

CITY OF OLNEY TREE BOARD  
OLNEY CITY HALL  
JANUARY 12, 2017  
7:00 P.M.

AGENDA #1 “CALL TO ORDER” The meeting of the Tree Board was called to order at 7:02 p.m. in the Council Chambers at City Hall, 300 S. Whittle Ave., Olney, Illinois, with Brandy McKinney presiding.

AGENDA #2 “ROLL CALL” The following Tree Board members were present: Brandy McKinney, Andrea McDowell, Bill Caulfield, Kelsie Sterchi, Paige Abell, and Bill Page. Chris Simpson was absent.

AGENDA #3 “APPROVE MINUTES OF TREE BOARD MEETING ON SEPTEMBER 22, 2016” Mr. Page pointed out that the second paragraph on the second page should show Mrs. McKinney instead of Mr. Page. With that amendment, Mr. Page moved to approve the minutes of the Tree Board meeting on September 22, 2016, seconded by Mrs. Sterchi. A majority affirmative voice vote was received.

AGENDA #4 “PUBLIC COMMENTS/PRESENTATIONS”

4-A “Update on Tree Identification Park” Donnie Watson was present to report that all trees had been planted in the Tree Identification Park this past October. The trees came with a one-year warranty that would cover trees that died naturally. Currently, the identification/sponsor plaques were being produced. Once all signage is in place, Mr. Watson’s portion of the project would be complete.

After all trees and signs are paid for, approximately \$1,100.00 would be leftover for the purchase of water bags, mulch, and other miscellaneous items.

Mr. Watson then reported that 49 volunteers participated in the tree plantings, totaling 250 total volunteer hours. The Tree Board expressed their great appreciation to Mr. Watson for his efforts in establishing a Tree Identification Park in Olney.

Mrs. Sterchi commented that the Park Department Supervisor had indicated that tree bags at the Tree Identification Park would be watered twice per week.

Mr. Watson exited the meeting at 7:14 p.m.

4-B “Trees Forever Program” Barb Grabner-Kerns, Field Coordinator for the Trees Forever program, was present to speak to the Tree Board. Mrs. Grabner-Kerns explained that she works with the U.S. Forest Service and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (DNR) on the Trees Forever Program.

The program is designed to help smaller, rural towns be able to build a healthy tree canopy, to be prepared in the event of natural and manmade disasters, and to conduct tree inventories. Mrs.

Grabner-Kerns' objective was to be able to work with 20 communities on strengthening their green spaces.

Mrs. Grabner-Kerns went further into detailing the advantages of a tree inventory and how it could be of benefit to municipalities. She also gave an example of creating a volunteer task force called Tree Keepers that could assist in inventory, planting, and pruning efforts.

Mrs. McKinney wondered how Mrs. Grabner-Kerns handled watering and maintenance of trees. Mrs. Grabner-Kerns replied that fire departments can sometimes assist with watering. Past that, different municipal departments and volunteers were key.

Mrs. McKinney detailed that the autumn months were difficult because many of the seasonal employees are no longer working for the City, so resources become tighter. Mrs. Grabner-Kerns then offered that she had worked with a municipality that bought a water tank so that volunteers could utilize the tank to help with watering.

Mrs. Grabner-Kerns asked the Board if they felt that the Olney community would have a fair amount of people that would be interested in learning more about trees and their care. The Board felt so.

Mrs. Grabner-Kerns then asked if the City's Street or Park Departments received regular training on tree care. The Board did not believe so.

Mrs. McKinney felt that there was a disconnect on goals and communication between administration, the Tree Board, and various departments. She would like to see everyone work together. Mrs. Sterchi felt that there was an all-around desire to have an excellent green space, but over the past several years, staffing within the City had been dramatically scaled back mainly due to pension issues.

Mrs. McKinney had met with the City Manager to discuss such issues, and had offered various ways to help with the concerns, but was met with hesitation due to potential liability issues. Mrs. Grabner-Kerns offered that disclaimer forms could possibly be signed by volunteers.

Mrs. Grabner-Kerns asked if Olney had a tree inventory. Mrs. McKinney replied that one had been conducted years ago, but since then, no one cared to keep track of the inventory. She had noticed that many trees were being taken down currently. Mrs. Grabner-Kerns indicated that many communities require that for every tree taken down, at least one must be planted.

