

CONSERVATION COMMITTEE REPORT

October 20, 2010

10:00–11:00 am

140 West Pine Street

Members Present: Marilyn Marler (chair), Pam Walzer, Bob Jaffe, Dick Haines, Renee Mitchell, Ed Childers, Jon Wilkins, Stacy Rye, Dave Strohmaier and Roy Houseman

Members Absent: Lyn Hellegaard

Others Present: Ben Carson, Donna Gaukler

I. ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS

A. Approve minutes.

Minutes of September 29, 2010 were approved as submitted.

II. FINAL CONSIDERATION AGENDA ITEMS

III. CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS –

IV. REGULAR AGENDA ITEMS –

1. Discuss the Urban Forestry program. ([memo](#))—Regular Agenda (Stacy Rye) (Referred to committee: 09/20/10) – **REMOVE FROM AGENDA**

Stacy – this referral was to discuss the urban forestry program with topics to include;

- How to improve public understanding of and care for trees in ROW,
- Raising awareness of the Missoula forest in crisis
- Fundraising - Improve Run for the Trees
- In house work vs. contracting out: what are the relative pros and cons
- What changes would the Urban Forester like to see

2. Review Urban Forestry Component of the FY11 Park District 1 Work Plan. ([memo](#))—Regular Agenda (Dave Strohmaier) (Referred to committee: 09/20/10) **REMOVE FROM AGENDA**

Dave – my referral was to give the Parks Department staff an opportunity to discuss specific implementation plans for the additional \$40,000 allocated to the Urban Forestry in the FY11 budget.

Ben Carson addressed both agenda items in his power point presentation to the committee. ([Presentation](#))

The urban forestry crew consists of one urban forester, two 12 month arborists and one 10month arborist assistant. Their equipment includes a brush chipper and dump truck, an aerial lift truck and one 1961 stump grinder. The urban forestry crew manages the trees located in boulevards, tree pits, valley floor parks, and other right away as well as assists with the management of trees located in open spaces, natural parks and larger parcels of conservation lands.

In the current budget year excluding new appropriation the Urban Forestry budget for contracted services was \$26,000 which was used to complete tasks that generally deferred liability while allowing staff to continue to perform routine maintenance tasks. Previous year's contracts were for tree planting, pruning, stump grinding and consulting services for new inventory software. The Urban Forestry includes the following four programs; policy/ordinance development and enforcement, liability mitigation, improving community aesthetic, planning, and species/age diversification and as well as outreach and educational programming.

The current policy documents need to be reworked to assure consistency, fairness and are and enforceable. The number one priority of the Urban Forestry division is the safety of the public and city employees. Public safety is increased and liability is minimized through routine performance of maintenance activities. Maintenance activities include pruning, tree removals, trip hazard abatement, stump grinding, sidewalk displacement/replacement and tree grate/pit management. Ben would like to see the department move from being reactive to proactive by

establishing goals for improving the maintenance program, determining the condition of the tree population and procuring the necessary funding to move forward towards those goals.

Given that Missoula's urban forest is over 65% maple and 10-15% ash the high population of just two genera makes Missoula' urban tree population extremely susceptible to invasive pests and disease. An ideal urban forest tree population would contain no greater than 10--15% of any one tree species.

There are several ways to improve the urban forest which includes preserving the older still viable trees through regular pruning and appropriate watering, removal and replacement of trees and increasing the longevity of trees by minimizing their potential for failure. The improvements would require an additional \$365,000 in contractual funding annually, while maintaining the current staff levels.

Ben reviewed the pros and cons of in house staffing vs. contracted laborer services. Given additional funding and staffing would provide public safety, community aesthetics, air and water quality and public health as appropriate pruning, removal and replanting occur.

Ben had several ideas for outreach and education programming as well as generating or seeking other funding venues.

The additional funds allocated in the FY11 budget would be earmarked for tree planning with possible augmentation by grants and the remaining funds to be used in conjunction with the current contracted services budget to fund liability mitigation projects including the Clark Fork levee tree removal mandate, stump removals and pruning and removals along East Pine Street.

The committee briefly discussed the issues related to tree planting deferred maintenance and how to balance pruning and removals with plantings.

Ben thanked the committee for their help in securing additional funding this year for the urban forestry program. The additional funds are stepping in the proactive direction.

V. NON-AGENDA ITEMS

VI. HELD AND ONGOING AGENDA ITEMS - PER COMMITTEE CHAIR – Marilyn Marler

ADJOURNMENT - The meeting adjourned at 11:00 am.