

MURRAY CITY POWER
Shade Tree & Beautification Commission
Murray City, Utah
August 6, 2024

Minutes of the Murray City Power Shade Tree & Beautification Commission meeting held on August 6, 2024, at Murray City Power located at 153 West 4800 South, Murray, Utah.

Shade Tree & Beautification Commission

Jann Cox, District #2

Marshall Smith, District #4

Alex Motro, District #5

Department Staff

Matt Erkelens, Forestry Supervisor

Bruce Holyoak, Park Superintendent

Marshall called the meeting to order at 9:08 am. Marshall asked if there were any changes or corrections to the March minutes. There were none; he made a motion to approve. Alex seconded the motion. All approved.

Marshall then asked if there were any changes or corrections to the July minutes. There were none. Jann made a motion to approve, and Alex seconded it. The minutes were approved.

Marshall turned the time over to Matt. Matt introduced the Commission to Bruce Holyoak, Parks superintendent and then introduced the Commission.

Beautification Awards

Matt asked if everyone was able to notify the winners. He told them that the winners would receive a letter next week and that the winners would be asked to RSVP to the Power Department office. On September 10th @ 6:30 pm the winners will be honored at the Murray City Council Meeting. Matt asked that each Commission member announce the property owners from their districts. He will send a list of winners and who will be announcing them at the meeting.

Matt let them know he was working on a PowerPoint presentation and that he would send it to the Commission for them to look over. Plaques will also be made and presented. Matt felt like the Commission chose some really great winners.

This is the 2nd year of the Water Wise Living Park Strip award. This award is a great way to let other people see how a park strip should be converted to a water wise living oasis. Park strips should have drought tolerant plants with mulch around the trees and not just be solid rocks.

This year the judging took place later than in the past. Therefore, the yards were not in bloom and some of the grass was scorched. As a result, the photos for the presentation weren't as good as Matt would have liked. He would like to see the judging be done earlier next year.

The Commission finalized where to stand, that Marshall would introduce, and that Matt would run the PowerPoint. Matt told them that the entire presentation would take approx. 15 minutes. For the Citywide Award Winner, the mayor will present and give the plaque.

New Business

Matt talked about the Street Tree Planting list for 2025.

Matt would like to get a list compiled of approved street trees as well as a list of those that are NOT approved (ie: cottonwood, Siberian Elm, Russian Olive, evergreen trees, fruit bearing trees).

Marshall thought it would be great to go to nurseries, look at the trees, and ask questions. He also volunteered to go the extension office and get a tree Utah book.

Marshall asked if someone went around to enforce the kinds of trees in park strips. Matt said that there isn't an official ordinance regarding street trees, so there is nothing to enforce.

Marshall noted that some of the undesirable street trees can cause drainage, gutter, and street cleaning problems. He also said that pinecones and fruit can be a tripping hazard.

Matt said that these issues are a great segway into City Ordinances.

City Ordinances Revision

Matt would like to see a revision of city ordinances. It's been a while since the ordinances that affect street trees have been revisited.

Currently, there aren't any ordinances regarding private trees that encroach onto sidewalks and streets. Without an ordinance, the city doesn't have power of enforcement. Currently, when the garbage trucks go through, it hits those tree limbs and then the Forestry Division has to go and pick them up. Property owners should be held responsible for their trees and for trimming their trees. This year has been one of the worst for calls about private trees growing into the roadway.

Matt said that the ordinance should define that area which is approximately 8' above the sidewalk and 14' above the street. Alex questioned how tall the garbage trucks are. (Garbage trucks often hit trees on the roads). Matt said around 13' 5" so it would be important to have 14' clearance over the center of the road. Marshall said that when the garbage trucks pull over to the curb it's likely not enough room. Matt said that going any higher than 8' above the sidewalk would just decimate most street trees.

Alex asked if the ordinance could read something like 14' from 5' away from the curb. That is something to consider when working on ordinances. The Commission said they would have to put some measurements together.

Marshall wondered if Ace Disposal had some parameters that would be important to them because they would be affected. Matt also said the street sweepers are affected.

