



Minutes

ROLLING MEADOWS ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE MEETING
01/03/2022 at 6:30 p.m. at the City Hall EOC

1. Call to Order

- a. by Alderman Sanoica at 6:30 PM.

2. Roll Call

- a. Present: Karen Gill, Maggie Trevor, Michael Koehler, Ald. Lara Sanoica, Joan Thomas, Alysse Dahlgren, Graham Strebler, Devon Jones, Melissa Bosnyak, Fred Vogt

3. Approval of the Minutes from December 6, 2022.

- a. 1st by Dr. Michael Koehler, 2nd by Maggie Trevor
- b. All in favor

4. New Business

- a. Tree Preservation Ordinance (Presented by Graham Strebler)
 - i. City staff presented materials from the [Committee of the Whole on May 17, 2022](#) which compared various communities' tree preservation ordinances.
 - ii. Question for the Committee: What is everyone's thought on how restrictive the ordinance should be?
 - iii. Committee Member Gill asked if residents are currently able to remove trees from the public parkway. Staff clarified that public parkways are not in-scope for the ordinance as residents may not remove trees from public parkways. The City already has an ordinance managing public trees, and therefore the ordinance at hand would cover trees on private property.
 - iv. Committee Member Thomas asked if the origin of the tree preservation ordinance was a residential property

that was under development, but the development did not move forward and the trees were cleared. Staff clarified that similar situations have happened on multiple occasions, and Aldermen have thus brought requests for a tree preservation ordinance for Council Approval.

- v. Staff requested additional input from the Rolling Meadows Environmental Committee on.
- vi. Fred Vogt provided historical context that in the past, the City had previously encouraged replacement of lower quality trees with high quality trees if removed, regardless of public or private property. Staff clarified that removal of trees from public spaces require fees for tree removals that need to be removed for various justified reasons.
- vii. Staff clarified that a draft ordinance would likely be used for commercial properties, where developers might need to provide a survey of the current plot and note which trees on the survey would be affected by a new development.
- viii. Committee Member Thomas said she preferred an ordinance that specified tree width, because the bigger the tree, the larger the cost.
- ix. Committee Member Ald. Sanoica presented a comparison of tree preservation ordinances in comparative communities, and demonstrated that some ordinances have specific triggers that would invoke a tree preservation ordinance.
- x. Staff compared Arlington Heights, Schaumburg, and Mount Prospect. Staff said that more restrictive ordinances, such as Park Ridge and Wilmette, require permits, the city in question reviews the permit, and then assess a fee. There is a priority for preserving high-quality or heritage trees, as reflected by higher priced fees.

- xi. Ald. Sanoica asked what the purpose of the fee, and whether the fee was meant to dissuade tree removal or if the fee was meant to fund future tree plantings. Staff stated that the purpose of the fee depends on the community. Ald. Sanoica noted that the Rolling Meadows Environmental Committee may want to review the efficacy of comparable community tree ordinances. For example, she continued, if the Committee identified a correlation between stricter ordinances and better tree canopy preservation, then the Committee may communicate this finding in its recommendation to the City Council.
- xii. Staff said that the direction requested from the Committee input or discussion on how small of a project should trigger the ordinance.
- xiii. Committee Member Trevor said that she would want to know how many lots within Rolling Meadows are eligible for large-scale developers. If there are not very many lots that could be developed, she continued, then the tree preservation ordinance may not be applicable. However, single-family residences are abundant in the community. Trevor suggested that, while tree preservation is a good goal, the ordinance should also incentivize single-family residences to care for the property and remove invasive species, such as buckthorn. Trevor did not want any resident to be concerned that they would be fined while maintaining their property.
- xiv. Staff said that the draft ordinance would likely not cover any trees with growth widths less than six inches, which would allow residents to continue general upkeep without triggering the need for a permit and would exclude invasive species.
- xv. Committee Member Trevor asked what would happen if a resident wanted to remove a tree for safety reasons?

