

TREE BOARD MEETING MINUTES MAY 24, 2022

The meeting was called to order at approximately 5:20 pm. In attendance were Mayor Charlene Klein, City Arborist John Foster, Candice Kirchberg, Chair, and Sonya Dailey. Mary Jo Fesenmaier was in the audience. Cindy Yeger was ill and could not attend, Cindy Fuerdi was also absent.

Minutes were approved by Sonya, seconded by John. It was noted that the city emails are changing to dot.gov.

TREE AND PROPERTY VANDALISM IN DOWNTOWN LAKE GENEVA

John gave a report on the recent damage to six trees in the downtown area. There was no footage of the vandals caught on camera. John was going to check to see if there was insurance on the trees. John said that he would need a \$5,000 cushion to replace the trees or other tree issues that could pop up. Even though the cost of trees is going up, John said that the best solution would be to plant larger trees. There was discussion that the bigger trees may not last as long in the containers. The average life of a city tree is 15 years, less in the downtown area. It was noted that in the last five years, 1500 trees were planted using TIF monies.

One suggestion was to put up signs noting that it was a criminal offense to kill or damage trees. Another thought was to write an article in the Regional News to alert citizens about the issue and encourage people to be watching out for our trees!

The board discussed getting tree ID tags. We can go online, get the computer address of the tree, and send it to a company that can make the tag for that specific tree. This project could be done this fall and over the winter and could be a nice way to help people be more connected to the trees in their neighborhoods.

There has also been damage to the bathrooms on the lakefront. There are cameras installed, but so far no one has been able to ID the people doing the damage.

Mary Jo Fesenmaier asked if the Tree Board could put together a written request before July for a budget amount—last year the budget was \$20,000, and this year it was cut down to \$10,000.

SOUTH STREET PATH PROJECT

May Jo asked for a digital copy of the trees on South Street to determine which ones on the North side were slated to be cut down. There are red and white oaks and silver maples. Mayor Klein said she would get a map of the path and trees and get that to the Administrator. There was discussion about how this whole project unfolded:

1. A multi-use path was proposed 5-6 years ago for South Street. It was not scheduled to begin until 2024.
2. The city applied for a grant to the state and was awarded \$800,000.
3. The City Council approved the project.

4. So far, \$88,000 has been spent on engineering.
5. In the last 6 months, it became apparent to residents that the project involved taking down trees, some of which were “junk” but many others that were mature oaks and maples. There have been two public informational meetings at City Hall. Residents appear to be in favor of the plan, but we need to get people galvanized to move the project forward and work to accommodate trees and people.
6. The proposed path is intended to connect with other paths and sidewalks and end up at the new YMCA.

When trees are taken down in the city, they are typically replaced with another tree. The board wondered if this could be specified on the South Street path project, and if so, what would the criteria be for size and species?

Because this project is a federal grant the path has to be 10’ wide. Apparently, this was not made clear to the residents at the informational meeting. In addition, there are drainage issues and culverts along the intended path route. Potentially the trees by the church could be saved. The engineers are looking for alternatives.

WHITE RIVER REPORT-JOHN FOSTER

John gave the following update on work at the White River:

1. He has been clearing debris and invasive species out of the river, which is full of storm damage and beaver encroachment. He went into the river to try and get the junk out!
2. The frisbee park and dog park were also full of debris.
3. John is trying to save as many trees as possible, and mentioned planting bald cypress, tamarisks, and other species. He said that beavers cut down 50 trees along the river.
4. There is erosion along the riverbanks; a discussion was held on what grasses and plants would be suitable for this area. Another suggestion to manage the area would be to do periodic burning to remove brush and debris.
5. John will get the Tree Board a project plan and photos, and he and Candice will tag team efforts to get things cleaned up. Some of the aldermen were also asking about replanting.
6. There was also discussion about contacting Dennis Hines to do an article about the current plan for the White River.

FOUR SEASONS PARK

John reported that they are mowing the park once a year to control invasives.

TREE CAMPUS K-12 ARBOR DAY FOUNDATION PROJECT

Sonya Dailey reported on the Tree Campus Arbor Day project she did with the Central Dennison second grade class. Two other local schools also participated. The project took 80 hours and was sent to the Arbor Day Foundation. John also helped with the project by spending 40 hours doing the Arbor Day application.

Students gathered over 2,000 Sugar Maple seeds, learned about the trees, and how to germinate, plant and care for the seedlings. The seeds are put down on wet leaves in October and require a period of cold to break the physiological dormancy so they will germinate in the spring when the weather warms up.

The project received national recognition on the Arbor Day website and a Tree Campus flag for Arbor Day. There are plans to expand the project next year.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Cardiff
June 7, 2022