

**PARKS & RECREATION
SHADE TREE COMMITTEE MINUTES
Tuesday, February 25, 2020
Activity Center
12:00 Noon**

ATTENDEES:

Hannah Payne, Lee Washburn, Matt Hill, Randy Westergard, Kim Johnson, Ronnie Campbell, Aaron McCracken Gerry Bates, Lyon Johnson, Mason Handke, William Harker, Rich Potter and 6 High School Students, Madilyn Scheffield, Amaya Preunenstiel, Jozie Billings, Alex Lacraix, Lexi Schwartz and Ethen Perttula.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Matt Hill Approved, Randy Westergard Second

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Tree code enforcement letters went out in March. Public feels getting the letters means their trees are out of code, neighbors are calling them in, or they are being personally targeted by the City. Public is confused by letter when they do not have trees. Gerry Bates mentioned that he received a letter and he felt he was being targeted, as if someone felt his trees were out of code, which he knows that they are not. Gerry Bates did not know it was a basic letter. There was a suggestion to add to the letter that stipulates; if you do not have trees, please disregard, and rewriting the letter so that the letter is more clear to avoid excessive phone calls. Suggested all scenarios in letter so that individuals know which scenario they fit in.

ARBOR DAY 2020:

Lee introduced he would like Arbor Day 2020 to be April 14th from 10am – 12pm. Mason indicated Mayor is traveling most of April. If she cannot be present, she will send a councilmember. Edgemont Elementary School 6th grade is participating. Arbor Day will be at Community Park and a presentation at the shelter. There will be 15 to 25 trees planted. Mason came back and said Mayor would be available for the Arbor Day Celebration on April 24th or 27th. Lee and Ronnie discussed which date would be better but still on hold as to which day we will celebrate our Arbor Day. Ronnie claimed Michelle Ziel-Dingman, can always come out and read the proclamation if Mayor is not available or if we want to do the Arbor Day on a different date. Lee would prefer May and it was suggested May is better because of weather if Mayor is not set on a day in April. Ronnie is going to run possible dates through PJ for Arbor Day Celebration and get back.

STREET TREE TRIMMING:

It was asked, “how tree code enforcement is done,” Hannah introduced the process including the TrakIt side. Someone inquired if Lee’s division is responsible for going out and trimming trees. Ronnie specified that as of now yes, but they are hoping to change this process and outsource work.

Statistics and progress:

Stats are pulled from TrakIt. Tree Code Enforcement opened up 306 cases in 2019. Only 150 cases in 2018. Closed 177 cases, which means 177 complied. 44% of homeowners have cut their trees since the initial inspection, request to trim was 143 but it’s actually down to 119. Talked about differences between the Freeman Zone and Community Zone and speculated that the Community Zone would be much like the letter streets. Ronnie answered Gerry Bates trimming question stating “those numbers are months behind to enforce the trees”. Ronnie went to Public Works and Community Development to request funding because those trees are in Public works right of ways. Ronnie said they are going to consider budgeting to have extra help plus equipment. Ronnie said we were considering outsourcing tree trimming. There was a suggestion to have information on licensed trimmers and concerns about or city tree inventory not being up to date. Suggested the tree code enforcement and tree trimming needs to reflect city tree inventory. Concerns about city tree inventory being out of date. Asked if it was possible to make those updates of tree trimming or tree removal maintenance in city tree inventory.

EARTH DAY 50TH ANNIVERSARY:

50th Earth Day anniversary introduction of Mason Handke. Mason introduce that they would like the shade tree committee to have a presence at the 50th Earth Day anniversary Saturday, April 25 from 8 to 4 at Tautphaus Ice Arena. Clarified that it is separate from Arbor Day. Gerry Bates withdrew interest due to preparation of Arbor Day. Horticulture was preparing to have their staff there to talk about what their department does. This withdrew their availability to help out with the booth. Aaron from Sunnyside is going to donate a tree. Ronnie said because of the presence of parks and rec that will shine light on the shade tree committee and what the shade tree committee does and thinks that that would be enough for the Earth Day anniversary. Ronnie suggested bringing information about the Shade Tree Committee for the booth. Gary Bates talked about displays that he can make available for the booth. Mason will take this to the board

CHANGES TO ORDINANCE:

