

**City of Kalamazoo
TREE COMMITTEE
Minutes
January 4, 2022**

Stockbridge Main Conference Room, 1st Floor
415 E. Stockbridge, Kalamazoo, MI 49001

Members

Present: Erik Injerd, Forester, Consumers Energy
Anthony Ladd, Public Works Division Manager, COK
Patrick McVerry, Deputy Director - Parks & Recreation, COK
Steve Skalski, Water Superintendent & Asst. City Engineer, COK
Gail Walter, Environmental Concerns Committee (ECC)

City Staff: Karen Rutherford, Recording Secretary

Guests: Lee Mueller, Davey Resource Group (virtual)

A. CALL TO ORDER

Committee Chair Ladd called the meeting of the Tree Committee of January 4, 2022 to order at 2:00 p.m.

B. ROLL CALL

Committee Chair Ladd completed roll call and determined the aforementioned members were present.

C. INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Committee Chair Ladd introduced guest:

- Lee Mueller, Davey Resource Group

D. APPROVAL OF AGENDA (January 4, 2022)

Committee Member Walter noted an error on the Agenda referencing the date of the meeting minutes. It was noted as November 2, 2021 and should be December 7, 2021.

Committee Member Skalski supported by Committee Chair Ladd, moved approval of the January 4, 2022 Tree Committee Agenda as amended. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

E. APPROVAL OF MINUTES (December 7, 2021)

Committee Member Skalski supported by Committee Member Walter moved approval of the December 7, 2021 Committee Minutes. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

F. NEW BUSINESS

Davey Resource Group – Tree Inventory Project Report

Committee Chair Ladd stated Davey Resource Group is presenting findings from the tree inventory project they performed from the end of June 2021 to October 2021. This effort was to update the tree inventory for the City right of way trees. The last inventory was done by Davey Resource Group 20 years ago. Committee Chair Ladd stated this information will help guide their decisions going forward as well as updating our inventory as they do plantings and removal projects in years to come. This report has great information and would not have been possible without the support of the Foundation of Excellence. Committee Chair Ladd expressed his appreciation of their support for the City's forestry initiatives.

Lee Mueller, with Davey Resource Group, met with the Committee virtually. He screen-shared information from the tree inventory report as he spoke. He stated they did the original inventory 20 years ago in 2001 and it is exciting to see the changes between the two periods of data collection. He stated they conducted the inventory between June and October 2021. They looked at the trees in the City right of way. When they do this, they walk down every street in the City with a map marking it off as they go. They have the City's right of way layers on their field computers so they can capture every tree that is the City's responsibility for maintenance within the right of way. They assess the tree for risk concerns, identify the species, put the location of the tree on the map, measure the diameter, and collect maintenance information.

Mr. Mueller stated there were more trees in 2001 than there are now.

- 2001: 26,046 trees, 4,713 vacant lots (potential area to plant trees), 134 stumps
- 2021: 22,287 trees, 12,296 vacant lots (potential area to plant trees), 818 stumps

He noted the reason for more trees in 2001 than 2021 could be due to a number of issues including the parks could have been more clearly included in 2001, the emerald ash borer hit the City after 2001, development patterns, and road projects that have had impacts on the trees. In regard to vacant lots, he suggested they may have not done all the vacant lots across the entire City, or it could be the definition of a vacant lot in 2001 is different from a vacant lot in 2021. He noted he is not concerned with the vacant lot information. He stated he is not surprised with the difference in the tree totals given the emerald ash borer issue and the City's improved infrastructure.

Mr. Mueller discussed species and genus diversity. The top genera for trees in 2001 and 2021 are the maple. We have 43% maples (different varieties) in 2021 compared to 50% in 2001. Honey locust and Oak come in at 2nd and 3rd respectively. There is 7% honey locust and oak in the City in 2021 and 6% in 2001. We are planting less maple and have increased plantings of honey locust, oak, and other species. He noted the guidelines the industry tends to use is not have more than 10% of any one species, 20% of any one genus, and 30% of any one family.

Mr. Mueller stated the reason why species diversity matters is because of pest and disease susceptibility. Certain pest or disease attack a particular family or genus or species. He stated they analyze the susceptibility of our tree population to pest and disease. They did this for 2001 and 2021. In most cases our pest and disease susceptibility has gone down. This is due to us getting a better diversity of tree species along the street population. He noted the most problematic pest that could have the largest impact to our urban forest is the Spotted Lanternfly and Asian Longhorned Beetle. They are not in Michigan yet, but we need to keep an eye on them.

Mr. Mueller discussed tree condition. The City has 86% good/fair trees and 14% are poor to dead. He stated 14% poor to dead trees are trees that need removed now or likely to decline in the next five years.

Mr. Mueller discussed diameter class distribution in terms of the tree's age class. In 2001 we had a large population of established trees in the 9" – 17" category. In 2021 we have many trees greater than 24". Large trees offer a lot benefit. They provide shade and offer esthetics to the community.