Mr. Caulfield told Mrs. Grabner-Kerns about the Tree Board's efforts in planting ornamental trees along Main Street. The Tree Board was running into difficulty finding places to plant the trees due to underground utilities. He was curious if she had any ideas on how to work around that issue, or if she knew of any trees that would not interfere with underground utilities. Mrs. Grabner-Kerns replied that unfortunately, when it comes to underground utilities, there is not much that can be done other than place concrete planters.

Mrs. Grabner-Kerns then told the Board that Trees Forever also had a tree planting grant that is available to communities that participate in the program. Trees Forever also provides learning programs on the Emerald Ash Borer, among other topics.

Mrs. McKinney hoped that community residents and City employees could benefit from such programs. She felt that the outcome of the upcoming municipal election would be key on getting the support needed to reinforce such ideas.

Mrs. McDowell was extremely interested in the Tree Keepers idea. Mrs. Grabner-Kerns told that learning about trees was a great way to motivate people to advocate for trees. Additionally, a program such as Tree Keepers provided for a fun, social opportunity.

Mrs. Grabner-Kerns explained that the Trees Forever program would continue for another 18 months. If interested in participating, Mrs. Grabner-Kerns recommended letting her know as soon as possible before the 20 spaces were filled. Mrs. Sterchi asked what would be required to reserve one of the 20 spaces. Mrs. Grabner-Kerns replied that all she would need is a “yes” that the Board was interested. There would be no other requirements or obligations.

The Board was in consensus to reserve a spot with the Trees Forever program.

In the near future, Mrs. Grabner-Kerns would be in touch to help better determine goals, objectives and needs.

Mrs. Grabner-Kerns exited the meeting at 7:54 p.m.

#### AGENDA #5 “UPDATES”

5-A “Tree City U.S.A. Application” Mrs. Sterchi reported that the City’s Tree City U.S.A. application had been submitted at least three times. Each time, the DNR came back requesting additional documentation and detail to accompany the application.

The DNR also made some suggestions on updating the City’s tree ordinance. The Board had been in consensus that DNR’s suggestions were acceptable, so the ordinance amendments were then passed by the City Council. Mrs. Sterchi supplied each Tree Board member with an updated copy of the Street Trees portion of the City Code.

As of December 16, 2016, all necessary information had been submitted for the Tree City U.S.A. designation. Mrs. Sterchi would be waiting to hear of a formal acceptance or denial of the application.

5-B “Mayor’s Monarch Pledge & Tree Board Participation” Mrs. Sterchi told the Board that Mayor Vaughn had been contacted by an organization making him aware that the Monarch Butterflies are in danger, and their population has decreased by 90%. Illinois is 100% in the path of the Monarchs’ migration, so Mayor Vaughn signed an online pledge that Olney would do its part to help with this problem.

Mrs. Sterchi indicated that there were three suggestions that the Tree Board may be able to help with. The first suggestion was to host and/or support a native plant or milkweed seed give-a-

way event. The next would be to convert abandoned lots into Monarch habitats. And lastly, the Board could help to integrate Monarch Butterfly conservation into its future plans.

Mrs. Sterchi pointed out that the City had acquired a property on W. Butler Street that now squared off the property of the Olney Public Library. She offered that this lot could be a potential space where a Monarch Butterfly habitat could be established.

Mrs. McKinney requested a list of City-owned, vacant lots that may be suitable to consider for habitats. Mrs. Sterchi would have a listing at the next Tree Board meeting.

#### AGENDA #6 “GENERAL DISCUSSION/ACTION”

##### 6-A “Watering Plan for Newly Planted Trees on Main Street and Tree Identification Park”

Mrs. McKinney expressed concerns over the lack of watering on the newly planted Main Street trees from July to October, and felt they were highly neglected.

Mrs. McDowell thought that a plan for watering the Main Street and Musgrove Park trees had been established at the last meeting. Referencing the September 22, 2016, minutes, Mrs. Sterchi indicated that the Tree Board did take action to suggest watering the Musgrove Park and Main Street trees twice per week.

