

Morgantown Tree Board (MTB)
Minutes, meeting of March 23, 2015

Present: MTB members Dan Brown, Katherine Payne, Brent Bailey, Greg Dahle, Secretary Jon Weems, and Chair Dave Barnett, and City Manager Jeff Mikorski, City employee Marchetta Maupin, and City employee Damien Davis.

Chair D. Barnett called the meeting to order at 4:31 PM in City Council chambers and noted that a quorum was present.

K. Payne moved, and G. Dahle seconded, that minutes of the 2/23/15 meeting be approved as amended. The motion carried unanimously.

Unfinished Business

1. Deckers Creek Trees at Marilla Park/ WV Radio Corporation (WVRC). WVRC has requested information be sent again so they can make a decision soon. Damien Davis said he had been in the area during recent flooding and saw how important the large sycamores are to protect the bank from erosion.
2. Bartlett Tree Experts/City Trees. M. Maupin reported that Bartlett did a very good job, and the cost was somewhat less than estimated. There was some confusion because another tree service was destructively topping trees in the same neighborhood while Bartlett was pruning properly. Residents expressed satisfaction with Bartlett's work. \$13,878 was in the budget before Bartlett's work, and that work cost \$10,190, so there may be enough funds remaining to hire Bartlett's crew and equipment for another day's pruning. Woodburn, Wiles Hill, Jerome Park, and the South University Avenue park were mentioned as areas where pruning could well be needed. It was also mentioned that (BOPARC-funded) pruning of the large sycamore at Jack Roberts Park, for which Bartlett had allowed a full day, took only a half day.
3. Tree Planting and Grates. Damien Davis reported up to \$50,000 has been earmarked for removal of twenty-seven High Street tree curbs, installation of tree grates, and possible replanting as needed for trees that would lose too many roots in the process. The idea is to remove the tripping hazard of raised curbs, a hazard for which the City is liable. City Manager Mikorski stressed the importance of a solution that will be flush with the adjacent sidewalk. Damien Davis will seek price quotes, hopefully in the neighborhood of \$1000 to \$1500 per tree pit, for work that may be done in summer 2015. M. Maupin noted that trees along the top two blocks were planted high and will likely need replacement, trees along the third block were planted low and may accept grates without too much damage, and trees along the fourth block were planted at an intermediate depth. G. Dahle suggested the possibility of using porous rubber mats instead of grates, and noted such mats have been used successfully in Washington, DC. Damien Davis mentioned that electrical outlets associated with tree curbs will also be removed. Existing light poles were mentioned as a possible source of power. D. Brown moved, and G. Dahle seconded, that the April MTB meeting be a "working" meeting beginning at the top of High Street and moving down to assess the twenty-seven trees with curbs. The motion passed unanimously. Damien Davis said he would like MTB to provide a schematic tree pit diagram. D. Brown indicated that Bob Hannah will work

with MTB on a possible Demonstration City grant, and D. Brown will check on the deadline for application. Damien Davis said he needed to know about any tree pits on Pleasant that may be retired so he could have Public Works concrete them. It was decided to add a check of Pleasant Street tree pits to the April working meeting.

4. Community Forestry Ordinance review. D. Barnett asked City Manager Mikorski if MTB should work on new text, to establish MTB as an independent board rather than a subcommittee of the Urban Landscape Commission (ULC), for City Council's consideration. City Manager Mikorski said yes, including clearer Urban Forester language. City Manager Mikorski and G. Dahle agreed an independent MTB would be better administratively and make for clearer funding pathways. J. Weems, K. Payne, and G. Dahle agreed to work on new text.

5. 2015/2016 MTB budget. City Manager Mikorski indicated there was nothing to add since the February meeting.

6. Hazard Tree replacement policy. City Manager Mikorski said citizens are interested in a list of recommended trees for specific and problematic sites. Discussion centered on each situation being different, with power lines, narrow tree lawns, and other factors common. D. Barnett wondered if a request form would help track locations where removed trees should be replaced. Damien Davis suggested such a form could be filled out each time a city tree is removed.

New Business

1. Hazard Tree update. M. Maupin reported silver maples in poor condition in Evansdale and Suncrest. Specifically, there are three or four problematic trees on Riverview, and more in the Rawley Ave. area.

2. Paul Preserve tree planting. The ULC has a landscape design for this site, now owned by BOPARC, in Jerome Park. BOPARC Director Melissa Burch will attend a meeting April 6 with the Jerome Park Neighborhood Association to consider the Paul Preserve plan. M. Maupin raised the possibility of MTB doing this year's Arbor Day planting at Paul Preserve.

Open Discussion:

B. Bailey said MTB needs to think carefully about its composition and its connection with the community. He liked the Year of the Tree (YOTT) program, would like to reconnect with YOTT folks, and would like to see a continuing YOTT-style outreach program. K. Payne and others agreed. There was discussion of a possible series of articles on trees, both those good to plant and those good to avoid planting. B. Bailey further suggested MTB might want to set goals for itself. G. Dahle supported this idea, and D. Barnett said he would put it on the agenda for the May meeting.

There was brief discussion of WVU's possible "second arboretum" in the Falling Run area.

Next meeting, Monday, April 27, 2015 at 4:30, will be a “working” meeting beginning at the top of High Street.

Motion to adjourn made at 6:12 PM by D. Brown, seconded by G. Dahle. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted, _____ Jon Weems, Secretary