

**To:** City Commission  
**From:** Tree Board  
**Date:** December 16, 2021



## City Tree Board 2021 Annual Report

Dear Commissioners,

It has been an active year for the Tree Board. During the early part of 2021 we met over Zoom, then moved to in-person meetings at the gazebo in Sacajawea Park for the warmer months. The main happenings during the year include:

- **Emerald ash borer plan:** Anticipating that this non-native pest may arrive in Livingston at any time and have a potentially devastating impact on Livingston's public trees, in March we advised that you assign to the City Manager the task of creating an EAB plan. Our recommendation included a report outlining best science for pesticide treatment, cost scenarios for treatment and removal of trees, and more.
- **Volunteers available for pruning:** Many of the recently planted trees in Livingston's parks are in need of formative pruning, which can prevent trees from developing problematic structure that requires more invasive and expensive pruning later in life. After learning that participants in MSU Extension's Master Gardener class are trained in this practice and are available to earn volunteer hours, we recommended that Public Works partner with Extension for mutual benefit.
- **Updated boulevard list and planting guide:** Per the Tree Board responsibility defined in Livingston's tree ordinance, we updated the list of trees suitable for boulevard planting. In an effort to support property owners in planting boulevard trees, we created a Livingston Tree Planting Guide with information about the approved species/cultivars as well as best planting practices. We recommended these to the City in April, along with suggested text for the City Trees webpage that is outdated and incomplete.
- **Budget recommendation FY 2021:** In April we recommended that the Commission request an additional \$10,000, above the \$13,000 from the previous year, for updating the tree inventory, part-time seasonal watering, pruning of hazard trees, and preemptive replacement of boulevard ash trees.
- **Arbor Day:** In a volunteer capacity our board helped coordinate an Arbor Day celebration on April 30 for the planting of three trees in Mars Park. Students from the Educatio School attended and learned about tree planting from former board member Andy Mitchell. An Arbor Day event is required each year for renewing Livingston's Tree City USA status, which helps Livingston qualify for expanded grant funding.
- **New board members:** We welcomed new members Maureen Lighthiser in January and Sarah Boyle in November. Andy Mitchell resigned in July.
- **Strategic plan:** During the course of several meetings we discussed our board's priorities and outlined them in a strategic plan that we approved in October to guide our activities over the next five years.

- **Budget recommendation and board priorities for FY 2022:** In December we expressed our top priorities for the coming budget cycle. Broadly speaking, these are: 1) Supporting new tree establishment in boulevards; 2) Developing an updated tree management plan in support of tree district(s); and 3) Including trees in long-term landscape planning for Park Street/Highway 89.

In 2022, we look forward to more opportunities to support the City of Livingston in maintaining and enhancing the many benefits provided by our public trees in boulevards and parks. Amid uncertain and trying times, investing in our public trees is a tangible act of hope and a gift to future generations.

As always the Tree Board welcomes your questions, ideas and guidance for how we can best serve the Commission and our community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Marshall Swearingen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Marshall" being more prominent than the last name "Swearingen".

Marshall Swearingen, Chair