



**URBAN FORESTRY BOARD  
REGULAR MEETING  
Wednesday, March 20, 2013 - 5:30 p.m.  
Northwest Recreation Center  
2913 Northland  
Austin, Texas**

**URBAN FORESTRY BOARD  
MEETING MINUTES**

**REGULAR MEETING  
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 20, 2013**

**Board Members in Attendance:**

Tom Hayes, Vice Chair. Board Members Nicholas Classen, Peggy Maceo, Chris Kite, Daniel vanTreeck. Board Chair Brewer and Board Member Fleming absent.

**Staff in Attendance:**

**Parks and Recreation Department:**

Pat Fuller, Division Manager, Park Ranger Division  
Angela Hanson, Executive Liaison)  
Robert Clawson, Staff Liaison

**Austin Energy Department**

Ray Henning

**Ex-Officio Members in Attendance:**

Jessica Wilson, Environmental Conservation Manager, Watershed Protection Department  
Director Designee  
Michael Embesi, City Arborist, Planning and Development Review Department

**MEETING MINUTES**

**A. CALL TO ORDER**

Board Vice-Chair Hayes called the meeting to order at 5:50PM.

**B. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

1. Motion made by Board Member Classen, seconded by Board member vanTreeck to approve the UFB meeting minutes of February 20, 2013. Board Vice-Chair Hayes noted the Urban Forestry Board Document Procedures approved at the February 20, 2013 were not attached. He asked that approval of the minutes be tabled and resubmitted at the April 17, 2013 meeting when the document could be attached to the draft meeting minutes. Motion amended to table approval of the minutes until the next meeting. Motion made by Board Member Classen, seconded by Board Member Kite. All in favor. Board Member Maceo abstained. Board Chair Brewer and Board member Fleming absent. Angela Hanson noted new Board and Commission posting rules that will be effective April 1, 2013.

### **C. CITIZEN COMMUNICATION**

The first 4 (four) speakers signed up prior to the calling of the meeting to order are allowed a three-minute allotment each to address their concerns regarding items not posted on the agenda.

Michael Fossum – Project duration ordinances – City Council Item #22 for tomorrow's meeting. Opposed to the item. Requesting UFB members to contact City Council to voice opinion.

Zoila Vega – Parker Lane Trees. Concerned about amount of mulch around the trees. At some points, up to eight inches.

### **D. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Jessica Wilson – provided information on Watershed Protection ordinance regarding trail distances. Next Watershed Protection meeting will be April 1, 2013.

Outsmart the Drought training tonight at One Texas Center.

March 28, 2013 – talk at Recycled Reads regarding Grow Zones.

April 6-7, 2013 – Zilker Botanical Gardens Festival.

First Invasive Plant Trainings underway. Saturday will be first of four volunteer training.

Four Watershed walks planned.

Angela Hanson – Comprehensive Urban Forest Plan to be discussed at the trainings.

HB 1377 and HB 1858 to be presented at the Capital.

Board Vice-Chair Hayes – Special Called meeting of the Urban Forestry Board to be held Saturday, April 13, 2013, 9:00AM to 12:00PM at the Parks and Recreation Annex Building, 919 W. 28 ½ Street, Shoal Creek Room. To develop Strategic Goals for next year.

### **E. DISCUSSION AND ACTION ITEMS**

1. Discuss and approve Resolution to City Council Containing Recommendations for Maintenance of Live Oak Trees.

Board Member Kite presented information posted. Photographs of the trees viewed. Motion made by Board Member Maceo to adopt the resolution and recommendations of the UFB Working Group submitted in the backup information. Seconded by Board Member Classen. Angela Hanson, Program Manager, PARD Forestry Unit, stated that the cuts to the trees presented would violate the ANSI A300 Pruning Standards for Care of Trees on Public Property. Existing power lines were discussed regarding location to the trees in question. LCRA lines carry 69,000 volts. Board Vice-Chair Hayes stated that the resolution proposes pruning to leave half of the sprouts as an interim measure until study is completed. Look at cost study to possibly raise the lines. Michael Embesi, City Arborist, stated that the proposed pruning would cause less than 25%. Ray Henning, Line Clearance Supervisor, stated concern of being asked to violate standards set and accepted by the City. Stated pruning should be in accordance with the ANSI standards. Amendments to resolution discussed. Resolution to be included in the body of a memo to City Council. Board Member Maceo made a motion to approve the resolution and recommendations as amended by Board Vice-Chair Hayes, seconded by Board Member vanTreeck. All Board members present in favor.

