



**Bloomington Tree Commission
Minutes of the meeting, 17 November 2021**

PRESENT: Tom Coleman, (Professor Emeritus, Dept. of Fine Arts, IUB; Indiana Tree Steward of the Year 2004) by phone from the hospital; Laurel Cornell (chair, Professor Emeritus of Sociology and Studio Art); Erin Hatch (COB Urban Forester); George Hegeman (Professor Emeritus, Microbiology, IUB); Jeff Palmer (Professor Emeritus, Biology, IUB); David Parkhurst (Environmental Commission, Professor Emeritus, SPEA); Dedaimia Whitney (Certified Tree Steward, Master Gardener).

ABSENT: Kerry Bridges (ISA Board Certified Master Arborist); Mia Williams (landscape architect, Indiana University).

GUEST: Linda Thompson, Senior Environmental City Planner

CONSENT AGENDA

Because of a lack of a quorum, approval of the minutes of the October meeting was postponed. The next meeting of the Tree Commission will be 9:30 a.m. 15 December 2021.

URBAN FORESTER REPORT [Erin Hatch]

Bluestone Tree and Canopy Bloomington joined the city staff in the Matlock planting (see attached *Urban Forester's Report*). Erin said the planting was a big success and hopes that this kind of collaboration can serve as a model for future planting. In response to a question from Jeff, Erin said which species were planted depended on site specifics, but that they were spaced out enough that they did not appear to be planted in a row.

Laurel asked about people stealing newly planted trees, and Erin replied that not theft, but vandalism, has been the problem this year. She said people have broken off the leader branches of young trees, sometimes all the branches, and carved into the bark to the point where the trees may not be able to heal themselves.

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION [Dave Parkhurst]

The EC meeting will be tomorrow night. The EC will consider a proposal from the chair regarding the destruction of buildings that contain lead. If approved, a resolution will be sent to the City Council. The EC will also discuss what project to assign the Ostrum intern, and who will write the memos from the ECPC to the Planning Commission in the future, now that Linda has been reassigned.

Laurel asked whether the Ostrum Institute might have an intern for the Tree Commission. Erin said she has a project that might be suitable, namely, evaluating tree species with respect to sidewalk buckling. Dedaimia suggested an intern could also look for grant funding to help with removing invasive tree species.

NEW BUSINESS

Removal of callery pears. Since MC-IRIS announced that pear trees are the 2022 invasive species of the year, Erin has seen more requests for removals than usual. She said she would like to have a set of criteria to would help her decide whether to approve or deny such requests. Some neighborhoods, such as Gentry Estates, have very dense populations of Bradford pears,

but also the additional complication of utility line conflicts. In some of those cases, a tree could be removed but not replaced in the same site. She said removing and replacing park trees is less problematic; it's mainly street trees that are the issue. Jeff asked whether replacement trees might be planted somewhere else on the homeowner's property if the site of the pear tree is unsuitable for replanting. Erin said this would probably not work within current city policy, but a volunteer group such as MC-IRIS might be able to have this discussion.

Erin reports that there are approximately 1,274 pear trees on city property; at \$1,000 per tree removal (\$500 for removal, \$500 replacement), she estimates that removing all of the pear trees would be a \$1.2 million dollar project. \$120,00/year would remove them all in 10 years. The city's current budget for tree removal is \$116,000 per year, which includes about 30 pear trees removed yearly, because of poor condition. Erin said she added \$10,000 to the 2022 budget for the removal of pears along the B-line Trail.

MC-IRIS submitted a statement indicating that they do not believe the Callery pears' contribution to the tree canopy balances the damage they do to the ecosystem. They believe replacing large invasives with smaller non-invasives will be more beneficial in the long run. (See attached statement below.)

