

Tree Board

Date: September 11, 2018

Time: 11:00 am – 12:00 pm

Headwaters meeting room at Currents

600 Cregg Ln., Missoula, MT 59801

Agenda

Public Comment on non-agenda items

Action Items:

Appeal of Tree Removal at 601 E Beckwith

Option 1 Motion: I move the Missoula Tree Board deny the appeal of John Dunkum and uphold the City Forester's plan to remove and replace two aging Norway maple trees in the Arthur Street boulevard abutting 601 E. Beckwith.

Option 2 Motion: I move the Missoula Tree Board grant the appeal of John Dunkum and retain the two aging Norway maple trees in the Arthur Street boulevard abutting 601 E. Beckwith.

John E. Dunkum
601 E. Beckwith
Missoula, MT 59801-4422

July 24, 2018

Marie Anderson
Urban Forestry Specialist 1
Missoula Parks and Recreation Department
Parks Operations – Urban Forestry
100 Hickory St.
Missoula, MT 59801

Dear Marie,

I am writing to appeal – and oppose – the City of Missoula’s decision to chop down the two Norway maple trees on the public right-of-way adjacent to my home at 601 E. Beckwith Avenue. According to your letter of July 12th, a certified arborist/assessor has deemed them worthy of removal due to the trees’ poor condition and that they pose an “unacceptable level of risk to the public right-of-way and surrounding properties.”

As regards the two maples’ condition, the middle-aged trees are obviously sporting some dead branches and are spreading in an awkward way due to about 20 years of aggressive pruning since the unfortunate placement of a broadband cable beneath the power lines along Arthur Avenue. The condition in question therefore, is that they are stunted and a little strange-looking, but still familiar, beautiful, and useful old friends. I am not an arborist, and while their lives may be as stunted as their shape as result of the Asplundh treatment every 3 years or so, it seems to me the two trees should be allowed to live out the rest of their mostly natural lives.

“An unacceptable level of risk” sounds scary and incontrovertible once somebody asserts it. My home, at the corner of the busy intersection of Beckwith and Arthur, is the only surrounding property, and I know with absolute certainty that the trees do not threaten me in any way. As for the public right-of-way, dead – or living – branches can conceivably fall onto the street or sidewalk any time, but by this measure all the trees in Missoula are a menace. There are a number of trees in my neighborhood that, through neglect, are in much worse shape than “my” trees, but which I suspect are being spared the city’s ax. If you remove these two maples, I will have a less obstructed view of the rental home across Arthur where tree and lawn maintenance are not priorities, and where I have observed willow trees, vines, grass, and boulevard trees die preventable deaths over the last few years.

I suspect in addition to aesthetic and safety concerns, a third, unstated motivation is at work here, and that perhaps the Norway maples are an undesirable species of tree, one that undermines in some way the overall health of our urban forest. I can speak to the fact that the two trees’ own beauty and maybe health have been diminished, but apart from my own observation of massive tree removal projects on campus and on the courthouse lawn for example, am ignorant of the relative benefits of certain specimens over others.

In urging you to spare these two trees, I can be accused of ignorance and selfishness, of failing to see the big picture. But the city often obscures, or misstates the big picture, and then only after the fact. If an Asplundh worker hadn't approached me while I was outside working in my yard the other day, I wouldn't have known your intentions until I heard the sound of chainsaws. I am grateful for your letter and the chance to appeal, but this sort of heavy-handedness reminds of the (now abandoned) practice of demolishing and re-building city sidewalks at the expense of the adjacent homeowner. Or of the demolition of the Mercantile building, whose presumed historical protections were voided by the assertion that it too was blighted, in "poor condition and an unacceptable risk..." Finally, my mother, who lived in this home since it was built in 1927, passed in May of this year at the age of 93. She witnessed the planting of these trees, as well as the transformation of Arthur from side street to arterial, and would have been sad to see that the two Norway maples weren't allowed to live out their lives. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. E. Dunkum". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

John E. Dunkum

Missoula Parks and Recreation Tree Board Referral

Citizen or Organization Name: City Forester

Main Contact: Chris Boza

Address 100 Hickory

Phone: 552-6270

E-mail: cboza@ci.missoula.mt.us

Referral to: **Missoula Parks and Recreation Tree Board**

Requested date for Board consideration: September 11, 2018

Item: Appeal of Tree Removal at 601 E. Beckwith

John Dunkum of 601 E. Beckwith is appealing the decision of the city forester's plan to remove and replace two aging Norway maples in the Arthur Street boulevard abutting 601 E. Beckwith.

