

CONSERVATION COMMITTEE REPORT

February 10, 2010

09:00–10:00 am

140 West Pine Street

Members Present: Marilyn Marler (chair), Pam Walzer, Dave Strohmaier, Bob Jaffe, Dick Haines, Renee Mitchell, Ed Childers, Jon Wilkins, Stacy Rye, Lyn Hellegaard, and Roy Houseman

Members Absent:

Others Present: Ben Carson

I. ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS

A. Approve minutes.

Minutes of February 3, 2010 were approved as submitted.

II. FINAL CONSIDERATION AGENDA ITEMS

III. CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS –

IV. REGULAR AGENDA ITEMS

- V. Approve and authorize the Mayor to sign the agreement with Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) in an amount not to exceed \$37,799.60 ([memo](#)).—Regular Agenda (Ben Carson) (Referred to committee: 02/08/10)

Motion: The Committee recommends Council approve and authorize the Mayor to sign the agreement with Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) in an amount not to exceed \$37,799.60.

The City of Missoula was recently awarded an Urban Forestry Program Development Grant through the Montana DNRC for \$14,000. The two projects proposed for the grant will help to lay a sound foundation for future enhancement of Missoula, urban forestry program. The grant will be used with matching city in kind and \$5,000 out of purchased service account to facilitate the completion of the grant.

The two major projects proposed include the purchase of a GIS based tree inventory software. The software will help track the condition of trees in Missoula, in neighborhoods, service requests, tree species, and work orders. This will be a good asset management tool for the urban forester.

The funds will be reallocated out of the current forestry budget, with most of the funding coming from in kind match in salaries. There will not be a request in the next fiscal year for any additional funding as the grant execution period ends on June 15, 2010. The software is compatible with GIS and will not become obsolete as other program.

The proposed grant allows for data conversion from the 2003 tree inventory to be put into the new software. Staff will use PDA, or tablet PC's in the field to assess the physical tree and put the data directly into the system. Once there has been a full tree inventory completed it will be a baseline to be compare how well the urban forest is doing over the next years. As part of the grant process a new tree task force will be established as an advisory board.

Stacy Rye suggested having a council person on the new Tree task force.

Roy – this is a good opportunity to get an inventory and moving toward a better pruning cycle. Using this grant is a creative way to get a new inventory without using more general funds. Roy moved to recommend approval of the agreement with DNRC.

Bob – I would recommend the use of additional interns to help shorten the time of inventory.

Marilyn – I agree and there is an interest in a citizen group working on this project.

Ed – Missoula has a huge asset in its trees and it would be helpful to increase funding maybe through a parks maintenance district as funding is always a problem. Grants are a good tool to use to update the existing inventory.

Marilyn – the data from the 2003 inventory is still valuable, and will be used.

Jon – does it take away time from other tree projects?

Ben –time from other projects will be deferred slightly with staff time prioritized and reallocated. They will do data collection during this fiscal year.

Renee – we need to have actual work, instead of what we are doing, our parks are not taken care.

Pam – I appreciate Ben's work on this and if we want to give more money to the Urban Forestry program that would be terrific. However we don't know the extent of the problem and this will be a starting point. I would imagine that the inventory will be just a part of staff's normal work day. It is important to know the state of our trees and this gives us tools to convince the public to share in the cost of the trees as well as the benefits.

Lynn – I believe this is needed but does it have to happen now?

Marilyn – I would support the project as it uses incoming grant money, some staff time and using only limited general fund dollars. It will also be a good catalyst for getting a tree board.

Ben – the new Tree Task Force will be a separate entity from the current tree board. The Task Force will be a advisory group comprised of citizens and professional members of the community, elected officials, all yet to be determined. They will help determine how to best accomplish the goals of the division. The outside vision is valuable.

The vote on the motion was taken with Jon Wilkins, Lyn Hellegaard abstaining and Rene Mitchell voting against the motion to recommend approval of the agreement with the DNRC.

The committee also discussed how Missoula's urban forest compares to other cities in Montana. Bozeman which has a tree maintenance district has a 12-15 year pruning cycle. Ben talked about a goal for Missoula would be to have a 7 year pruning cycle and a stocking density of 90%. Stocking density is looking at all the available planting spaces, and keep at least 90% of trees in those spaces. Missoula has a monolithic tree inventory and it need diversification to keep the forest healthy.

Jon – people won't water the trees and this is not enforced, how can we have more enforcement by you?

Ben – enforcement of ordinances is an issue but we would need an officer who can issue citations to provide the enforcement which would be a full time job.

VI. NON-AGENDA ITEMS

VII. HELD AND ONGOING AGENDA ITEMS - PER COMMITTEE CHAIR – Marilyn Marler

- A.** Support for City employee cash for Bus Commuters Program ([memo](#)).—Regular Agenda (Ben Schmidt and Nancy Wilson) (Referred to committee: 08/24/09)
- B.** Budget update on aquatics ([memo](#)).—Regular Agenda (Lyn Hellegaard) (Referred to committee: 12/21/09)

ADJOURNMENT - The meeting adjourned at 10:00 am.