



MINUTES

Wednesday, February 21, 2024

Community Auditorium Conference Room,
1915 Main Street

Minutes are unofficial until approved by the Commission.

A. Call to Order

The February Community Forestry Commission meeting was called to order at 5:32 PM.

1. Roll Call

MEMBERS PRESENT: Bruce Countryman, David Hunter, Justin Marble, Mark Nakajima, Kathy Walden, Councilor Marshall

MEMBERS ABSENT: Shaun English

STAFF PRESENT: Dan Riordan, Senior Planner

GUEST PRESENT: Michael Howell

B. Public Comment:

1. Written Public Comment
2. In-Person or Remote Public Comment

No public comments were provided for Commission consideration.

C. Action Items

1. Election of Officers for Calendar Year 2024

By unanimous consent, the Commission elected Justin Marble as Chair and Mark Nakajima as Vice-Chair.

2. Approval of Meeting Dates for Calendar Year 2024

David made a motion, seconded by Mark to approve the proposed Commission meeting dates for 2024, with the addition of March 20th. The motion passed unanimously.

3. Review and Approve Meeting Minutes for November 15, 2023

The Commission read and approved the November 15, 2023, minutes as presented.

D. Discussion Items

1. Register Tree Removal Permit: 1604 Birch Street

Dan informed the Commission that the owner of property at 1604 Birch Street requested removal of one Oregon white oak listed in the City's Register of Significant Trees. The property owner submitted a tree assessment report prepared by an arborist. The report indicates that the tree is rated as a high level risk and should be removed as soon as possible. Dan noted that the City's tree protection ordinance allows for an exception to the standard tree removal permit requirements when a tree is deemed to be an imminent danger to the public or any property owner or resident as is the case in this situation. Given the high risk a public hearing to remove the oak tree from the Register of Significant Trees was not held and a permit authorizing removal was approved and issued by the Community Development Department.

2. Arbor Month Event Planning 2024

Commission members discussed ideas for the City's 2024 Arbor Month tree planting event. The Commission discussed possible locations for the tree planting event including Talisman Park and Reuter Farm Park. The Commission agreed that Talisman Park is very wet and may not be a good location due to frequent standing water. The Commission also discussed possible tree varieties to plant including western red cedar or madrone. Michael Howell offered to donate trees for planting. Justin offered to contact Tom Martin, City parks supervisor, to discuss a possible location, day and time for the event. David suggested that Tom be invited to the Commission's March 20th meeting to discuss event details.

3. Downtown Street Tree Removal and Planting

Dan reported that the City may have funding through the City's urban renewal program to remove problem trees in downtown Forest Grove during spring and replant during the fall. Dan also mentioned the owner of Van Dyke Appliances and the United Church of Christ have requested permission to have street trees removed but are waiting, so the City can address the tree issue comprehensively. The Commission discussed the possible scope of the removal and replanting project, including focusing on only the trees with tree grates. The Commission also discussed possible tree varieties for replanting. Justin suggested more research is needed on appropriate trees to plant.

The Commission also discussed possible planting alternatives, including using planter boxes. It was suggested that perhaps trees shouldn't be planted in each location where there's a tree grate. Mark suggested some locations could be used for public art instead and perhaps the Public Arts Commission would be interested in this idea. Justin, Bruce and Mike offered to take a look at the trees with tree grates and report their findings to the Commission. Bruce asked that copies of the 2018 downtown tree inventory be provided, so it can be used as a starting point for recommending trees to remove.

4. Emerald Ash Borer Update

Dan provided an update on efforts to mitigate the impact of the Emerald Ash Borer.

Dan informed the Commission that the Oregon Department of Agriculture has additional funding for ash tree removals this summer and will likely have funding for purchasing and replanting some trees. Dan noted that the Oregon Department of Agriculture is mailing letters informing property owners about the tree removal program. Letters were mailed to 36 property owners with ash trees on February 16th. Dan also noted that the Oregon National Guard unit in Forest Grove is interested in volunteering time to remove trees near 13th Avenue.

E. Council Liaison Report

Councilor Marshall informed the Commission that City Council will be holding their annual goal setting retreat on Saturday, February 24th at the Community Auditorium.

F. Commissioner Reports

David updated the Commission on the continuing education work he's doing. Justin noted that in May he's conducting a tree climbing training class in northern California for CalFire.

G. Staff Communications

Dan informed the Commission that the Metro Intertwine Alliance, in partnership with the Urban Greenspaces Institute, prepared an assessment of regional urban tree policies and programs. Dan mentioned that Forest Grove scored very well since the City has an urban tree code, an urban forest management plan, an established tree board, and urban tree canopy targets. The City scored 9.5 out of 10 for overall tree policies and 7 out of 10 for overall tree management. The City would have scored higher for tree management if the City required tree removal permits for all or most private yard trees.

H. Announce Next Meeting and Adjourn:

The meeting adjourned at 6:45 PM. The next meeting will be on March 20th and will focus on the Arbor Month tree planting event.

Respectfully submitted by Dan Riordan, CFC staff liaison