Matt showed the Commission how to access the City Ordinances via the City Website. He told them how to search for forestry ordinances. They read a few of the ordinances.

Matt would like to see some of the ordinances changed and would like to see “topping trees” removed from the wording. He also felt it might not be a bad idea to have companies apply for permits to work on city trees (including park strip trees). A lot of municipalities require permits (including requiring companies have certifications before being approved for a permit). He has seen private tree companies come in and cut down city owned trees.

Marshall asked if the permit would cost money. Matt didn’t feel that it was necessary. The companies could apply for a permit without a fee.

Jann wanted to clarify that if a tree is dead, should the homeowner contact the Forestry Division to remove the tree. Matt said, “yes”, because the Forestry Division needs to update their tree inventory list.

Marshall thought some of the language could be made clear that owners are responsible for trees on their private property.

The Forestry Division is a small division whose responsibility is to maintenance trees in the park strip and trees on Murray City property. Clearing private trees from sidewalks and streets takes time from their other duties, including the important task of clearing trees from the power line so that the power is uninterrupted.

Matt spoke with code enforcement, and they told him that South Salt Lake has a clear ordinance for private property trees and for street trees. If there is an infringement, the city can write out warnings, tickets, and fines. This is a public safety issue.

Matt noted that Provo City Power has a really nice forestry program. He feels like the Commission could adopt some of their policies or look at them for some ideas.

Matt told the Commission that in St. George, their Shade Tree Commission requires that any pruning or removal of street trees must be approved by the Commission.

Alex asked if the trees on the park strip were property of the city. Matt told him that park strip trees and landscaping is city property regardless of who purchases the trees. Alex noted that tree trimming is expensive, and it would be nice to have help with trimming the trees. He thought anything over 10’ high would be dangerous for the homeowner to be responsible for. Trees on private property would be the responsibility of the homeowner regardless of height. **The Forestry Division currently offers free tree trimming and removal for all street trees in the city.**

Marshall felt that homeowners should be made aware that anything planted in the park strip is city property.

Alex asked what the homeowner’s responsibility is regarding maintaining the park strip. Matt wasn’t aware of anything within city code that gave the homeowner’s direction in that area. He felt that it would include watering the lawn, pulling weeds, or watering plants in the park strip.

Matt said that if homeowners want to plant a tree in the park strip, they should really have a permit, which would ensure they are following proper guidelines.

Jann noted that when they get a permit, it would be important to provide them with the guidelines so they would know what to do.

Matt said that sometimes homeowners request that their street trees be removed because the trees are messy, or they want to do something different. Those aren't good reasons for a good shade tree to be removed. It's another issue if the tree is dying or has disease.

Marshall suggested having private companies go through a bid process, maybe have 3 city approved companies that might be willing to give homeowners a reduced rate.

Marshall asked who is responsible when street trees grow and lift the sidewalk. Matt explained that the Streets Division is responsible and has been aggressive in fixing those issues.

Marshall thought it might be good to partner with Tree Utah and they could help create a guide for the city. Matt thinks that Tree Utah already has guides that could be used.

Marshall indicated it would be a good idea to include disease control for the health of trees in the neighborhood. Matt noted that there is a beetle that has been attacking evergreen trees and that this has affected some trees in the city parks. The beetle jumps from tree to tree. In fact, this beetle has caused about a dozen city park and cemetery trees to die.

Bruce reported that they have now treated about 120 trees and that they are looking better.

Matt knows that this is a very big project. He feels like the ordinances need to be revised to be more understandable for the city and for property owners. This would need to be worked on and approved by the City Council.

Alex asked what the assignment looks like and what Matt would like to have from them by the next meeting. Matt said that the Commission would keep working on the project over the next 6 months. He would like to:

- Establish a clear-cut height restrictions for trees over roads and sidewalks.
- Require permits to remove street trees.
- Differentiate what the Forestry Division will do for private trees.
- Possible warning from Code Enforcement when trees are growing into the right of ways. (Maybe a 6-month time period to comply and then add penalties or fines.)
- List of city approved tree companies.

