

TREE BOARD

August 2, 2021

The Tree Board of the City of Norman, Cleveland County, State of Oklahoma, met for an in person meeting appearing on the 2nd day of June August 2021, at 4:05 P.M.

ITEM 1, being:

ROLL CALL

Present: Chairman Menzie and Members Buthod, Fagin, Pape, Spain and Tedder-Loffland

Absent: Members Huffman and Janaway

City Officials: Tim Vermillion, City Forester
Karla Sitton, Admin Technician IV

ITEM 2, being:

APPROVAL OF THE JUNE 7, 2021 MEETING MINUTES

Member Pape made the motion and Member Buthod seconded to approve the minutes. The vote was taken with the following results:

YEAH: Chairman Menzie and Members Buthod, Fagin, Pape, Spain and Tedder-Loffland

NAY: None

ITEM 3, being:

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Member Fagin made the motion and Member Tedder-Loffland seconded to approve the agenda. The vote was taken with the following results:

YEAH: Chairman Menzie and Members Buthod, Fagin, Pape, Spain and Tedder-Loffland

NAY: None

ITEM 4, being:

DISCUSSION REGARDING TREES THAT ARE RECOVERING FROM THE WINTER STORM

Mr. Tim Vermillion, City Forester, said highlighted an article from Texas A&M Forest Service regarding what to do with trees recovering from the Winter Storm "Uri". He said Oklahoma is facing the same challenges and wanted to discuss options with the Board. Mr. Vermillion said despite ample rain, many trees are showing signs of stress, i.e., tufts of leaves give patchy, inverted look while others are losing vast amounts of bark, or seemingly dying overnight. He said many home and land owners wondering what they should do.

Mr. Vermillion said the Texas A&M Forest Service and experts in the community joined forces this past spring to send a unified message of wait until mid-July before cutting down leafless trees. The good news is that the vast majority of trees that were late to leaf out have mostly, if not fully, recovered. Now the time has come for home and land owners to make a decision; to remove or not remove their trees.

Mr. Vermillion said if a tree is bare and has not put out a single leaf by now, it is almost certainly dead and anything green on the tree means there is a chance for recovery. If this is the case for any of your trees, it is probably time to consider how and when to remove your tree.

Mr. Vermillion said there are a few ways to determine if your tree is in good shape, or if it could use a helping hand. Trees that have 50% or more of their normal canopy are likely to survive; however, if the tree only has a 20% or 30% canopy then that tree has likely suffered a bad hit and may not have enough to come back. Mr. Vermillion said to imagine a circle around all of your tree's branches; 25% or more of that circle should be filled in with leaves. If not, that tree is most likely to die and it is worth planning to remove it. Another way to monitor your tree's progress is by taking a photo of your tree's canopy as soon as possible. Keep the photo – remembering the angle to took it from – and then wait for next spring. Once the tree has fully leafed out, take another photo from the same spot and compare the pictures for improvement. More foliage next spring means the tree is in recovery.

Patchy foliage is not the only mark of a stressed tree and some oak trees have gotten wide cracks in the trunk. Mr. Vermillion said these are an exaggerated manifestation of the more typical frost cracks or "radial shakes." These frost cracks are caused by a tree's inability to endure expansion and contraction of the bark and wood that results from the freezing of water inside the tree. Many of these cracks were only partially visible following the winter storm; however, the recent surge of summer heat, has exacerbated those cracks making them more visible in some trees. Mr. Vermillion said trees have a built-in mechanisms or recovering from trunk damage and frost cracks and those trees with one or two cracks should be able to seal themselves. On the flip side, bark is still essential for protection against pests and diseases. Trees with multiple cracks or lots of exposed wood are unlikely to recover and trees with few but deep cracks should be monitored closely to ensure they do not become hazardous. Mr. Vermillion said lacebark elms, sycamores, and crape myrtles are more likely to survive; however, they should still be monitored closely for oozing discharge and other signs of stress to include browning foliage or expanding cracks.

Mr. Vermillion said landowners can begin by removing dead branches, or by pruning back the dead ends of branches on trees that experienced significant dieback. These branches are more likely to break off and injure property or people than the main body of the tree. This can still be a dangerous and difficult task and hiring an I.S.A. certified arborist can help since they have the tools, knowledge and experience to do it safely.

