



# City of Milwaukee

200 E. Wells Street  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin  
53202

## Meeting Minutes CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS COMMITTEE

**ALD. NIK KOVAC, CHAIR**

**Ald. Robert Bauman, Ald. Michael Murphy, Ghassan Korban,  
Martin Matson, Mark Nicolini, and Mariano Schifalacqua**  
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Fiscal Planning Specialist: **Kathleen Brengosz, 286-3926,**  
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Wednesday, May 22, 2013

9:00 AM

Room 301-B, City Hall

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Meeting called to order at 9:06 a.m.

**Present: Kovac, Bauman, Korban, Matson, Szopinski, Froh, Schifalacqua**

**1. Review and approval of the minutes from the May 1, 2013 meeting.**

*Minutes were approved as written.*

**2. Presentation of the Forestry Condition Report.**

*Individuals appearing:*

*David Sivyer, Department of Public Works  
Paul Klajbor, Department of Public Works*

*Mr. Sivyer gave a PowerPoint presentation on the Forestry department (please see the attachment "Forestry Condition Report PowerPoint" to Council file 121406).*

*Mr. Sivyer discussed the condition of the City's street trees and boulevards. He said that a canopy analysis in 2008 determined that there are 3.4 million trees in the city, providing about 21.5 % canopy coverage. He said that number of ash trees was higher than expected at 587,000, representing 17.3% of the tree canopy. That study also quantified the structural value of the urban forest, which is the cost to replace all the trees in the City in kind in terms of size, condition and species at \$1.4 billion. He said the structural value of the City's street trees is approximately \$300 million. Mr. Sivyer presented the functional values and city wide benefits that are derived annually from the urban forest.*

*Mr. Sivyer said that Forestry manages just over 193,000 trees. He said that the City conducted a spatial inventory to locate individual trees and to track their attributes and maintenance needs. There are 138 distinct species or cultivars. The condition of 89% of street trees is rated as fair or better. He believes the rating criteria used were rigorous and may tend to underestimate actual condition. Mr. Sivyer said that between 1.8% and 2.0% of the tree population is removed annually because of disease, defects, natural decline or storm damage.*

*Mr. Sivyer discussed the department's pruning program. He said that at the current*

staffing level it is difficult to maintain a six-year pruning cycle. He said the preferred pruning cycle would be a three- and six-year cycle where trees 12" or less in diameter are pruned every three years and larger trees are pruned every six years. He said that this cycle was used until 2004 when the department switched to a five-year cycle. The six-year cycle began in 2010. Mr. Sivyver said pruning increases tree longevity and increases public safety. He mentioned New York as an example of a city that has had trees cause injury and death because they were not maintained properly.

Mr. Sivyver said between 200 and 500 trees are impacted by paving projects, other construction projects or are damaged by vehicles or vandals. He said that the department has developed special provisions to protect trees during construction projects. The department also provides inspection services. He said the department has considered including preconstruction pruning as a bid item in the paving contracts.

Mr. Sivyver discussed hazardous tree abatement on private property. He said inspectors generally respond on a complaint basis but the department is becoming more proactive with private trees because of the discovery of emerald ash borer (EAB) in the City. He said that the number of hazardous trees is expected to grow exponentially as EAB sweeps through the City. He said the Common Council approved a hazardous tree assessment program that allows for hazardous tree abatement orders to be paid over time like an assessment for street improvements. He said that it is a positive move that will help residents manage the cost of removing large trees that infested with EAB.

Mr. Sivyver said that Milwaukee's EAB program is recognized nationally and throughout the world. He said that it is a multi-faceted program that is based on full risk assessment. The first step was to quantify the number of ash trees that are at risk. This allowed for more accurate estimates of the costs for resources and staff. Mr. Sivyver added that the mapping of tree locations will help residents manage trees on their property. He said the department has conducted various outreach programs. In 2009, the department conducted an educational billboard campaign. Grant funding was used for radio campaigns in 2011 and 2012. The department also created a microsite where individuals can learn about EAB and get other facts about our urban forest.

Mr. Sivyver said the City began treating ash street trees in 2009 even though EAB hadn't been detected yet. EAB was confirmed in July 2012, in the 7900 block of West Mill Road and the infestation was probably between four and six years old when it was discovered. He said that nearby ash trees, which had been injected in 2009 and again in 2011, do not appear to be infested. Mr. Sivyver also said that the department will use capital funding to continue injecting ash trees on a two year cycle. He added that the department will continue to monitor for EAB activity and will alter its plans accordingly.

