

# Village of Fox Point Tree Commission

Minutes of August 15, 2024

A meeting of the Village of Fox Point Tree Commission was held at the Fox Point Village Hall on Thursday, August 15, 2024, at 4:00 p.m. This meeting was originally scheduled for July 11, 2024.

## 1. Roll Call

**Present:** Trustee Eric Fonstad (Chair), Kim Caviggiola, Jonathan Knopp, Ramsey Radakovich & Catie Anderson

**Ex Officio:** John Gall, Village Forester

Also present were Kathe Lake, 7471 Beach Court.

The meeting notice was mailed to the *North Shore Now* and to all others as required by the State open meeting laws, and posted on the Village website and bulletin boards.

A quorum being present, Eric called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. Eric welcomed Catie as the newest member of the Commission.

Under public comment, Kathe Lake reported she raised concerns with Village staff about the number of new trees planted along Beach Drive. She said she initially thought the plans for the Beach Drive Revetment project called for more trees than have been planted. She thanked Forester Gall for taking the time to go over the plans for the project with her. She said her concerns were unfounded and she apologized to staff for the misunderstanding. Eric noted that it is anticipated that more trees may be planted on Beach Drive in future years just as is the case with other public spaces in the Village.

## 2. Approval of Minutes.

Following discussion, the minutes of the April 18, 2024, meeting were approved.

## 3. Old Business.

### a. Discussion of Private Property Tree Retention Alternatives

Eric briefly summarized previous discussions of this topic. He thanked Forester Gall for distributing materials prior to the meeting on the Free Tree Program administered by the City of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Commission members discussed how such a program could be put in place in the Village. Trees could be made available free or at discounted cost. Forester Gall noted that many communities use Stormwater Utility funds for trees. His concern with putting such a program in place in the Village is finding enough staff time to administer it. Eric suggested the Village could budget for additional staff time for this purpose. Money previously budgeted for Ash tree removal under the Emerald Ash Borer Initiative could be redirected to a long term program to replace some of the tree canopy lost to Emerald Ash Borer.

Eric noted that thousands of Village Ash trees have been lost in recent years due to Emerald Ash Borer. Many more thousands of Ash trees in the Village on private property have been and will be lost. At the same time, other trees will continue to be lost due to age, disease, or development. He encouraged Commission members to consider one of the primary roles of the Tree Commission as focusing on adding both public and private trees to the Village.

## **b. Marketing the Tree Commission Mission**

In addition to the Free Tree Program discussed earlier, the Commission discussed how a rebate program could be designed where residents would buy trees from a list of recommended trees, plant and care for them under guidelines set by the Village, and earn a rebate from the Village. Such a program could be funded through the Stormwater Utility.

The Commission asked Forester Gall to work with Village staff to outline how a free tree program patterned after the Milwaukee program could be implemented in Fox Point. The Commission asked staff to prepare a proposal along these lines for discussion at the Commission's next meeting.

The Commission also asked staff to continue to pursue using the stormwater utility to encourage residents to preserve and enhance the tree canopy in the Village. Stormwater utility rates currently only consider roof areas of properties. Aerial maps could be used to measure vegetation coverage, including tree canopy, to reduce rates. At the same time, driveways and other impervious areas could be added to the calculation of rates. In this way the stormwater utility would more closely relate rates to the effects properties have on stormwater management costs. A portion of stormwater utility fee revenues could be directed to support tree planting by residents. As Mr. Brandmeier noted in a previous meeting, if trees and driveways were included in the tier structure for the stormwater utility, a homeowner's stormwater fees could be increased if they clear cut trees on their property. The Commission asked staff to prepare a proposal for including trees and driveways in stormwater utility fee calculations.

Forester Gall asked for clarification on what the Commission is asking Village staff to do. In response, the Commission indicated it wants Village staff to estimate the start up and continuing costs of setting up and running three initiatives: 1) a Free Tree Program designed to work in Fox Point; 2) adding vegetation cover and driveways in stormwater utility fee calculations; and 3) a tree planting rebate program. In addition, the Commission wants Village staff to outline how those three initiatives could be structured to be workable in Fox Point.

Ramsey noted that the urban forestry grant program administered by Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewage District ("MMSD") may provide a source of funding to increase Forester Gall's staff time with the Village. He asked Village staff to look into filing an application with MMSD for a reforestation grant for this purpose. He recommended the application emphasize the impact these programs would have on trees planted on private property and suggested the Village set a goal of supporting the planting one hundred trees annually on private property.

## **4. New Business**

### **a. Forester's Activities Update year to date**

Forester Gall reported the re-inventory of Village trees supported by the WDNR Urban Forestry Grant was completed in mid July. He handed out a spreadsheet showing changes in the inventory of Village trees since 2009. Village tree inventories have been conducted every five years since 2009. Over the past fifteen years, the total number of public trees in Fox Point has gone down by 1,227 to 7,953 while the calculated total tree value of public trees in the Village has gone up by \$2.1 million from \$15.0 million to \$17.1 million. Over 3,000 Village ash trees were lost during this time period, meaning the most recent inventory shows about 1,800 public trees of other species have been planted by the Village. Forester Gall reported 771 ash trees are currently being treated under the Emerald Ash Borer Initiative.

Forester Gall reported on the Public Tree Planting Workshop held on May 4, 2024. Eric said he attended the workshop along with a few residents. Eric said the materials handed out about

planting, pruning and caring for trees and how to identify forest trees of Wisconsin were excellent and encouraged Village staff to place the materials on the Village website. Commission members discussed this information and encouraged staff to offer similar workshops in the future, perhaps in conjunction with Arbor Day observances and possibly including handing out free trees saplings to encourage attendance and the planting of trees on private property.

Forester Gall reviewed the April 25, 2024 Arbor Day observance at Stormonth School. Eric noted that it was another very enjoyable, well attended and successful Arbor Day celebration. Commission members suggested staff leverage this event by scheduling and announcing a tree planting workshop shortly after Arbor Day.

**b. Slow-Mow Summer**

Forester Gall noted that, in line with the article on “Slow Mow Summer” distributed to the members of the Commission, the Village is encouraging residents to reduce the frequency of mowing during summer months in order to better support pollinating insects that promote tree growth.

**5. Any other matters that may come before the Tree Commission (informational only – no action taken).**

Eric thanked Forester Gall for his participation in the Village Open House in June and for preparing and distributing pamphlets explaining how trees assist in stormwater management.

The next meeting of the Commission was scheduled for November 7, 2024 at Village Hall at 4:00 p.m.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:15 p.m.