With the larger trees we have to look at their future aging and declining. The industry suggests the ideal distribution is to have a lot of young trees, a little bit fewer established trees, fewer mature trees, and immature trees.

Mr. Mueller discussed tree risk. Tree risk is anticipating the likelihood of an event to happen. You look at a tree and try to determine how likely that tree will fail within a year. If it does fail, what would it impact and how much damage would it do. The tree assessment protocol allows us to not just think about a condition of the tree but other the factors that come into play as it relates to undesirable interaction of the things we care about.

Mr. Mueller discussed tree pruning by risk level. He noted we have a low number for tree pruning risk.

Mr. Mueller discussed tree planting and stocking. Tree stocking is an indication of the percentage of possible planting locations that have trees in them. One hundred percent stocking is not desirable. He noted all the vacant lots they identified may not be suitable for planting trees when you consider the social consideration of the urban environment. Currently the City is 63% stocked along the streets. It is worth noting there is 2,818 trees recommended for removal. Using 1% of the trees, the natural mortality of trees in the City is 223 trees per year. With this information we need to plant 17,493 trees over the next 7 years to achieve 100% stocking. 100% is not realistic or desirable but it is a good number to know as you develop planting goals.

Mr. Mueller suggested the following recommendations:

- Prioritize removals and pruning based on risk rating.
- Pruning trees, particularly based on risk, should be priority.
- Continue to diversify tree planting. Limit planting of maples.
- Caring for old, mature trees pay dividends.
- Consider establishing a risk management / inspection protocol and regular re-assessment of trees.

Committee Chair Ladd noted this is such litany of good information provided in the inventory and management plan. In the last couple of years, through the Foundation of Excellence, we have been able to contract out work for our tree planting program, tree removal program, and tree trimming program. This assessment gives us a good direction. He noted this year we have a goal to plant 500 trees.

Committee Chair Ladd noted they have resident's resistant to planting. Mr. Mueller suggested instead of saying yes or no, offer the resident a choice of a tree. Committee Member Walter stated she watched a webinar on this topic, and they noted one reason for resistance from residents is they do not know how to care for the tree. People were more receptive when they were provided information and suggested giving residents a pamphlet on how to care for their tree.

Committee Chair Ladd stated they are planning an Arbor Day Event. He is hoping to encourage tree plantings on private properties, including providing instructions and demonstrations.

Committee Chair Ladd stated we are in the process of revising our Tree Ordinance. The greatest request we get is removal of a City trees. He asked Mr. Mueller what other communities are doing when asked to remove a City tree and how do they compensate for the value that is lost when the tree is removed. Mr. Mueller suggested to concentrate on the real issue and tackle that issue and make changes. He noted there is a difference to a tree ordinance and a tree manual and standards. A tree ordinance may not be the place to have all your specifications. The tree ordinance may be where you talk about authority, who has the authority, how permits happen, and what is a prohibited act. The ordinance can reference a tree manual stating this is where our specs and standards are. There is

often a section in the manual on tree removal. It would include a list of things we would consider that would justify a tree removal and list of things that would not justify a tree removal. If it is an allowable removal, the requester would pay the cost of the removal but not require them to pay for a replacement. Other communities require the requester to pay for the removal and pay for replacing the tree.

G. OLD BUSINESS

None.

H. ACTION ITEMS

None.

I. PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

J. COMMITTEE COMMENTS

Committee Chair Ladd stated Committee Member Brian LaBelle is one of the City's three Public Works Supervisors who work shift rotation. Every winter a supervisor is in charge of handling our winter snow removal and salting the streets at night. Committee Member LaBelle is working the night shift during these winter months. Let Committee Chair Ladd know if there is something that requires Committee Member LaBelle's attention. He stated he is in contact with him on a regular basis.

Committee Chair Ladd stated the City of Kalamazoo is going back to in-person meetings. The committees had an option to go in-person and include with the in-person meeting a virtual option. If we were streaming on Facebook we would still be meeting in person. There is only one room in the City that is able to do virtual meetings. In doing the meeting virtually, we would need someone to operate the video and audio equipment. If we would choose to do in-person virtual meetings, we would need to adjust our schedule. He noted streaming the meeting allowed us to showcase all the efforts and work we have been doing. He also suggested we could move the meeting to a larger conference room at our Harrison facility. Committee Member Skalski stated it would be a good idea to move to a larger room. He suggested we could use the conference room at Parks and Recs, or the training room upstairs at Stockbridge once it is completed. Committee Chair Ladd stated they will look into moving into a large room.

K. ADJOURNMENT

Committee Member Skalski supported by Committee Member McVerry, made a motion to adjourn the Tree Committee meeting. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 3:03 p.m.

Submitted by: Karen Ruthford
Recording Secretary

Date: 2-23-2022

Approved by: Ad
Staff Liaison

Date: 2/23/2022