### **F. BRIEFINGS – 10 Minute Limit For Each Briefing**

2. Austin Energy Line Clearance Monthly Update (to include December and January reports)-- Ray Henning, Line Clearance Superintendent, Austin Energy.  
Thirty-five line miles cleared. Number of trees distributed: 107. Number of calls for service up due to storm season.

3. City Arborist Program Tree Presentation and Replenishment Monthly Update – Michael Embesi, City Arborist, Planning and Development Review Department.  
Number of permits issued: 218. Monthly report reviewed. Projected bike path for part of Shoal Creek Trail and Pease Park discussed.
4. City Arborist Program Heritage Tree Monthly Update – Michael Embesi, City Arborist, Planning and Development Review Department.  
Verbal information provided on February, 2013 work completed and Keith Mars, Environmental Program Coordinator, Planning and Development Review Department, presented additional Annual Report information given.
5. Update on Urban Forestry Board Management Plan Working Group. Presenter: Patrick Brewer, Board Chair.  
Board Chair Brewer absent.

**G. URBAN FORESTER EXECUTIVE LIAISON REPORT – Angela Hanson Program Manager, Forestry Unit, Parks and Recreation Department, Urban Forestry Program, including:**

- Monthly Notification: Removal of protected size trees on parkland that constitute an imminent public safety risk.  
Photos of Live Oak and Mesquite trees removed for emergency reasons at Zilker Park requested by the Board at last month's meeting viewed.
- Update on Comprehensive Urban Forest Plan progress.  
Backup documentation discussed. Past and future timeline for completion of the plan reviewed. Deadline moved to September 2013. PARD staff working with Public Information Office on a education campaign about the plan.
- Update on Community Wildfire Protection Plan progress.  
Met new Assistant Director at Austin Fire Department responsible for wildfire plan. Updates will be coming to the board.
- Imagine Austin Green Infrastructure Priority Program Implementation Team (GIPPIT) overview.  
Team tasked with implementing the items listed in Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan as it relates to developing a green infrastructure within the City. Angela Hanson is co-leading the Public Lands Management Plan subteam. Focused on creating standard classification for how we manage land. Board Vice-Chair Hayes noted the GIPPIT has a big emphasis on public lands. Is the Comprehensive Urban Forest Plan focused on public lands? What are we doing on private lands? Goal of Comprehensive Urban Forest Plan serves as model to be considered public education tool.
- Cutting of vegetation by volunteers and others on city properties adjacent to residential areas implemented as part of Firewise program.  
PARD partnering with AFD to implement the Firewise program. Volunteer projects and staff to address fuel modification requests. Adopted Firewise Community Program standards used for Wildland interface areas. Educational components. Board Vice-Chair Hayes requested a briefing at the next meeting.

**H. FUTURE ITEMS FROM BOARD MEMBERS**

- Briefing regarding the projected bike path for Shoal Creek Trail and Pease Park requested by Board Member vanTreeck.
- Briefing on Duncan Park BMX Trail requested by Board Member Maceo.
- Briefing on Cutting of vegetation by volunteers and others on city properties adjacent to residential areas implemented as part of Firewise program requested by Board Vice-Chair Hayes.

## **I. ADJOURNMENT**

Motion made by Board Member vanTreeck, seconded by Board Member Kite. All in favor. Board Vice-Chair Hayes adjourned the meeting at 8:50PM without objection.

The City of Austin is committed to compliance with the American with Disabilities Act. Reasonable modifications and equal access to communications are provided upon request. Meeting locations are planned with wheelchair access. If requiring Sign Language Interpreters or alternative formats, please give notice at least 4 (four) days before the meeting date. Please call Robert Clawson at the Parks and Recreation Department, at 978-2600, for additional information; TTY users route through Relay Texas at 711.

For more information on the Urban Forestry Board, please contact Angela Hanson at [angela.hanson@austintexas.gov](mailto:angela.hanson@austintexas.gov) or by phone at 974-9551.



