

Morgantown Tree Board (MTB)
Minutes, regular meeting of February 25, 2013

Present: MTB members Dan Brown, Katherine Payne, Greg Dahle, Dave Barnett, Secretary Jon Weems, and Chair Kara Hurst, and guests Ken Beezley and Acting City Manager Jeff Mikorski

Chair Kara called the meeting to order at 4:33 in City Council chambers and noted that a quorum was present.

Greg moved and Dan seconded that the minutes of the January 28, 2013 meeting be approved as drafted. The motion carried unanimously.

New Business

1. Update from Acting City Manager Jeff Mikorski. Jeff explained the City's financial situation as tight money in the current fiscal year, but better prospects for the next year beginning July 1. There are no funds budgeted for MTB at this time. Less money than anticipated has come in during the current year, but the City expects more money to work with in the future. Jeff hopes this will include at least \$10,000 for MTB-contracted pruning and other projects in the coming fiscal year. Jeff then discussed problems with pedestrians tripping over tree well curbs in the second block of High Street, with one tree's curbs being particularly troublesome. Possible corrective actions are being brainstormed, with action possibly to be piggybacked onto the next phase of streetscape upgrades. Jeff will get back to MTB before corrective action takes place. He mentioned the possibility of removing one tree from in front of the Thai restaurant.
2. Spring Arbor Day. While Morgantown's Arbor Day will be in the fall, there is interest in also celebrating the national Arbor Day with an April program to distribute seedlings to schoolchildren. Much discussion followed as to whether or not this would be an efficient use of money. It was decided to pursue the possibility of a program limited to North Elementary, a school within city limits, to hold down the cost. Suitable trees may be available from the National Arbor Day Foundation or from the Clements Tree Nursery in West Virginia.
3. Contract Labor Options. Discussion addressed how to deal with pruning funds, if and when there are such funds. \$30 to \$35 per hour was considered a minimum reasonable fee for a certified arborist, provided that arborist did not have to travel far, working at least four hours each contract day. Work could include pruning from the ground, minimal climbing, and assessment/reporting of problems noticed on nearby city trees. Serious climbing would also require a ground man at perhaps \$20 per hour, or a capable volunteer. Tree removals and picking up piled brush would be tasks for City employees.
4. Year of the Tree (YOTT). Brief discussion of possible money earned by YOTT to benefit MTB ended with agreement that any such money should be deposited with Your Community Foundation.

Old Business

1. Web site. There has been a glitch, but Susan is working to iron it out. There has also been some confusion because the tree of the month is an MTB project, but YOTT is separate and not an MTB endeavor.
2. Roh Trees. There have been no recent developments.

3. Tree Inventory. Jeff had expressed hope that funds for TreeKeeper would be available after July 1, but discussion after he left centered around the high cost of TreeKeeper and the need to be able to begin using the Forest Service database soon, before it goes stale. Filemaker Pro was cited as an example of a program that could work, and at \$200 a copy for much less money than TreeKeeper. However, if we use Filemaker Pro for the database it would have to be maintained by someone. Updated data could easily be transferred from Filemaker Pro to TreeKeeper in the future if we go that route. Dave said he would talk with Greg and Damien, and send a note to Jeff, about this possibility.

4. Tree of the Month (TOTM). Katherine reported that the TOTM photo and brief text would appear in the Dominion-Post on the last Tuesday of each month. There was agreement that expanded text and Sunday publication would be preferable from MTB's point of view. Dan has prepared good draft text for sycamore (March) that is longer than text submitted for January and February.

The next meeting was set for 4:30 PM Monday, March 18 in Council chambers, because the fourth Monday of March falls during spring break.

Dave moved for adjournment. Dan seconded. The motion passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 5:58 PM.

Jon Weems