



URBAN FORESTRY COMMITTEE MINUTES

October 16, 2026, 8:05 AM

City Hall- City Hall Conference Room 6

Members Present:

John Schwandt (Chair) (left at 8:54 am)

John Burke

Daniel Roop (left at 9:20 am)

JD Reeves

Bruce Martinek (Vice Chair)

Steve Bloedel

Members Absent:

Daniel Dance (Student Representative)

Staff Present:

Monte McCully Urban Forester

Kris Beyer Admin Assistant

Guests Present:

Katie Sorensen City of Spokane Forester

CALL TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order at 8:10 AM by John Schwandt.

MINUTES

Motion to approve July 2026 minutes by Bruce Martinek, seconded by John Burke; all in favor, motion passed unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENT

none

FORESTERS REPORT

**See attached report by Monte McCully.

Monte McCully reported:

- An update on the proposed grant-funded street tree inventory project was discussed. It was reported that the grant remains dependent on reimbursement funds owed from several communities. According to conversations with Matt Perkins at the ISA conference, funding is expected to be available once those reimbursements are received, although no definite timeline is known. The Committee discussed that updating the street tree inventory would help the City complete needed inventory work at minimal cost to the City.



- Will continue to update tree inventory records as opportunities arise in the field but noted that thousands of trees still require updated information, estimating approximately 30,000 trees still require updates.
- Reported applying to attend a forestry/arboriculture training program in New Jersey and is awaiting acceptance.
- Committee members discussed the Residential Street Tree Requirement (RSTR) program and current reimbursement process. Discussion included the current \$300 deposit, the increasing cost of trees and installation, and comparisons to similar programs in neighboring communities. Members noted that inspections performed by forestry staff have improved oversight of tree planting quality and species selection. They also discussed RSTR fee of \$300 may be too low. People maybe using it as a buyout and avoid not having to plant street trees.
- JD Reeves reported that North Idaho College recently received grant funding to replace trees lost during recent windstorms. Approximately 72 to 73 trees representing roughly 50 different species will be planted across campus. Many of the new trees will be installed in irrigated areas, with a mix of deciduous and conifer species selected to improve long-term canopy diversity. McCulley also reported that planning is underway for improvements to the trail corridor along Rosenberry Drive, which may affect future tree planting opportunities adjacent to the dike.

UF COMMITTEE REMOVAL REVIEW

- Lee Wayman City Council Repeal on October 20th, 2026
 - The Committee discussed the upcoming City Council appeal involving the tree located at 801 E. St. Maries Avenue. Members noted the tree has been reviewed multiple times and remains in generally healthy condition. The property owner's primary concern involves the possibility of tree failure affecting a nearby gas meter.
 - The Committee discussed the low probability of such an occurrence but agreed additional information from Avista regarding tree proximity to gas service equipment could be helpful. McCully agreed to contact Avista regarding any applicable standards or concerns prior to the City Council hearing on October 20, 2026.

REMOVAL REQUESTS

- Mike Parson- 2969 W Augustin Dr: Remove and replace 4 trees
 - McCully presented the request to remove and replace four street trees due to irrigation conflicts and minor sidewalk lifting. Two trees were identified as lindens. The trees were reported to be healthy with approximately one inch of sidewalk displacement observed near one tree.
 - Committee discussion focused on alternatives to removal including root pruning, air excavation, sidewalk grinding, and future sidewalk replacement if necessary. Members discussed that irrigation systems naturally encourage tree growth and



root development and that irrigation repairs are generally less costly than removing and replacing healthy trees. Additional discussion included proper watering practices to promote deeper root growth and reduce surface roots.

- Members agreed that no replacement tree species exists that would completely eliminate potential conflicts with irrigation systems and that mitigation measures should be pursued before considering removal. The larger tree included in the request was not creating sidewalk or irrigation issues and was requested for removal primarily because of its size.

Motion by Bruce Martinek moved to deny the removal request and approve the recommendation for root pruning and sidewalk grinding as appropriate. John Burke seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

The Committee also discussed the appeal process for denied removal requests. McCully advised that property owners have ten days from receipt of notice to file an appeal.

