

Public Hearing Minutes - April 24, 2018
City Hall, Council Chambers

Call to Order:

Mayor Novak called the public hearing to order at 4:30pm.

PRESENT: Council members A.Forsman, Kess, Debeltz, Omerza, Callen, and Mayor Novak
ABSENT: D.Forsman

Purpose:

To hear public comment on the tapping of the Maple Trees on City Boulevards

Dixon Shelstad from the Ely Tree Board gave the Tree Board concerns and recommendations over the Tapping of the Maple Trees.

The Tree Board does NOT believe that tappers in Ely are doing so with malicious intent. Most tappers are apparently doing this as a hobby. This tradition has taken place for many years on city streets and parks. The Tree Board recognizes and respects the history of tree tapping, but recommends that the practice should be significantly reduced, and eventually eliminated.

Energy budget in trees:

- Street trees experience numerous stresses not always found in natural forest trees (constricted rooting zone, restricted water absorption, compromised soil condition, mechanical damage, etc). This can limit energy creation, and critical energy reserves can drop as a result.
- Trees respond to wounds (including tap holes) by expending energy to actively defend against any potential micro-organisms that may follow. Trees with high energy reserves are often successful in walling off the wounded area. They are also left with adequate energy to carry out other necessary functions, and respond defensively to attacks by various pests. Result: The tree remains “healthy”. Note: Sugar Maples respond well to wounds. Silver Maples- not as well.
- With limited energy reserves, wounding urban trees can trigger responses that consume even more energy, compromising other necessary functions, which can in turn result in accelerated decline.
- Decline from a “healthy” condition to a dead tree can take 10, or 20, or more years, with little outward sign of declined until the last few years.

Tree Tapping and the energy budget:

- Many of Ely’s older silver maple are showing evidence of dieback. Likely cause: numerous street tree stresses, which may include tapping.
- Ely’s trees are NOT dying from tree tapping alone. Some trees have been tapped for years and are still living. Trees won’t fall over from tapping. There are many contributing factors. Tapping is only one factor, but it is one that can be more easily controlled or eliminated.

- Tapping sugar maple in a sugar bush is an acceptable practice, while tapping urban trees is not recommended, and it is prohibited in all cities with a forestry department that the Tree Board has contacted.
- The goal for urban trees is to increase the value they provide by bringing them to maturity (larger size), then extending life past maturity, as long as functions and safety remain intact. This requires managing in ways that maximize stored energy, regardless of their poor growing environment.
- Avoiding wounding whenever possible prevents the tree from “spending” energy reserves to protect itself. The result is higher energy reserves, which leads to longer-term survival.
- The Tree board is interested in extending the life of older trees and protecting our younger trees from tapping.

Mary Groeninger from the Ely Tree Board discussed the letter to the editor that the Tree Board put in the paper, the thought of the letter was to inform and educate the public on proper tapping. Some of the observations the Tree Board made this year were:

- Some tappers followed the guidelines and some did not.
- Competition between tappers led to early tapping, and multiple tappers utilizing the same tree. The result was 4 or 5 or 6 taps on individual trees.
- The Tree Board’s recommendations were not followed.
- There was a wide range of techniques being used, from good to poor.
- It appeared more trees were tapped than in previous years.

The Tree Board’s recommendation is a City Ordinance stating:

No person without written permission of the City Administrator shall plant, remove, break, bore into, spray or take any action which will injure or destroy any tree or shrub, the base of which is located in the street right-of way or on other city land.

Mary Icenhour from 10 E James complimented the City Council for having this hearing, and is glad the council is looking at and addressing this issue.

A. Forsman asked Shelstad and Groeninger how many Silver Maples and how many Sugar Maples the City has. They stated that there might be a couple Sugar Maples, but the majority are Silver Maples.

Adjourn

Mayor Novak adjourned the meeting without objection at 4:48pm

Casey Velcheff
Deputy Clerk