Right-of-Way and Utility Approved Tree List

Adding and subtracting to the Right-of-Way Tree List and adding and removing from the approved Utility Tree List. Lee asked the committee for input on what trees to add and take away from approved tree list. Lee asked the Shade Tree Committee members to mark up the handout and please bring thoughts to next meeting. There was a suggestion about the medium tree list and them being small and a better definition. Small trees are 20' or below medium or 30' or below large or 40' or below and there is a gray area for the medium trees. Suggested revising heights, moving small tree height up to 25' instead of 20'. There was concern expressed about the Utility Tree List and heights stipulation for utility trees. With the small to medium there's confusion, it looks like it says only these varieties are available for this situation. The gentleman from the IFP said the power company does not trim anything lower than 15'. Primarily when they trim, they want to be on a four (4) year cycle. Suggested that the tree heights keep limbs out 10' around power lines, depending on power line height, 20' to 25', and 20 lateral feet away from power line. Discussed that utility approved trees are columnar and do not grow over 25'. Ronnie brought up the fiber line. Discussed the utilities are moving to the front of homes and underground, this helps with the issue of trees encroaching power lines. Asked if Conifers were okay in the Right-of-Way. Those are generally not wanted. It is harder to see through Conifers than deciduous trees and Conifers usually get taller. Suggested that Rocky Mountain Maple is to be taken off the list. Pointed out that it is not a hearty tree for this area at all. Gerry Bates asked if it would be beneficial if he shared the approved tree list from other cities. Gerry Bates feels like there is not a variety for homeowners to choose from with our current list and the utility approved list really needs to be dialed in. Adding these new heights of 25' and suggesting being columnar will help. Suggested not being so ambiguous with the list and going with what the standard name as class 1, class 2 and class 3 to help buyers at garden centers. Suggested to emphasize spread of the tree. Ronnie said he would really like the committee's involvement before they present the list to legal.

Private Tree Company Licensing Amendment

Hannah discussed that the current code is a simple infraction and a \$100 fine. Want to change to misdemeanor. Unlicensed tree cutters incorporate this \$100 fine into the bid to the homeowner so the homeowner is paying the fine and not the unlicensed private tree company. Issue with cases being thrown out. Introduced cities in Idaho that the code violation is actually a misdemeanor. City moving forward with tree code a seven-year plan to accomplish all the zones it would be good to mitigate the situation now while we see little things happening before it gets bigger. Give private homeowners a better selection and more competitive market of companies to hire. It was asked what other violations in the city are misdemeanors, gave examples dog at large, not cleaning up litter within 10 days, and signage for your company that is not approved by the city. It is been discussed that some companies (landscaping companies) can cut trees if they are 10' or smaller and that's okay but after the 10' height you have to have a licensed arborist and that is clearly stated. It was discussed that it's unfair for those who have taken the time and money and staff to meet our code that these other peoples will start taking advantage of the increased work as we add the tree code enforcement seven-year plan. Discussed finding that it is actually those individuals who have taken

the time to become ANSI-certified that are calling in these other companies that are not licensed. Asked why the misdemeanor tickets are not being paid, discussed that it takes more money to deal with the issue than the ticket. The gentleman from the power company also said that a lot of these homeowners know they hired somebody with no license and by the time the power company arrives the cutter is already gone and the homeowner doesn't give name. Asked if the fine would go up with each violation: something that we we're going to have to get together and discuss and see what legal thought because that was a push back they've gotten before. Gerry Bates was surprised that it wasn't a misdemeanor and he says that they (State) recommends that these sorts of violations are a misdemeanor. Discussed our lack of knowledge on how the whole system runs, talked about my meeting with Cherise and her suggestion on how to get these violators prosecuted. Basically, it takes more effort on our part to see when the violator is going to court so that we have a presence, before we did not know when people were going to court. There was no presence made by the City in the court. Ronnie suggested taking my current amendment to legal to see what kind of support or pushback we were going to have with this before the effort was done to make changes and present it at our next meeting. Discussed insurance and business license requirements.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Gerry Bates -Arbor Day Grant goes out this week.

The 6 high school students were thanked and dismissed.

Meeting adjourned.

Next meeting will be held March 31, 2020.

*Recorded by
Hannah Payne*