Mr. Sivyver said the department is now focusing on wood utilization options and finding creative ways to use urban wood. He said the department has been working with Kettle Moraine Hardwoods to find appropriate uses and showed examples of furniture and flooring that were made with wood from city trees. Ald. Kovac asked how much of the City's wood is being recycled in that way. Mr. Sivyver said that the City is sending them all of our logs that are of a size that could be processed in a mill. Kettle Moraine Hardwoods is diverting lower quality logs to other wood utilization processors. Mr. Sivyver said the department is still piloting the process, but under the current arrangement the City ships the logs to Kettle Moraine and if the City has the need for milled wood, Kettle Moraine provides it free of charge. He added that the

cost of shipping the wood is about half of what it would cost to tip it in the landfill. Mr. Sivyer added that marketing urban wood is not easy. Typically, because of the defects - nails, structural defects, and rot etc. - most mills won't even touch it. He said that Kettle Moraine will communicate with the City about the usable products they can get which will help determine the wood's value. The goal is to develop a market where urban wood would be sold much as wood is sold at a lumber yard. Ald. Kovac asked if other cities are marketing their wood. Mr. Sivyer said that Ann Arbor, Michigan has a re-use center where it markets its lumber. He said that he didn't know if revenue came back to the city as part of their model. Ald. Bauman asked if the department would have to change its method of removal in order to make the wood more usable. Mr. Sivyer said yes, the crews are trying to leave longer log lengths that would be more useful for milling.

Ald. Kovac suggested that tagging trees with their location might increase their market value. He asked if the trees that were being taken down for the East Library project could be tagged. He said the project has a public art component and he wanted to give the artist the opportunity to reuse the wood.

Ald. Bauman asked if the wood is usable for fireplaces. Mr. Sivyer said yes. Ald. Kovac asked if there was a way to formally provide trees to residents for firewood. Mr. Sivyer said that firewood from Milwaukee County and the surrounding counties has been quarantined because of EAB. He expressed concerns that trees converted to firewood in Milwaukee have the potential to move outside the quarantined area and spread EAB across the state. He also said that the City has operated wood yards in the past where people could go pick up firewood. Ald. Kovac asked why they were closed. Mr. Korban said that he was unsure but his staff would look into it.

Ald. Kovac asked what percentage of removed trees gets turned into mulch, how much mulch eventually goes to the landfill and if logs are ever taken to the landfill. Mr. Sivyer said that prior to the Kettle Moraine arrangement, anything that could fit through the chipper was mulched and whole logs were tipped in the landfill. He said that now larger logs are sent to Kettle Moraine instead of the landfill. Anything not shipped to Kettle Moraine is chipped to make mulch. Mulch is used internally and distributed to self-help centers where residents can pick it up free of charge. He added that the City has a vendor that picks up any surplus mulch and hauls it away for free. He said that it is difficult to measure the biomass of each of those components. Mr. Klajbor said that much of the wood that is tipped in the landfill is generated at the self-help centers, not by Forestry activities. He said the exception would be a large storm that outstrips the City's capacity to store and process downed trees.

Mr. Sivyer discussed the City nursery. He said the 160 acre nursery produces between 3,600 and 4,000 trees that are planted in the street. Buying that many trees from a private vendor would be cost prohibitive. Mr. Szopinski asked if the public can purchase trees at the City nursery. Mr. Sivyer said the nursery is not open for retail purchases, but the City does sell to other municipalities. He added that the City sells more flowers than trees. Ald. Kovac asked if there was demand from the public to purchase trees. Mr. Sivyer said that it would be difficult logistically to set up a retail operation. He said the harvesting of trees is generally done once per year and that balled and burlaped trees are too big and heavy for the typical retail customer to move and plant.

Mr. Sivyer discussed street tree diversification. He said the City used to have entire neighborhoods planted with a single species. Then the City began to diversify on a block or street basis. He said the goal now is to have multiple species within the same block. He said that in the long run this type of diversification will provide the greatest protection from future pests.

*Ms. Brengosz asked how ash trees are distributed throughout the city. Mr. Sivyer said that there are higher concentrations along the river ways and that the state park in the City has a fairly high concentration of ash. He added that the tools available to manage EAB are cost prohibitive when used on a large scale. He anticipates that most of the ash canopy will be lost and that water quality will be affected by increased storm water runoff. He also said that the holes created in the canopy will make the management of other invasive species like buckthorn more challenging. Mr. Froh asked if Forestry has the authority to order people to remove invasive species like buckthorn. Mr. Sivyer said no. He added that invasive species like buckthorn most typically occur on county owned land, not residential properties.*

*Ms. Brengosz asked Mr. Sivyer to compare the magnitude of the tree loss from EAB with the losses suffered from Dutch Elm disease. Mr. Sivyer said that the risk to the City's streets will be much less for the EAB because the City has effective tree protocols and there are fewer ash trees in the right of way. He said that in the 1950's, most Midwestern cities had American Elm as their primary street tree. He said many cities probably had 80% of their canopy at risk. Milwaukee has 17% of its canopy at risk for infestation by EAB. He added that EAB will not be the last invasive species that threatens Milwaukee's urban forest and stressed the importance of being vigilant and proactive.*

*Mr. Szopinski asked if other agencies or companies are contributing to the removal costs for infected trees. Mr. Sivyer said that WE Energies was a partner on the mapping project. He said he did not know if WE Energies has programs to provide assistance to property owners for trees that impact distribution wires.*

**3. Set next agenda.**

*There is a request that DPW-Fleet appear before the committee on June 12th.*

**Meeting adjourned at 9:52 a.m.**

**This meeting can be viewed in its entirety through the City's Legislative Research Center at <http://milwaukee.legistar.com/calendar>.**