

City of Urbana, Illinois

Minutes of the Urbana Tree Commission Meeting

**Wednesday, March 7, 2012
1:30 P.M.**

Members Present: Jeff Dawson, Michael Stevenson, Barbara Anderson, Thom Fehrmann

Members Absent: Darin Eastburn

Staff Present: Michael Brunk, City of Urbana Arborist
Kevin Sanderson, Arbor Supervisor

Others Present: Dennis Roberts, Urbana City Council
Linda Lorenz

Approval of Meeting Minutes

The meeting was called to order at 1:36pm.

The minutes from December 7, 2011 were presented for approval. Dawson noted one correction: Barbara Anderson's name needed to be removed from the list of members absent from the previous meeting. With that correction, Stevenson moved to approve the minutes; Fehrmann seconded, and the minutes were approved.

Heritage or Exceptional Tree Program

Dennis Roberts addressed the Commission regarding the need to establish a Heritage Tree Program (or Exceptional Tree program), which would commemorate and preserve certain historic or significant trees in Urbana. He said a program such as this one had been included in City Council goals several years ago, and implored the Commission to support its creation. The Commission discussed the details of the proposed program; specifically, how the Commission would designate which trees would be commemorated, how to handle trees which are on private property, and incentivizing property owners who preserved historical trees. The Commission also discussed creating a list of trees to consider for commemoration.

Brunk said that a Request for Proposals for tree inventorying had just been released and was awaiting responses, and that hopefully, inventorying City trees could help locate any significant trees that might be considered under the program once it is established. Roberts said that he had recently sent out invitations to participate in a historical survey in the Historic East Urbana

Neighborhood, and that this questionnaire specifically asked homeowners if there were any large trees on their properties which would merit “heritage” status. He hoped this would also pinpoint significant trees for consideration. Brunk said the Commission members could view the selected trees, vote on them, and present the results to City Council. This would occur after the creation of the program. The Commission also discussed components of heritage tree programs from other communities to determine whether some of those implementations could work for Urbana’s program. Brunk said City staff is already in the process of creating an outline of the program’s components, which he would present to the Commission once a draft was prepared.

Lincoln Heritage Tree Project

Dennis Roberts presented to the Commission information on an Elm tree which Abraham Lincoln was said to have given a speech under. After extensive research, he found that the tree was located at 704 E. Main St, adjacent to the current AutoZone building. He said that he and Brunk had been in negotiations with AutoZone headquarters to establish a mini-park at the site where the tree stood, and to plant a disease-resistant Elm and install a plaque to commemorate the tree. Roberts pointed out that the planting of the commemorative tree would be a good Arbor Day event. He said the Historic East Urbana Neighborhood Association (HEUNA) was willing to solicit funding for the project and that AutoZone was agreeable to the idea. Fehrmann moved to formally endorse the Lincoln Heritage Tree Project, Anderson seconded, and the motion was passed by a voice vote. The votes were as follows:

Anderson – aye	Brunk-aye	Dawson-aye
Fehrmann-aye	Stevenson-aye	

Dawson asked that a formal resolution be sent to Roberts, the Mayor, and Rebecca Bird (City staff member on the Historic Preservation Commission) stating the Tree Commission’s support of the project. Some discussion followed regarding the type of Elm tree that should be planted at the site.

The Commission also discussed a pine tree that previously stood across the street from the Elm tree, at 605 E. Main. Abraham Lincoln purportedly paid to have this pine tree planted after his carriage damaged the one that stood there before it. This tree is no longer standing, but Brunk said he had collected pine cones from it before it was removed, and inquired about having seeds germinated from those cones in order to plant a new tree from them. Dawson said he would look into it.

Roberts also introduced Linda Lorenz, an Urbana citizen who voiced her support for the Lincoln Heritage Tree Project.

Ash Tree Removal Update

Brunk presented information on the latest ash tree removals. He said the spring removal list contained 31 trees to be taken down; 20 would be targeted in the coming season. The removal of these trees would leave approximately 450 ash trees on City right-of-way. He said the presence of the Emerald Ash Borer is imminent, and that in the event that the pest is discovered in Urbana, City staff would be prepared to handle it.

Old Business

There was no old business.

New Business

Brunk informed the Commission that all elected and appointed members would be required by the State of Illinois to complete training and receive certification on the Illinois Open Meetings Act. This certification must be obtained by all members by January 1, 2013.

Brunk also informed the Commission about a piece of legislation that he had been keeping abreast of. The Overhead Utility and Facility Damage Prevention Act (HB 3884), would allow utilities to remove trees which are over 25 feet in height, up to 20 feet away from their overhead utility lines. Brunk said that there is much opposition to this bill, and said he would keep the Commission informed on its progress.

Adjournment

There being no further business to discuss, Stevenson moved to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 3:11 p.m.

Femi Washington, Recording Secretary
Tree Commission