

Urban Forest Advisory Committee City of Dallas

Tuesday, June 3, 2008 4:00pm
Conference Room C • L1FN
Dallas City Hall

Attendees:

Steve Aten, Sara Beckelman, Dick Coupe, Phil Erwin, Michael Fitzgerald, Michael Hellmann, Lora Hinchcliff, Steve Houser, Kurt Kretsinger, Eric Larner, Jeff Quinters, Bill Seaman, Margie Webb.

UFAC Chair, Mr. Steve Houser, called the meeting to order at 4:00pm and welcomed all Committee Members and guests. The Chair asked the committee members if there were corrections or additions to the May meeting minutes. With none noted, the minutes were approved unanimously (Motion to accept – Mr. Bill Seaman, Second – Mr. Dick Coupe).

Mr. Houser informed the committee that the second briefing for the Quality of Life Committee will cover the subject of how department or office of urban forestry fits into governmental structure nationwide. A power point presentation is ready and the briefing date was moved to August 2008; date to be determined. Additionally, Mr. Houser queried if any committee members were aware of a Public Utility Commission hearing scheduled in June to consider urging utility companies to offer free trees, rebates or funding for trees in an effort to conserve energy. No one on the committee had information or insight. If true, the consideration would effectively offer strong support for the Dallas UFAC tree planting and reforestation efforts.

Mr. Houser queried the committees interest in creating an “I Love Trees” type of button to include the committee website on the bottom. The cost is around \$0.27 each and could be used as give away items at community events. Some discussion ensued with suggestions to use red print with a green tree and to consider using “Trees Are the Answer”. For general information, the “Green Dallas” website is a great link to send people to. Visitors can click on “trees” or “green news” or “community green events” to find information on the committee or the Citizen Forester program.

The pilot project for a hyper-spectral analysis of a test plot will likely be moving forward in the next month or so. There is a great deal of field work required in order to prepare and there are many details to be ironed out. Richard Smart, Storm Water Management Department Liaison, is checking with other departments such as Public Works to garner more support.

For the record, Mr. Houser noted that due to the committee sponsorship of the June 12th National Arbor Day Foundation seminar on restoring native ecosystems, we were given one free pass for the event. Since one of our goals is to further educate city staff, the free pass was offered to Mr. Mike Hellmann and Mr. Phil Erwin by phone, with the pass going to the first to return the call from the Chair. The winner was the Chief Arborist for Dallas, Mr. Phil Erwin.

Office of Environmental Quality report was covered by Steve Houser. Volunteers and Citizen Foresters are needed to help with Dallas Ozone Day on June 10. Volunteers are to contact Mr. Houser if they can assist that day in helping to educate the public.

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The Dallas Urban Forester Report was provided by Mr. Michael Hellmann, Sr. Park Planner. The Urban Forester position has been put on hold, as the City has initiated a freeze on hiring. Mr. Pete Smith, Texas Forest Service (TFS) Grant Administrator, committed to Mr. Hellmann that he will therefore freeze the TFS grant and start it up again when a candidate is hired for the position. Mr. Hellmann discussed the LB Houston Greenbelt – Elm Fork Flood Plain Management Study. Various plans are being evaluated to mitigate flooding, including a wetlands concept. Part of the plan would include privet management with a proposed 88 acres of privet to be removed and less tree removal or destruction to the parkland. It is clear the issue of Forest Management is not going away, and is becoming more of a 'hot' topic.

Mr. Phil Erwin provided the Chief Arborist report. Two city arborists will be going to Fort Worth this week for certification. Furthermore, the City has cut the budget, so the department will start trying to gather funds in order to attend the College Station conference in September. Ms. Crystal Lee (MOWmentum Program) sent Mr. Erwin information on the Skillman median planting proposal. Areas of concern to be addressed include long term safety issues regarding tree clustering and learning about the existing soil conditions before planting. It is wise to dig a test hole before proceeding too far with any plans. There are also concerns about species availability. Some of the requested trees may not be available therefore Mr. Erwin will begin a search. Additionally, there needs to be full accountability once the median is planted by means of a contract with the group sponsoring the median. Mr. Houser previously spoke with the Dallas Street Department regarding the establishment of an endowment within the Dallas Parks Foundation to address street tree maintenance.

