process would be stalled and go nowhere. Ludwig disagreed as she stated that city-wide, there have been consultants come in for various things in the past and plans have been successfully implemented.

Holmes sees an issue in that we have Aspen at the end of its life cycle and if we want a healthy forest that can recapture value, we need to move forward sooner than later if the goal is to have money to put back into the forest. If we had different age classes or diversified species it would not be an issue. For the most part we have one age class, 85 years old on low site index Aspen, it is at the end of its life. To say that it is going to become old growth, it is not going to happen without a lot of money. There was discussion around what constitutes a healthy forest as there are differing opinions. The issue is, if we want to regenerate and have options in the future we need to get it sooner than later. The reason that it was made an SNA is because it is in its state of natural generation of dying, wind throw, and what happens after the red pines fall – not because it is a healthy forest, whatever that means. That is not a measure of success for the SNA. A lot of the decisions come down to use desired within those boundaries.

Requests for proposals for a consultant would likely go through a sub-committee or team from the board. In the interim of updating the plan, when requests come in to do things in the forest, those requests would be handled in conjunction with Ryan Magana as has been done over the past 5 years. The SNA would not be updated until the Master Planning processes are complete.

There may not be action on this before February when the Capital Improvement Program is being brought back for approval by the City Council. Cadotte would use an initial budget number and if approved, then work on creating RFP's to find a consultant.

MOTION by Ludwig, second by Kaufman and carried to table agenda items 4 and 5 indefinitely and ask that the City Council recommend hiring a consultant to make a Comprehensive Municipal Forest Master Plan.

5. Municipal Forest Management Plan draft for review and approval
6. Parks, Recreation & Forestry Director's Report

Director Cadotte had nothing additional to add.

7. Set next meeting

Cadotte proposed setting the next meeting for February or March to discuss the USA Tree City Arbor Day Celebration. The board would like to have potential dates sent out after the first of the year. 5:30 pm works best for the board members.

Councilor Holmes announced the meeting adjourned at 6:59 p.m.

Minutes submitted to the Council Meeting of December 1, 2020.