

City of Livingston, Tree Board Agenda

A regular meeting of the City Tree Board has been scheduled for Thursday, December 16, 2021 at Noon. This meeting will be held over Zoom. All are welcome to attend.

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81068669122?pwd=K0loOUlOak9mNzk1Si9jYUxPOGFQUt09>

Meeting ID: 810 6866 9122

Passcode: 071677

- **Approval of Minutes**
- **Old Business**
 - Updated budget recommendation and priorities for 2022.
 - Tree City USA renewal application, due by end of 2021.
- **New Business**
 - Annual report to Commission.
 - Recommend 2022 Arbor Day proclamation (for January Commission agenda).
- **Public Comments**
- **Board Comments**



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

Tree Board Priorities and FY 2022 Budget Recommendation

Dear Commissioners,

As the City of Livingston begins formulating its FY 2022 budget, we would like to express our board's priorities for supporting Livingston's public trees, which provide numerous benefits to our community. For context, we are also including the strategic plan our board adopted in October to guide our discussions and recommendations.

Priority #1: Support new tree establishment in boulevards.

Public boulevard trees in many parts of Livingston are dominated by an aging population of ash trees that are susceptible to emerald ash borer and early mortality due to lack of maintenance. According to the tree inventory conducted in 2014, there are more than 700 vacant planting sites in boulevards. While the City is putting considerable grant-funded effort into replacing ash trees, we believe it would be beneficial to support property owners in planting and caring for new boulevard trees. Many cities in Montana, including small towns like Dillon, offer cost-share programs and outreach materials that incentivize tree planting and help ensure that young trees survive. Currently the City provides no such advertised support for property owners.

This directly relates to Growth Policy Strategy 4.1.2.4: Consider setting goals and establishing programs to increase tree cover as a way to reduce the heat island effect and mitigate high temperatures exacerbated by climate change.

For the coming budget cycle, we recommend piloting a boulevard planting program and setting an annual goal of planting, say, 20 new trees. We are aware of multiple community partners who are interested in supporting new tree planting with donations and/or volunteer labor, which could keep costs low. This could also be funded by a Program Development grant from Montana DNRC.

With past boulevard tree replacement efforts we have observed a significant level of mortality among new trees, likely due to lack of watering by property owners. With any major new public tree planting we recommend funding a part-time seasonal watering position and/or educational materials for property owners to protect the significant investment in new trees.

Priority #2: Develop updated tree management plan in support of tree district(s).

The inventory of Livingston's public trees hasn't been updated since it was conducted by a consultant in 2014. The inventory supported the consultant's 2015 tree management plan, which specifically stated that it was providing guidance for a 5-year period that has now expired. We believe the tree inventory and management plan should be updated. With the recent revision of the tree ordinance clarifying that property owners are responsible for maintaining boulevard trees, a

new management plan could outline specific cost scenarios for municipal tree management that could be funded with one or more tree maintenance districts. This would give property owners the option of paying for the City to assume responsibility for boulevard trees. For many or most homeowners this could mean paying a smaller amount annually for "tree insurance" rather than an occasional much larger expense for hazardous tree pruning or removal.

This supports Growth Policy Objective 4.3.5: Support and improve the health and diversity of trees and other flora throughout Livingston; and more specifically Strategy 4.3.5.1: Ensure trees on City lands are well maintained and healthy.

We would like to see a new tree management plan consider and integrate our board's recommendation earlier this year to create a plan for emerald ash borer. This could be funded in part by a Program Development grant or similar funding from Montana DNRC.

Priority #3: Plantings along Park Street/Highway 89.

The City of Livingston is bisected by Park Street, which runs concurrently with Montana Highway 89. The property along this route is owned and managed by a variety of stakeholders, including Montana Department of Transportation, Montana Rail Link, multiple business owners, and the City of Livingston.

As our main thoroughfare, Park Street is heavily travelled by commercial and private vehicle traffic. It is also used for bike and pedestrian travel, although these uses are inhibited by a lack of infrastructure. The increased traffic is due to overall growth in our local population, sprawl, increased reliance on vehicles for transportation, and increased tourism.

Park Street is a street that is often congested, noisy, and windblown. A lack of sidewalks, curbs or plantings makes it hard to identify the edge of the roadway. Areas that could be landscaped are neglected, especially the railroad side of the highway.

A comprehensive landscape plan for this route could identify potential pockets for landscaping and hardscaping to improve safety, slow traffic, reduce noise and dust, and improve routes for pedestrians and bicycles, including routes for schools. This could also beautify and improve access into the downtown area for community members and visitors. We recognize this project is more complex to implement and may be difficult to incorporate as a budget item. Because this project is broader in scope, and will require collaboration, organization and commitment of funds in order to become a reality, we raise it now so initial planning can begin.

This relates to Growth Policy Objective 2.1.1: Establish community gateways to indicate entrances into Livingston and celebrate its character; also Strategy 4.3.5.3: Consider adding requirements for trees into Gateway overlay zoning.

As always, we welcome your questions, suggestions or other feedback so that we can best support your efforts. Thank you for the opportunity to serve Livingston.

Sincerely,
Sarah Boyle
Laurel Desnick
Lisa Harreld
Maureen Lighthiser
Thomas Shands
Marshall Swearingen - Chair

Livingston Tree Board

Strategic Plan for 2021-2026

Revised and approved by board 10/21/2021.

Mission

The purpose of the Livingston Tree Board is to advise the City Commission on matters related to trees within the city. We advocate on behalf of the public for policies, funding, outreach and partnerships that promote, protect and enhance trees for public benefit.

