

Morgantown Tree Board (MTB)
Minutes, meeting of February 22, 2016

Present: MTB members Brent Bailey, Dan Brown, Jonathan Cumming, Dave Davis, Secretary Jon Weems, and Chair Dave Barnett, prospective MTB members Phil Crim and Toby Grapner, City employee Marchetta Maupin, and First Energy representative Ryan Thomas.

Chair D. Barnett called the meeting to order at 4:32 PM in City Council chambers and noted that a quorum was present.

D. Davis moved, and D. Brown seconded, that minutes of the 11/30/15 meeting be approved as amended. The motion carried unanimously.

Introduction: Ryan Thomas, First Energy Transmission Forestry Technician

R. Thomas said First Energy planned to clear the right of way for a major power line in the Morgantown area in 2016. The line runs from the vicinity of the dam on Cheat Lake to a site near Booth, crossing I-68 near the Pierpont Center and near Brookhaven, and crossing a small amount of land within city limits. The right of way would be maintained to its full width, generally 100 feet. Detailed planning of this job would likely begin in March and April, with physical work beginning in June. R. Thomas said he was being proactive and urged MTB members to refer inquiries to him. In discussion, he was open to the possibility of vouchers for lost specimen trees and to making recommendations of species for replanting on a case-by-case basis.

Unfinished Business

1. Deckers Creek Trees at Marilla Park/ WV Radio Corporation (WVRC). D. Barnett reported that Bartlett had completed its work and done a good job, although the site looked a bit rough. It was up to MTB to plant underneath the three heavily pruned sycamores to reduce erosion. D. Barnett said he would find the list of plants MTB previously developed for the site.
2. Demonstration City Grant Application. Bob Hannah reportedly still had funds for planting on Pleasant Street. The City's grant application, almost complete, was awaiting information from Damien Davis. It was noted that recently hired City employee John Whitmore should also be helpful with tree-related business in the future. Discussion then turned to a problematic area not part of the Demonstration City grant, Willey St. from High St. to WVU, an area with narrow sidewalks, overhead wires, and heavy pedestrian and vehicular traffic. Consensus was reached that the best solution might be to replace the two trees near West Virginia Junior College and remove the trees between Chestnut and High Streets.
3. Pruning List for Contracted Arborist. M. Maupin distributed two lists, one for large out-of-town firm Bartlett, the other for local arborist Dave Mitchell. The thinking was that Bartlett would be more appropriate where a large crew was needed to complete work quickly, but that it was a good idea to hire fully qualified local arborists for other work. M. Maupin said the City was awaiting a price quote from Bartlett and that D. Mitchell had yet to see his tree list. MTB members expressed satisfaction with M. Maupin's

approach and tree lists.

4. South Walnut St. Trees. Trees in this area have been damaged. Vehicles speeding around the turn from Cobun have hit trees planted on the side of the street without overhead wires. Pedestrians have damaged small trees on the other side of the street. It was decided that larger trees might better withstand these challenges, and the best approach would be to contract out the planting of larger trees, perhaps in the fall of 2016.

New Business

1. FY 2016-2017 MTB Budget. It was noted that \$15,658 remained in MTB's budget for 2015-2016, but that most of that might be spent on pruning contracts as discussed under old business above. City Manager Mikorski had indicated there would be \$10,000 in the coming year's budget. It was agreed that plenty of tree work needed to be done, but maintaining a small balance for contingencies might be wise.

2. ULC Meeting Update. No date had been set for a joint MTB – Urban Landscape Commission meeting.

3. Mountaineer Treeways Program (MTP). It was reported that this program, through which utility companies paid to replace removed trees with more appropriate species under power lines, was being resurrected.

4. Year to go Green. MTB had been invited to participate in this current local initiative, partially modeled on the 2014 "Year of the Tree" program. It was suggested one way for MTB to contribute would be to support tree plantings in every ward. Attendance at neighborhood association meetings (7:00 on the second Monday of each month) was cited as one way to make connections. J. Cumming and T. Grapner indicated interest in working on this.

5. Inventory System. M. Maupin was continuing to use and update the old inventory put together by the USDA Forest Service, but the need for a better system was evident. Both Bob Hannah and City Manager Mikorski reportedly considered a grant for a new system important and possible. M. Maupin and D. Barnett reported trying the demo of a program called "Plan-It-Geo."

6. Other New Business. Members were reminded of the importance of keeping track of their MTB hours. D. Barnett and J. Weems agreed to draft a note offering MTB's help in deciding what to plant at the Courthouse Square.

Next meeting not announced

Motion to adjourn made at 6:10 PM by B. Bailey, seconded by D. Davis. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted, _____ Jon Weems, Secretary