

Laurel Tree Board Meeting
Minutes
8-1-24
Council Conference room

Attendance: Matt Wheeler, Tom Canape, LuAnne Engh, Bridget Coleman, Michelle Mize

1. Public Input
2. General Items.
 - a. June minutes
 - b. Members – Paul and Walt are off the board and Phyllis is unable to attend anymore so we are left with 4 member, 2 Council Members (Michelle and Tom) and 2 community members (LuAnne and Bridget) . Dan Fevold and Bill Hansen are interested in considering membership. Aaron Christensen remains an advisor for Arbor Day events. Since we can't keep a full board of 7 filled, and therefore we rarely have a quorum (2/3rds) to vote, it was decided to ask the City Council if the Tree Board could drop to 5 members. We can have any number of interested parties attend our meetings and help with events. It was mentioned to ask Steve from RiverRidge to consider being a board member.
 - c. Matt shared the letters from the 4th graders (Kanta's class) from Arbor Day. They mentioned the Weather (NOAA) guys, Invasive Species (Anthony Summartano) and Yellowstone Weeds as their favorite speakers. They appreciated the lunch and being at Kids Kingdom. Mrs. Kanta's class does a remarkable job on their letters every year.
 - d. DNRC – report- Michelle organized the tree inventory with the DNRC June 25th. Sheri Stretler, Hannah Payne, one other Helena DNRC person and Lydia Hesel arrived and did a class for the few volunteers that showed up. The whole process was very involved and took 5 days and only 2 wards and the city parks were completed. The remaining 2 wards could be finished with a local group next Spring. According to the DNRC the Tree Board is supposed to supervise a Tree Inventory every 3 years. The last time ours was done was 10 years ago. We would need laptops and 8 people/day to do the work. Each tree that isn't in the data base already needs to be measured, identified and assessed for tree health and age. Michelle was overwhelmed with the whole process and the lack of connection to the DNRC prior to the survey. It appears Laurel was given the program years ago.
 - e. Trees on public/private boulevards – The DNRC says it is in our city ordinances that the city is responsible for the care of boulevard trees. Matt has maintained that the city ISN'T responsible and that trees that the state has planted in projects on Main street and 8th street belong to the homeowner and they should water and care for them. Matt is concerned and wants the city attorney to review that and possibly rewrite the ordinance.
 - f. Arbor Day – We are considering moving to October 8th with back up date the 15th. We'd go to Thomson and make the event simple, as we did during Covid. Our theme and shirts would be the same as in May. This would be a way to move to the Fall without missing a class. There are only 116 kids this Fall in 4th grade with 5 classes. Possibly the kids would bring their lunches and we would provide dessert. LuAnne will check on the availability of

the vendors before we confirm the date. As far as planting trees, we still have \$2,000 available in the foundation account.

- g. Replacement trees – The Library tree has been replaced by Sylvan Nursery
- h. Tree maintenance – Matt said the large cottonwoods that were removed this Spring took almost \$10,000 so our budget for other tree maintenance is limited. Five Elm trees on East Maryland have been removed. That tree line is embedded in asphalt.
- i. Arbor Day Accounts – City \$100 – Foundation - \$2014 –

Old Business

City ordinance – Michelle Braukmann (city Attorney) will continue to review the city ordinance regarding liability to the city on trees on boulevards.

- 1. Grants for the future
- 2. MUCFA – Still not a member, but Scott Meyers from Billings Arboretum is now president

Meeting Adjourned at 5:20

Next Meeting: September 5th 4:30 Council Conference Room (unless otherwise advised)