

Advisory Committee Meeting #4 – Meeting Notes

July 7th, 2011

Time: 9:00-11:00 AM

Location: 6th Floor Conference Room, Ann Arbor City Hall
301 E Huron St

Meeting Attendees: **Peggy Sorvala** (DTE), **Ann Lund** (Broadway Neighborhood), **Lynn Borset** (Ann Arbor Tree Conservancy), **Mike Martin** (First Martin), **Kris Olsson** (Huron River Watershed Council), **John Lawter** (Parks Advisory Commission/UM Grounds), **Joan Doughty** (Community Action Network), **Jeff Plakke** (University of Michigan Botanical Gardens and Arboretum), **Paul Bairley** (Former City Forester)

City Staff: **Kerry Gray** (Urban Forestry and Natural Resources Planner), **Kayla Coleman** (Water Resources Program Assistant)

Meeting facilitators: **Cheryl Zuellig** (JJR), **Oliver Kiley** (JJR)

Plan Development Process and Methodology

- **Q.** Will the objectives include a strategy? (e.g. the steps to get there).
A. Yes, the objectives will be measurable and include an implementation plan that will have the action strategies.
- **Q.** There are groups that will review the final plan (e.g. City commissions, Council); will those groups have the authority to reject the plan, or parts of it?
A. Yes, they can. One reason that they wouldn't accept it would be we didn't have enough public engagement, but we don't think that will be an issue for the UCFMP.

Review of refined draft Vision Statement

- The purpose of the vision statement is to be inspirational and to provide a vision for how we would like the urban forest to be in the future after the plan is implemented.
- **Q:** What is meant by the word 'policy'?
A: The term policy in the vision statement is a general term- it is not meant to point to a specific policy within the document.
- There was overall agreement from committee members on using the vision statement as presented.

Objective Topics Review and Discussion

- AC member suggested objective topics were reviewed and accepted. It was noted that there may be overlap among these additions and existing objective topics. The objective topics list will be revised for repetition and/or grouped by similar topics.
- A suggestion was made to differentiate between topics that apply to private (homeowners/commercial) vs. public
 - o Check boxes could be used to indicate which groups the topic applies to; some may apply to multiple categories.
- The following concerns/suggestions were expressed in the discussion about whom objective topics should apply to
 - o Private development is already well regulated and does not need additional regulations.

- Incentives for private commercial tree planting/care is needed, and recognition for businesses that are doing very well with regard to tree planting/care.
- The city should be held accountable to their own standards. Although municipalities and public institutions do not legally have to follow ordinances, doesn't mean that they shouldn't; perhaps Ann Arbor can be a trend setter in this area.
- If Ann Arbor were to follow its own standards, it may help the City to gain community support.
- **Q.** At the beginning of the Urban Forest Management Plan public engagement, it seemed that there was a focus on City management of City trees, and now it is morphing towards management of private property trees.
A. Private property trees were added to the management plan because the community wanted them included- we heard this during last year's public workshops, the on-line survey and the focus group sessions.

NOTE: the objectives topics that are listed are written as presented at AC4. The topics discussed were those that had the most concern or comments based on the AC members' homework assignment.

A. Develop a Forestry fee structure for inspections and enforcement

- The meaning of this topic was clarified: There are currently no fees in place to cover any permit review or inspections for construction activities that impact trees. Forestry has to absorb all of these costs within their budget and this takes away resources that can be used to plant and maintain city trees. Other City units have fee structures to do this work and Forestry should be able to recoup their costs for these activities.
- Advisory Committee Members had the following suggestions and concerns:
 - Use someone who is already visiting the site (i.e. building inspector) to evaluate trees and the activities that may be impacting them.
 - Developers are already having a hard enough time, too many inspectors, too many fees. Can the City absorb the cost internally?
 - This is a very specific topic that may be included under the review of all the current policies and ordinances.
 - From a political perspective, it may be more difficult to charge for small services here and there than to build community support for the forestry program so that the resources to support those activities are available.

B. Develop resources to help address tree issues that arise between private property owners

- Need to include Grosse point and Birmingham in benchmarking research on this topic. These municipalities have nuisance ordinances that address trees on private property.
- This objective should focus on providing information, not getting involved with policies or enforcement.
 - For example, the City could provide notification to landowners with neglected dead trees to notify them of the liability of not taking action.
- Risk vs. value creeps into a lot of different forestry related topics; particularly with a limited budget many forestry departments focus on risk management. Ann Arbor should be cautious not to manage our forest with the worst case scenario in mind.

C. Plant trees and shrubs that can provide food to the community (e.g. fruit and nut trees)

- There are concerns about attracting wildlife, if there are certain fruit/nut tree species that are less attractive to the nuisance wildlife (skunks, raccoons, opossums) then those should be focused on. (Benchmarking topic)
- Often fruit/nut trees are not harvested
- Some concern was expressed about whether this truly is a interest of the community or of just a few really passionate people
- This work could be sponsored by a certain group that will be responsible for maintaining and harvesting the trees for x # of years.

D. Increase tree canopy cover & Increase net gain of trees in the city- # of trees planted greater than # of trees removed

- Other measures, beyond canopy cover should be considered, e.g. diameter, height. (Benchmarking topic)
- These may need to be re-worded, but there is support for them

E. Identify areas most in need of canopy cover and focus planting efforts in these areas.

- Already being taken into consideration with the planting plan
- May apply on public and private

F. Enhance and protect the growing area to allow trees to reach their full potential

- Wording may need revision, still unclear
- This is very specific, it should be part of another topic about keeping trees healthy
- We don't want to amend the soil, but there may be other things that can be done to help the trees grow better. Make recommendations about what should be done in, around, under trees that are planted.
- This may be related to "daylighting" soil areas

G. Discourage the use of invasive species & Manage invasive plant species

- Need to clarify that this is referring future tree plantings
- Two means of achieving this: Education about invasive plants species vs. active management

H. Encourage a structured/layered understory below canopy trees to provide additional environmental/ecological benefits.

- Maintaining transportation visibility is an important consideration along with this topic. Need to safely see around grasses/bushes
- Clarify that this refers to planting shrubs that are adapted to grow under trees, not ornamental shrubs that need a lot of maintenance.

I. Manage tree disposal for reuse and sustainability (wood utilization)

- This will become more specific when it turns into an objective (we won't incentivize tree harvesting for lumber).

J. Develop policy to address issues that may arise between solar, wind or other alternative energy projects and trees.

- Need to set a policy for this, there may be future issues

K. Develop a procedure for enforcement of forestry practices and policies

- This may be more of an action item. Seems like we are really jumping ahead to talk about enforcement already

L. Update landscape ordinance to require new development to plant street trees

- Currently exists but is not adequate; there is a need to raise the street tree escrow or make the developers plant trees
- The parking lot screen and street tree planting need some coordination

M. Recognize awards and achievements related to the urban forest

- This may have a funding issue. Who will pay for it?

Other Comments

- Topic #17 should include a specific description of what is meant by right tree/right place, we don't want to restrict large shade species. This plan should include adequate detail so that there are not radical changes depending on interpretation.