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- 3944 N Playfair: remove 3 oaks
 - McCully presented a request to remove three oak trees. The property owner cited aphid activity, leaf cleanup, sidewalk lifting, irrigation concerns, and maintenance challenges due to family health circumstances.
 - Discussion included observations that one tree may have been planted too deeply, resulting in surface rooting and approximately three inches of sidewalk displacement. Members discussed alternatives to removal including root flare excavation, canopy raising, pruning, sidewalk grinding, sidewalk ramping, slab-jacking, and consultation with Engineering regarding ADA-compliant repair options.
 - Committee members noted that aphid infestations generally do not affect tree health and typically diminish following seasonal frosts. Educational materials regarding aphids and tree maintenance were recommended. Members also discussed avoiding unnecessary systemic insecticide use because of potential impacts on pollinators and beneficial insects.
 - The Committee recommended amending watering practices to encourage deeper root growth and suggested pruning to improve street clearance and reduce maintenance concerns.

Motion by Bruce Martinek to deny the request to remove the three oak trees and recommend mitigation measures including cleaning around the base of the trees, evaluating sidewalk repair options, pruning lower canopy branches to meet City clearance standards, providing educational information regarding aphids, and modifying irrigation practices. Steve Bloedel seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

The Committee discussed:



- 17th & Sherman Tree Health- McCully reported receiving complaints regarding a tree located near 17th Street and Sherman Avenue. Concerns were raised about a cavity in the tree and potential hazards associated with its condition. Matt Perkins reviewed the tree and determined it was difficult to assess the extent of any internal decay without additional testing. His recommendation was that removal was not warranted at this time. Committee members discussed possible mitigation measures, including deadwood removal and structural pruning. Members noted the presence of a branch with significant included bark extending toward an adjacent building and agreed that reducing weight on that branch would improve safety. The Committee also discussed the possibility of a formal tree risk assessment, including sonic tomography or other testing methods, should future concerns arise. McCully stated he would add pruning of the tree to the City's work list and monitor its condition.
- Bark Beetle Infestation Update: McCully reported increasing bark beetle activity in several areas of the community, particularly in the Fairway neighborhood and wooded areas adjacent to the golf course. He explained that Idaho Department of Lands (IDL) staff have been working with affected neighborhoods and generally recommend removal of infested trees rather than chemical treatments once infestations have reached advanced stages. Committee members discussed the growing severity of the outbreak and concerns that healthy trees may become vulnerable as infestation levels increase. McCully stated he plans to develop educational materials and mailers for affected residents and may organize a neighborhood meeting to discuss management strategies. Katie Sorensen offered information regarding Spokane's outreach efforts and public workshops addressing similar bark beetle concerns.
- Revising the Approved Street Tree List: The Committee discussed the need to update the Approved Street Tree List. Members noted that certain species, including some ornamental plums and cherries, have not performed well and may warrant removal from the approved list. Discussion focused on creating a more regional approach to tree selection. Daniel Roop shared information regarding the Treasure Valley Tree Selection Guide and suggested collaborating with neighboring communities, arborists, nurseries, developers, and other stakeholders to develop a regional list of recommended species. Members discussed challenges associated with trees commonly sold by nurseries and big-box retailers that may not be suitable as street trees. McCully expressed support for exploring a regional approach and agreed to meet with Daniel Roop and representatives from Trees Idaho to discuss opportunities for collaboration and future updates to the approved species list.
- Revising the HUB (Historical, Unusual & Big) Tree Program: The Committee discussed updating the program. McCully reported that several remaining copies of the HUB booklet had been distributed and indicated it may be time to update program information and tree records. Members discussed re-establishing a nomination process for future HUB trees and potentially involving students or volunteers in remeasuring and documenting significant trees. The Committee also discussed maintaining ownership records, notifying property owners when their trees are included in the program, and incorporating HUB tree information into Tree Plotter. Discussion included mention of the American Chestnut trees in City Park, which may now be among the largest remaining specimens of their kind. Members asked for the tree nomination form to be accessible on the city website. Additional discussion occurred regarding locally significant walnut trees, impacts of



Thousand Cankers Disease, and the spread of Emerald Ash Borer in the Pacific Northwest. Committee members also discussed ongoing work related to chestnut tree collections from the Syringa area. It was reported that genetic testing is being conducted on previously collected samples and additional material has been gathered for evaluation. Members discussed opportunities to propagate trees from the collection and potential future nursery development efforts.

ADJOURNMENT

Next meeting Friday, November 20th, 2026, at 8:05 am.

Motion by John Burketo adjourn, seconded Steve Bloedel, all in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Meeting ended at 9:29 AM.