**TO: Mayor Leffingwell and City Council members**

**FROM: City of Austin Urban Forestry Board**

**DATE: March 20, 2013**

**SUBJECT: Draft City Council Resolution Recommended by the Urban Forestry Board for Maintenance of Live Oak Trees beneath Austin Energy Transmission Lines in the Gracywoods Neighborhood**

The Urban Forestry Board recommends that the City Council consider adopting the following resolution, in order to reach a long-term solution to the ongoing conflicts between the transmission lines and the Gracywoods oaks. Backup materials from our March 2013 meeting relevant to this issue include graphical images of the trees and surrounding area (<http://www.austintexas.gov/edims/document.cfm?id=185555>), along with multiple documents from October 2004 to the present (<http://www.austintexas.gov/edims/document.cfm?id=185554>).

#### **RESOLUTION NO.**

**WHEREAS**, the urban forest has social, environmental, cultural, economic, historical, aesthetic, and health benefits for the citizens of Austin.

**WHEREAS**, the urban forest is an essential part of the City's infrastructure that city policy seeks to protect.

**WHEREAS**, the urban forest canopy provides shade that reduces energy bills, removes air pollutants, and creates more livable and beautiful neighborhoods.

**WHEREAS**, in 2006 the City Council established the Tree Task Force, in order to address concerns by the Hyde Park, Hancock, and Eastwoods Neighborhood Associations with Austin Energy's tree trimming and removal program.

**WHEREAS**, the final Recommendations of the Tree Task Force (May 8, 2006) contain several agreements by Austin Energy, which respond to the strong desire of Austin neighborhoods to preserve their trees to the maximum extent possible. These agreements include the sharing of

vegetation work plans with neighborhoods, in order to provide selective pruning options on a tree-by-tree basis and offer line redesign and relocation options. Austin Energy also agreed to investigate and implement less aggressive trimming strategies.

**WHEREAS**, in 2007 the City Council passed a resolution, which established the Climate Program and directed the City to significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 2020. Tree preservation is an important means of achieving carbon sequestration to reduce overall greenhouse gas emissions.

**WHEREAS**, when ordained in 2010 by the City Council, the Heritage Tree Ordinance increased the protection of Protected (19+ inches in diameter) and Heritage (24+ inches in diameter) trees, including prohibitions against excessive pruning.

**WHEREAS**, Austin Energy is planning to prune a group of live oak trees, including Protected and Heritage trees, located immediately west of Swearingen Drive underneath 138 kiloVolt (kV) transmission lines. These trees are prominent components of the only park serving the Gracywoods and adjacent neighborhoods of north Austin. In order to meet safety requirements, these live oak trees were severely pruned in 2004 and received maintenance pruning in 2009. However, the trees remain healthy and continue to sprout vigorously following pruning; **NOW**,

**THEREFORE**,

**BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF AUSTIN:**

In order to both maximize the health of these trees and minimize the amount of foliage that is removed, the City Manager shall direct Austin Energy to take following interim steps:

1. This year, only prune the sprout growth that is expected to enter, within the next two years, the critical clearance zone between the tree tips and the transmission lines at their lowest expected sag point. The critical clearance zone shall be carefully defined for each affected tree. Austin Energy shall perform no pruning on sprouts growing at an angular direction away from the transmission lines, while removing no more than 25% of the existing live canopy of any tree.
2. Beginning this year, remove less foliage on a two-year pruning cycle rather than more foliage on the current four-year cycle. Avoid cutting back to the main trunk, and instead make pruning cuts to direct future growth away from the critical clearance zone.
3. Provide a three-inch layer of mulch out to the drip line of each live oak tree.
4. Remove dead wood and stubs from each live oak tree.
5. Instruct the Parks and Recreation Department staff to avoid grass mowing in areas with exposed roots.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

The City Manager shall bring a proposal for a long-term solution to the City Council. The proposal shall include long-term options for raising the transmission lines, so that significantly less pruning is performed in future years on these live oaks. Firm and independent cost estimates are needed before alternative funding options can be explored. At a minimum, detailed cost assessments that also take into account changes in maintenance pruning methods and costs, shall include the following two scenarios:

1. Replace the two existing lattice structures on either side of Swearingen Drive with taller transmission support structures for the 138 kV transmission lines. This assessment shall include itemized costs, along with relevant logistical information such as the additional line clearance that would be achieved and the amount of lead time required once authorization is given.
2. Leave the two existing lattice structures in place, but add a third taller structure in between. This will likely be a lower-cost option. As with the first scenario, the assessment for this option should include detailed itemized costs, the additional line clearance obtained, and the necessary lead time for construction completion.

**ADOPTED:** Date

**ATTEST:**

City Clerk