POLICY CONCLUSIONS:

- (1) Maintaining Bloomington's tree canopy is important; when individual homeowners apply for permits to remove Callery pears at their own expense, Erin will approve their requests provided they replace the tree using the standing city metric. [Caveat: Requiring owners to pay for tree replacement would probably necessitate a change to Title 12.]
- (2) Erin will work with neighborhoods with a high density of pears to develop a strategy for removing them, and to help residents understand the need to balance the competing benefits of maintaining the canopy with removing healthy invasive trees.
- (3) Erin will use a "triage" method to evaluate the removal of city pear trees. The criteria will include
 - a. the tree's general condition (branch breakage, etc)
 - b. proximity to other wooded areas
 - c. production of excessive seedlings
 - d. other specific objectionable properties
- (4) Erin will develop a budget plan to remove and replace all the Callery pears on city property over the next 10 years. Because of the city's budgeting cycle, any such plan cannot begin before 2023.

Respectfully submitted,

Dedaimia Whitney

Urban Forester Report

October 2021

Recent Activities/Events:

- Awarded \$8,000 from IDNR Community and Urban Forestry Grant program for creation of an urban forestry storm response plan – work to start in 2022 with matching budget funding
- 12 Trees Sent to Streets for Removal:
 - 608 E 2nd St – 30” Sugar Maple
 - 515 – 519 E 2nd St – 18”, 21”, 22” Sugar Maples
 - 3925 E Stonegate Dr – 10” Callery Pear
 - 2214 E Wimbleton – approx.. 16” Elm
 - 2217 E Wimbleton – approx.. 5” Redbud
 - 3307 S Forrester St – 12” Red Maple
 - 2900 E David Dr – 21” Callery Pear
 - 202 E 6th St – 15” Callery Pear
 - 1200 W Woodhill Dr – Callery Pear
 - 1636 S Ira Dr – 5” Oak
- Fall Planting
 - City Hall (2)
 - 400 N Washington St (3)
 - 701 N College (2)

Upcoming Activities/Events:

- Matlock Heights Fall Planting Event –Saturday Oct. 30th, volunteer planting date with CanopyBloomington
- Fall Planting – various locations

Ongoing Activities:

- Marking and Removal of hazard trees
- Tree Planting
- Utility marking and Site evaluations for Bicentennial Bond plantings by DRG

Statement from MC-IRIS on Bradford pear removal

- While MC-IRIS recognizes the importance of canopy closure as a metric to estimate the ecosystem impact of trees, we believe that the ecosystem damage caused by invasive trees outweighs the benefits. If canopy closure is to be used as a metric for ecosystem services of trees, **invasive trees should not be included in the tally because they are not providing the same services and are actually harming the environment.**
- Callery pears spread quickly through our forests and open areas, displacing native plants and making dense, thorny thickets of no use to wildlife. These infestations can be seen in many places around Bloomington, perhaps most clearly up and down the I-69 ROW that is now covered in Callery pear. We have the largest known Callery pear infestation in the country close to Bloomington (Martin Co.), with 8,000 acres of forest that has little but Callery pear in the understory and no regenerating native trees. You can see pictures of that infestation [here](#). **This is what we see happening to the forests all around Bloomington if Callery pears are not removed from landscaping.**
- We believe there are an estimated 1,200 Callery pears that were planted by the City in the City's ROW. We know now that those trees are causing terrible invasions on properties across the Bloomington area causing landowners time and money to clean up. **We believe the City should be working to hasten the removal of Callery pears across the city to lessen the spreading infestations.**
- We believe landowners should be able to apply to remove Callery pear trees from the City-owned ROW at their expense. If the loss of canopy closure due to this removal is a concern, we again note that these invasive trees are NOT providing comparable ecosystem services to native trees and should never have been included in the canopy estimates. Recognizing the importance of canopy in Bloomington, however, we support adding a requirement for replanting a tree. We recognize the replacement will be a smaller tree, but in the long run **replacing large invasive trees with smaller non-invasive trees is more beneficial for the overall ecosystem.** Small native trees can catch up and provide sustainable services, unlike the invasive trees, including protecting our water quality, reduced flooding and the whole web of life system support.
- **The city is all about a sustainable future. Invasive species are not sustainable.**