Motions/Action requested:

Option 1 Motion: I move the Missoula Tree Board deny the appeal of John Dunkum and uphold the City Forester's plan to remove and replace two aging Norway maple trees in the Arthur Street boulevard abutting 601 E. Beckwith.

Option 2 Motion: I move the Missoula Tree Board grant the appeal of John Dunkum and retain the two aging Norway maple trees in the Arthur Street boulevard abutting 601 E. Beckwith.

Brief Statement regarding the action you want taken by the Tree Board.

There are four Norway maples in the Arthur Street boulevard abutting 601 E. Beckwith. All four trees are under NWE distribution lines and are topped regularly for line clearance. The two trees proposed for removal are located closest to E. Beckwith.

Staff reviewed these trees multiple times and determined the trees to be in need of removal and replacement. What remains of the canopies is approximately 40 to 50 percent dead. The structure of the trees does not allow for pruning to ANSI A300 Standards.

The city is partnering with NWE to gradually remove and replace older trees under distribution lines. The cost is split on a 75-25 basis, with NWE absorbing the greatest portion of the cost.

Staff Recommendation:

Conduct an appeal hearing as defined in Section 12.32.180 of the Missoula Municipal Code. Absent any information to the contrary, staff recommends the the Missoula Tree Board deny the appeal of John Dunkum and uphold the City Forester's plan to remove and replace two aging Norway maple trees in the Arthur Street boulevard abutting 601 E. Beckwith.

Staff Recommended Motion:

I move the Missoula Tree Board deny the appeal of John Dunkum and uphold the City Forester's plan to remove and replace two aging Norway maple trees in the Arthur Street boulevard abutting 601 E. Beckwith.

Staff Report:



Memorandum

Date: September 6, 2018

To: Tree Board

From: Chris Boza, Urban Forester

CC: Donna Gaukler, Director
Marie Anderson, Urban Forestry Specialist 1
Betsy Willett, Administrative Manager – Operations

Re: John Dunkum 601 E. Beckwith – Appeal

Background

The Urban Forestry Masterplan, adopted in 2015, identifies approximately twenty percent of public right-of-way trees as having utility conflicts. Many of those trees are now in poor to very poor condition due to years of clearance pruning activities and would require city funded removal. While industry best management practices have since evolved, the trees have been left with numerous structural defects, including deadwood and decay.

Staff marked two Norway maples in the Arthur Street boulevard abutting 601 E. Beckwith for removal. These trees are under the Northwestern Energy (NWE) primary distribution lines located on the east side of Arthur Street.

Discussion

The two trees under appeal are in poor condition. Both trees are repeatedly pruned by NWE contractors for line clearance. Both trees have significant deadwood within the canopy. Photographs of the trees are shown below.

The plan is to remove the trees this year and replant next Spring. Under our agreement with NWE, NWE removes the tree and the city grinds the stump. NWE pays for the replacement tree and the city plants the tree. Class I trees, maturing at less than 30' in height, will be planted at this location.



Figure 1 North tree



Figure 2 South tree



Figure 3 North tree canopy



Figure 4 South tree canopy

Recommendation

Conduct an appeal hearing as defined in Section 12.32.180 of the Missoula Municipal Code. Absent any information to the contrary, staff recommends the the Missoula Tree Board deny the appeal of John Dunkum and uphold the City Forester's plan to remove and replace two aging Norway maple trees in the Arthur Street boulevard abutting 601 E. Beckwith.

Chris Boza
City Forester