Mrs. McKinney told the Board that after the September 22<sup>nd</sup> meeting, she had met with City Manager Barker to discuss a few concerns. Mrs. McKinney stated that she was told that the trees were being watered twice per week, but Mrs. McKinney disagreed.

Mrs. Sterchi recalled Mr. Page coming into her office to express concern over the lack of water on the Main Street trees. At the time, the Sewer Department was using its tank truck to assist with the watering. She had spoken to the Sewer Department Supervisor who had told her that their goal was to water the trees twice per week, but if there had been recent rains, they would not go out to water the trees.

Mrs. McKinney pointed out that a half inch of rain was simply not enough water to sustain young trees compared to the five gallons that are recommended to be placed in the water bags twice per week. She did not feel that watering the trees twice per week was too much to ask or was something too difficult to become part of a routine.

Mr. Caulfield noted that he had been in contact with an individual about using a specific photo of a tree for a stamp. He had suggested that if a stamp was made, perhaps a percentage of the stamp sales could be used to plant trees across the country. Mr. Caulfield then contacted Washington D.C. where officials also showed interest in his idea. While he is not confident that anything will come of his request, it is possible.

6-B “Creation of City of Olney Arboricultural Specifications and Standards” Mrs. Sterchi told the Board that the prior Street Tree portion of the Code referenced a sort of comprehensive plan for trees and tree care. She was unsure if one had ever been created by any prior Tree Board of the City of Olney. Mr. Caulfield was the longest tenured member of the Board. To his recollection, no such plan had been created.

Included in the DNR's recommended changes to the Code was a wording change to show that the Board should create Arboricultural Specifications and Standards for the City of Olney. Many municipalities have these on their books, and every Tree City U.S.A. does, as well. The Arboricultural Specifications and Standards show a standard to be upheld by the community, and also serves as an easy go-to reference guide.

The DNR had provided Mrs. Sterchi of an example from Clinton, Illinois. The example appeared to be a broken down version of their tree ordinance in an easier to understand version.

Mrs. Sterchi invited the members of the Tree Board to review the Arboricultural Specifications and Standards example and the updated version of the Code in order to make suggestions at the next Tree Board meeting.

Mrs. McKinney felt that Arborists should be required to take a certain number of classes before being able to work on any City trees. Mrs. McKinney told that she had presented that idea to the City Manager who felt that the City should not ask such things of its vendors. Mrs. Sterchi agreed that could be difficult in each scenario. Mrs. McKinney was highly offended, and felt that not asking those being paid prevailing wage to abide by such things was ludicrous.

Mrs. McKinney's goal was to bridge the disconnect between the Tree Board and the City's maintenance of trees. She was concerned that without a management plan for trees, any future planting of trees could be futile.

Mrs. Sterchi reminded the Board of their advisory role. The Board does not direct any one to do any thing, but should advise on best practices and should help promote green space. Mrs. McKinney felt that the City Council should require trainings for those working on trees in town.

Mrs. McKinney also had a hard time with the mature tree removal along S. Whittle Avenue for the waterline and widening project. She felt that S. Whittle Avenue had been sufficient for a number of years, but now trees were being taken down with no plans for re-planting. It was her opinion that Olney was in a state of emergency in regard to the health of Olney's canopy. Mrs. Sterchi noted that the widening of S. Whittle Avenue was in effort to improve the roadway and reduce the safety hazard.

Mrs. McKinney wondered what could be done to help. Mrs. Sterchi offered that the Board could continue to seek pledges for re-planting, and could make that a goal. Mrs. McDowell added that proper public education on the benefits of trees would increase awareness and interest in helping.

Mrs. McKinney then asked the Board if anyone would be willing to take over the seat as Chair. The Board was in favor of her continuing to act as Chair.

AGENDA #7 "SCHEDULE NEXT MEETING DATE" The next meeting of the Tree Board would be held on March 9, 2017, at 7:00 p.m.

AGENDA #8 “ADJOURN” Mrs. Sterchi moved to adjourn the Tree Board meeting, seconded by Mrs. McKinney. A majority affirmative voice vote was received. The Tree Board meeting adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

Kelsie J. Sterchi  
City Clerk