Once trees have been pruned or removed, it is essential to maintain a watchful eye. With August coming in hot, the soils are bound to dry up quickly and trees do not need anything that might put them over the edge. Mr. Vermillion said landowners may want to give them deep, supplemental watering once or twice. Meanwhile, if you are planning on replacing a tree, he recommended to not place the new tree right where the old one was unless the stump is ground out when a professional comes to remove the dead tree.

The Board discussed and thanked Mr. Vermillion for the information. Mr. Vermillion said he would consolidate the information given today so it can be distributed at the 2nd Friday Art Walk.

ITEM 5, being:

DISCUSSION REGARDING TREE STORY CONTEST PLANNING

Chairman Menzie said Norman will start back to school in a few weeks and said if the Board plans to hold the Annual Tree Story Contest, planning needs to begin now. Member Fagin suggested getting the information to the 4th and 5th grades one month after they have started school.

Member Tedder-Loffland asked if the Tree Story Contest has always been held in the fall and Member Fagin said yes. He said winners are selected before school is dismissed for Christmas Break and the winners are recognized in the spring at the Earth Day event. Chairman Menzie said his daughter, Mariah, will dress up (as a tree) and speak at the schools to inform the kids about the importance of trees. Member Fagin suggested to reach out to teachers and/or principals so they could also encourage the kids.

Member Fagin said he would update the flyer and email it to Staff so it can be forwarded to the Board.

ITEM 6, being;

DISCUSSION REGARDING THE FORESTRY DIVISION'S ACTIVITIES CONCERNING THE I-35
POLLINATOR PLANTING POTENTIALLY TAKING PLACE THIS FALL

Mr. Tim Vermillion, City Forester, said at a recent Council Retreat, trees were discussed. He said Council wanted trees planted along I-35 and he suggested a pollinator garden instead. He said Mayor Clark signed an agreement with ODOT to have a pollinator garden installed at I-35 and State Highway 9, on the west side of the I-35 clover leaf. Mr. Vermillion said a private donor has given money to have the material and labor for ODOT to install the garden; however, the City of Norman will maintain it for three (3) years before ODOT will take over maintenance. He said former Councilmember Carter and Bold Multi-Media have been working to raise money to help the City fund the maintenance of the pollinator garden. Mr. Vermillion said the maintenance will likely include having the pollinator garden mowed once or twice a year.

Member Buthod said she is familiar with completing grants and would be happy to help Staff obtain additional funding to assist with the maintenance. Member Tedder-Loffland said OEC recently had a report done on land/soil in regards to pollinator gardens since they will be installing a pollinator garden in the future and said she will share the OEC report with Staff. She said she was glad that the City and City Forester is involved in the project.

ITEM 7, being:

MISCELLANEOUS DISCUSSION

Member Buthod said the Hall Park Home Owners Association (HOA) will be having a meeting on September 14th at 7:00 pm at Wildwood Church to discuss an upcoming Neighborwoods Project and Member Pape suggested Staff attend the meeting. Mr. Tim Vermillion, City Forester, said the City will financially match what the Hall Park HOA's donates toward the project and he should know the budget soon. He said he will place door hangers throughout the addition to let the homeowners know the trees are free and those interested can only plant them in the front yard, in a spot he chooses, i.e., not under electrical lines or in site triangles, etc.

Member Buthod left the meeting at 5:06 p.m.

Mr. Vermillion said he wanted to explain what is going on at the tree planting along 12th Avenue. He said the water "wells" were mowed over incorrectly and he hopes the trees will leaf back out. He said he continues to water and pick off bag worms to assist with the tree maintenance.

ITEM 8, being:

ADJOURNMENT

Chairmen Menzie requested a motion to adjourn. Member Tedder-Loffland moved to adjourn and Member Pape seconded to adjourn. The vote was taken with the following results:

YEAH: Chairman Menzie and Members Fagin, Pape, Spain and Tedder-Loffland

NAY: None

Passed and approved this 4th of October 2021

Don Menzie, Chairperson