- xvi. Staff explained that any judgement on compliance with the ordinance would require staff evaluation, and safety needs to be qualified within the ordinance. A competent person needs to make a determination that a tree needs to be removed, in which case the City should not penalize a homeowner. Contrastingly, a developer may want to remove a tree regardless of safety considerations.
- xvii. Committee Member Trevor reiterated that she was concerned a homeowner would interpret a tree preservation ordinance as a new requirement to pay a \$60 permit fee to remove a three-inch tree growing against their foundation. Staff agreed that communication of any ordinance to be adopted would fall on staff to ensure that residents understood the ordinance requirements. Staff suggested that providing a higher number of trees may better communicate the intent of the ordinance and limit city involvement to larger-scale removals, such as the removal of three or more trees on a single residential lot. As far as the fee schedule, Staff clarified that this would need to be reviewed in accordance with other fee schedules in the City Code.
- xviii. Committee Member Dr. Koehler noted that preserving tree canopy is part of the proposed draft Sustainability Plan for the City of Rolling Meadows, and that Staff should consider consulting the Plan to inform the requirements of a tree preservation ordinance trigger. Specifically, the ordinance should go beyond the width of the tree, since certain trees grow at different rates, and therefore a six-inch width may take much longer to achieve, and therefore each tree should have its own value. Separately, instead of focusing the ordinance on homeowners, the ordinance and any associated permitting may be better suited for arborists and professional landscapers that are hired by homeowners,

as arborists will be able to provide solutions to homeowners directly that include tree trimming rather than tree removal and therefore may not require city staff to conduct the on-site review or inspection. Lastly, Dr. Koehler said that certain trees are valuable, and not just as mulch or firewood, but as planks. He explained that some trees can be more than \$10,000, depending on thickness. Therefore, the ordinance, if directed at private professional landscapers or arborists, should also include opportunities and incentives to connect the landscapers with other companies or entities that would produce up-scale materials for construction or other uses.

- xix. Committee Member Gill said that any ordinance should clarify and enumerate differences between native and invasive tree species, and provide weight to the type of tree and its longevity. She also suggested that private residences should be required to maintain a certain percentage of trees on residential properties.
- xx. Alysse Dahlgren commented that she was interested in the quality of the tree, and agreed that trees should be taken down if they pose a safety concern.
- xxi. Devon Jones commented that he wanted the Committee to determine whether the purpose of any fees related to the ordinance was to deter tree removal or fund tree replacement. Staff that our goal is to achieve preservation and canopy replacement over time.
- xxii. Committee Member Thomas stated that she prefers a more restrictive ordinance, but she understands that the ordinance will need to balance staff time and effort.
- xxiii. Fred Vogt suggested having a secondary opinion for qualified high-quality tree classification and to plan for a process to manage disagreements.

- xxiv. Devon Jones asked what would determine the value of each tree? Staff clarified that a number of factors would determine value, including value and tree type.

5. Old Business

- a. CBBEL Presentation on Kennedy Pond – postponed to the February 7, 2023 Rolling Meadows Environmental Committee Meeting
- b. Sue Walton Recognition of Service – Fred Vogt
 - i. Graham is in discussions with the Rolling Meadows Park District to secure a sign and bench
- c. Event Calendar
 - i. Ald. Sanoica instructed the committee to review the events committee and e-mail any changes to City Staff
- d. Styrofoam Recycling
 - i. This presentation is scheduled for the February 7, 2023 RMEC meeting.
- e. Earth Day Rain Garden
 - i. City Staff reported that the April Earth Day site is on-schedule.
- f. Chicago Bears and Impacts
 - i. This item will be pushed after the Sustainability Plan.
- g. Sustainability Plan
 - i. Ald. Sanoica shared the completed Greenest Region Compact Framework Assessment, which was slotted for completion by December 31, 2022 per City Council Resolution completed earlier this year.
 - ii. Dr. Koehler presented a draft Sustainability Plan and requested that all committee members present provide feedback directly to him so that he can incorporate the feedback into the plan. He asked what our timeline is for implementation or adoption of a Sustainability Plan.
 - iii. Ald. Sanoica clarified that the new Assistant City Manager will become the staff representative, and once the new staff member joined the organization, a better adoption schedule will be determined.

6. Upcoming Events

- a. Seed Planting at Rolling Meadows High School on 1/24/2023

7. Upcoming Meeting Dates

- a. February 7, 2023 is the next scheduled monthly meeting.

8. Items not on the Agenda:

- a. Fred Vogt requested that we include an update on the Duck Race Fundraiser on the February 7, 2023 agenda.

9. Adjournment at 7:20PM

- a. First by Dr. Koehler
- b. Seconded by Joan Thomas