Assignment:

- Check other cities tree ordinances. Bring them and be prepared to discuss them.

Street Tree Sales

Matt explained that on February 1st of each year the Power Department sells street trees. (In 2025 it will be on February 3rd because February 1st is a Saturday.) Last year trees sold for \$125

each and there was a limit of 80 trees (the number of trees has varied over the years). Matt noted that the city subsidizes the price of the trees.

One of the reasons there is a fee for the trees is because people tend to water and care for the trees more if they have paid for them.

Marshall asked why 80 trees. Matt told him it was because the Forestry Division has other duties, such as trimming trees from the power lines, which takes their time. Although citizens can currently plant their own trees in the park strip, the Forestry Division often finds that the trees are not deep enough or that they are planted too close to the corner, or that they are too near utilities. This is something that a city ordinance could address.

Marshall asked if HOAs qualify to purchase trees. Matt told the Commission that only residents are allowed to purchase the trees. HOAs and businesses don't qualify.

Alex asked what size the trees are. Matt told them that the trees are 1 ½" to 2" caliber (He prefers the 2" if he can get it). The trees are between 6' and 10' tall, depending on the species. They used to plant ball and burlap trees; however, they found the smaller trees were not only easier to plant but establish faster.

There was a question as to whether there is a limit for the street trees. Matt told the Commission that homeowners can purchase as many trees as they need for their park strip. However, most park strips can only hold a few trees.

Matt told them that the tree planting program is very popular and that they often sell out in 3 hours. It is on a first come, first served basis.

Currently, orders are taken via phone. The Commission wondered why the orders aren't taken via computer, the same way the Park Center does when signing up for classes.

Matt said that it's possible IT could be involved to make that happen.

Marshall told the Commission that the Salt Lake Tribune published the following article: <https://www.sltrib.com/news/2024/07/31/heat-salt-lake-city-afternoon/>

In the article it mentions how Salt Lake City wants to plant more trees as a part of mitigating heat islands. Marshall reiterated how important trees are to cool the environment.

Matt will send the Commission members the list of last year's trees that were for sale (each year the tree species are subject to change). He said that they usually sell 2 smaller growing trees and 2 medium (35'-40') growing trees.

Proposed Shade Tree and Beautification Schedule 2024

Matt handed out the proposed schedule for 2024.

There was discussion about when to judge the yards for the beautification awards. The Commission decided to table the discussion until the next meeting.

The Commission will make changes, if needed, and approve the schedule at the October meeting.

Arbor Day

Matt would like to choose the theme for the Arbor Day Poster Contest at the next meeting.

Marshall asked who informs the schools about the poster contest. He was told that MCP front office does that.

Alex would like to see the poster paper be made from recycled paper. The Commission felt the children needed to know that paper is made from trees.

Jann thinks that the recycled paper could tie into the theme for the contest.

A few theme ideas were:

- What are trees used for?
- How do trees help us?

With no further business to come before the Shade Tree & Beautification Commission, Marshall adjourned the meeting at 10:29 am. Minutes recorded and transcribed by Barbara Ishino.

The Commission will attend and present at the Murray City Council meeting on Tuesday, September 10th at 6:30 pm. They will be presenting the 2024 Jim and Jean Hendrickson Beautification Awards.

The next regularly scheduled Shade Tree & Beautification Commission meeting will be held Tuesday, October 1st at 9:00 am at the Murray City Power Office. **The date has been changed to Tuesday, October 8th.**

The tentative agenda for the October meeting will be:

- When will the nominations be due for the 2025 Jim and Jean Hendrickson Beautification Awards?
- When will the judging be done for the beautification awards?
- Choose a theme for the 2025 Arbor Day Poster Contest.
- Finalize the Shade Tree and Beautification 2025 meeting schedule.
- Plan the Annual Tree Lighting Ceremony at City Hall, scheduled for Saturday, December 7th at 6:00 pm at Murray City Hall.