Vision

We envision a biologically diverse, healthy tree landscape that provides beauty, reduces the urban heat island effect, promotes walkability, reduces pollution and energy costs, slows traffic and improves water quality.

Priorities (2-year goals)

Priority #1: Recommend programs, outreach and funding for establishing new trees in the 700+ vacant boulevard planting sites identified in the 2014 tree inventory.

Priority #2: Develop recommendation for tree planting at city entrances and along Park Street.

Priority #3: Recommend tree district(s) to support maintenance and planting of trees in parks and boulevards, including for emerald ash borer mitigation.

Long-Term Goals and Strategies

Goal #1: Advocate for establishing new trees, prioritizing where they are needed most, including to offset likely effects of emerald ash borer and maintain tree cover..

- Collaborate with Livingston Parks and Trails Committee and city staff to recommend trees at existing and new parks and trails.
- Recommend programs for establishing new trees in the 700+ vacant boulevard planting sites identified in the 2014 tree inventory.
- Identify priorities for trees at city entrances, collaborate with stakeholders and identify potential funding sources.
- Explore partnerships with school district to promote tree planting on school grounds.
- Promote tree planting during new development and re-development through recommendations regarding zoning, building standards and other policies.
- Consider equity of tree benefits throughout Livingston in all recommendations.
- Explore community plantings and partnerships such as community orchard, demonstration grove showcasing recommended species, etc.

Goal #2: Advocate for municipal tree management that enhances tree benefits and addresses tree hazard risk.

- Recommend city budget and staffing for carrying out municipal tree management and achieve Tree Board recommendations.
- Recommend new municipal tree management plan as advised by 2015 consultant report.

- Review city tree ordinance and recommend changes, including according to updated tree management plan and tree maintenance districts.
- Monitor advance of emerald ash borer and recommend management strategies according to best science, public input, long-term preservation of tree benefits, and city resources.

Goal #3: Expand the city's tree management capacity and efficacy through grants, city funding mechanisms, partnerships, philanthropy, and public outreach.

- Recommend grants from Montana DNRC, Montana Urban and Community Forestry Association and others.
- Recommend partnerships and volunteer programs for increasing city's capacity with tree growing, planting, watering and basic maintenance.
- Recommend options for tree maintenance district(s).
- Explore interest from philanthropic and nonprofit organizations for funding tree goals.
- Develop and recommend outreach (including social media, city website, signs in parks, etc) to inform the public of tree benefits, best practices for tree planting and maintenance, emerald ash borer, and other public tree issues.

Accomplished in 2021:

- Recommended creation of emerald ash borer plan. Provided extensive background information on EAB problem, cost scenarios for city, and treatment/replacement options.
- Recommended partnership with MSU Extension Master Gardener Class for structural pruning of young trees in parks.
- Revised list of suitable trees for boulevard planting.
- Developed brochure with information about suitable species and best practices for boulevard planting.
- Recommended new content for city tree webpage, coinciding with city's switch to new website. (Recommended with revised species list and planting guide.)
- Recommended increased city tree budget for 2021-2022 to leverage grant opportunities.

1) Tree Board members

Lisa Harreld	lisaharreld@gmail.com
Laurel Desnick	lhdesnick@gmail.com
Thomas Shands	thomaslshands@gmail.com
Maureen Lighthiser	maureenlighthiser@gmail.com
Sarah Boyle	fleshmancreekdesigns@gmail.com

2) Tree ordinance

https://library.municode.com/mt/livingston/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=CH23TR

3) Tree budget at least \$2 per capita

Budget

Community population: 8,040 in 2020 census

A) Tree planting and initial care

Include cost of tree purchases, labor and equipment for planting, planting materials, stakes, wrapping, watering, mulching, competition control, etc.

\$30,000

B) Tree maintenance

Include pruning, insect and disease management, fertilization, watering, etc.

\$2,500

C) Tree removal

Include cost of equipment, supplies, labor, etc.

\$35,500

D) Management

Include public education, professional training, memberships, salaries, street and park tree inventory.

\$1,500

E) Other

Include any other expenses not mentioned. Grant Administration: \$1,000

Tree management statistics

Number of trees planted: 80

Number of trees pruned: 15

Number of trees removed: 76

Volunteer hours: 0

4) Arbor Day observance and proclamation

[PDF of Arbor Day proclamation from previous year, 2021]

[photos from Arbor Day event]

[get city manager signature]



Whereas, In 1872, J. Sterling Morton proposed to the Nebraska Board of Agriculture that a special day be set aside for the planting of trees, and

Whereas, this holiday, called Arbor Day, was first observed with the planting of more than a million trees in Nebraska, and

Whereas, Arbor Day is now observed throughout the nation and the world, and

Whereas, trees can reduce the erosion of our precious topsoil by wind and water, cut heating and cooling costs, moderate the temperature, clean the air, produce life-giving oxygen, and provide habitat for wildlife, and

Whereas, trees are a renewable resource giving us paper, wood for our homes, fuel for our fires and countless other wood products, and

Whereas, trees in our city increase property values, enhance the economic vitality of business areas, and beautify our community, and

Whereas, trees, wherever they are planted, are a source of joy and spiritual renewal.

Now, Therefore, I, Dorel Hoglund, Chair of the City Commission
of the City of Livingston, Montana,
do hereby proclaim April 30, 2021, as

Arbor Day

In the City of Livingston, Montana, and I urge all citizens to celebrate Arbor Day and to support efforts to protect our trees and woodlands; and

Further, I urge all citizens to plant trees to gladden the heart and promote the well-being of this and future generations.

Dated this 19th day of January, 2021

Chair: 

Attest: 



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 written in a cursive, flowing style.

Marshall Swearingen, Chair