Mr. Bryan Kilburn, Trinity Forest Project Manger emailed the following updates to Mr. Houser for today's meeting. The Trinity office is soon to accept/release the Trinity Forest Management Plan. Due to the volume size (13,000-15,000 pages) the file may be too large to fit on a CD. Mr. Kilburn will try to provide the committee with an Executive Summary of the plan. If he does, Mr. Houser will forward it to the committee, or post it on our list server with other official documents. A 30-day review and comment period will be allotted, so please be sure to take the time to review the plan. The review and comment period will be the only time your comments will be noted in an official manner. Following the review and comment period, the plan will likely go to City Council for approval.

Additionally, the City of Dallas Trinity River Corridor Project Office is initiating the planning process for the IH-20/Southern Gateway Park improvements project. A community meeting is scheduled a week from today, June 10, 2008 to discuss this project with your Council Representatives, city staff and the design consultant. 6:30 p.m. Fireside Recreation Center 8601 Fireside Drive, Dallas.

Ms. Lora Hinchcliff, Wood Waste Recycling Team Leader, had no report.

Mr. Luis Salcedo, Forest Surveys, Inventory & Tracking Team Leader was not present.

Land Planning, Development and City Code Team Leader, Mr. Bill Seaman had no report.

Mr. Mike Fitzgerald, Public Relations & Media Team Leader offered a Dallas Morning News (DMN) write up about the Citizen Forester Program. The press release went out through the Public Information Office with coverage in the neighborhood section of the Saturday *Dallas Morning*

News. The more information we can place on the Neighborhood Go section, the more we can educate the public.

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Mr. Kurt Kretsinger, Tree Planting and Transplanting Team Leader mentioned that Dallas Parks will cover half of the reprinting cost for the tree planting guide. Over 5,000 copies have been distributed and the second printing should be complete soon. Mr. Kretsinger brought to our attention the recent coverage of the \$14 million dollar Trinity Learning Center (TLC) on the front page of *Dallas Morning News* Metropolitan Section. He requested that we send an image of our learning display for presentation purposes. The committee was unanimous in its support of Mr. Kretsinger following up with the TLC about placing a similar display in the new learning center and asking them to help fund it. Crystal Dallas Marketing client will not be participating in Adopt-A-Median program as hoped. The CEO chose instead to invest in trees for China. For those who will be out and about this weekend, Mr. Kretsinger's home is included in the water-wise tree planting tour on Saturday.

Dallas County Master Gardener Liaison and Citizen Forester Team Leader, Mr. Eric Larner, informed the committee that the 2008 Citizen Forester training program kicks off on June 11. 47 people have responded so far, but the class is capped at 35, so we should have a good core group to jump start the program. Mr. Houser had been working to develop media coverage and spoke with a Dallas Morning News reporter about the CF Program. As a result Mr. Houser, Mr. Larner and Mr. Fitzgerald will meet at Reverchon Park tomorrow, June 4, for photos and article contributions. The CF Program would like to schedule a weekend class in 2009, and Mr. Larner is looking into the Dallas Arboretum as a possible host site.

Mrs. Marjorie Webb, Marketing Director Texas Trees Foundation, offered to keep the Citizen Foresters busy by helping with 74,000 trees recently planted in pots. The Chair mentioned that the Citizen Foresters may have an interest in helping with these trees in the future. Mrs. Webb also shared with the committee a new Texas Trees Foundation pamphlet entitled "Dedicated to Greening North Central Texas". The Chair gathered extra copies for distribution.

North Texas Master Naturalist Liaison, Mr. Dick Coupe, is concerned about reporting issues specific to the CF Program for Master Naturalist volunteer hours and is working to address the issue.

Mr. Stan Aten inquired about carbon taxes and if there might be a way to fund trees in the future with such a tax. This is an issue that would need further investigation. It is anticipated that carbon credits could become a big item. The goal for UFAC is to plant 5,000-10,000, two to three inch in diameter trees a year over the next 5-10 years.

With no other items introduced, the UFAC Chair adjourned the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Lora Hinchcliff
Committee Secretary