



Board of Directors  
Minnesota Shade Tree Advisory Committee

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Meeting Minutes

<p><b>Date:</b> Thursday, April 20, 2023 <b>Time:</b> 8:00 – 9.45 am <b>Location:</b> MN DNR 500 Lafayette Road, St. Paul, MN 55155 <b>Virtual Option:</b> Teams Link provided in meeting invitation <b>Before meeting:</b> Review agenda and associated reports. For questions, contact Lisa Loots, DNR Forestry <a href="mailto:lisa.loots@state.mn.us">lisa.loots@state.mn.us</a> <b>Contact:</b> Karen Zumach, President; 952-767-3886, <a href="mailto:karenz@treetrust.org">karenz@treetrust.org</a></p>	<p><b>Meeting Purpose:</b> Governance of MnSTAC including advising the president, organizing sub-committees, and approving reports, studies and position papers.</p> <p><b>Our mission:</b> <i>To be the leading advocate for Minnesota’s community forests and to empower and educate Minnesota’s citizens to maximize the coverage, health, quality, function, and future of our community forests.</i></p>
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1. Call to Order & Welcome and Roll Call: President Karen Zumach (5 minutes)

Meeting started at 8:07am

In addition to the attending board members, we had Jeff Haberman and Emily Ball attend the meeting virtually, as well as Bill Sunder attending in-person.

2. Adopt Agenda (Additions/Corrections/Deletions) (5 minutes):  
Valerie McClannahan made a motion to adopt the April agenda. Tina Markeson seconded that motion.  
**Motion Approved.**
3. Consent Agenda
  - a. Approve minutes January meeting (5 minutes):  
Craig Johnson made a motion to approve the January minutes. Dustin Ellis seconded that motion.  
**Motion Approved.**
4. On-Going/New Business (60 minutes)
  - a. DNR Update:  
Valerie McClannahan provided a DNR handout to board members prior to this meeting. A key topic in Valerie’s update was around IRA (Inflation Reduction Act) funding. She reminded the board that the DNR requested \$31 million in total of IRA funds. As of 4/12/23, it was announced that the state of Minnesota would be awarded \$5.25 million in total funds. Valerie noted that currently, the DNR had not been advised by the U.S. Forest Service on how to reduce their original proposal. More information to come.

Gail Nozal asked if there was going to be guidance on what the funds would be spent on, such as competitive work, Environmental Justice (EJ) work, etc.? Valerie said that there are still certain requirements that need to be met, such as work being 80% competitively available, and that the work needs to be within EJ areas of concern. Currently a big question is how the money will be able to be spent around the tribal portion of the proposal. Depending on the outcome of how the tribal money can be allocated, that will determine how much funding can be allocated to other parts of the proposal. Valerie said that there still are a lot more questions than answers at this point but will keep the board updated as she knows more.

Josh Obermeyer asked for clarification about the IRA process, as he wasn't clear about the public facing request timeline. Valerie explained that the IRA funding is set up in two parts. Part one would be where individual states submit proposals for funding. Once the U.S. Forest Service awards states their funding, the second part would consist of the public requesting funds. This would mean that individual cities and organizations could then submit a request to receive funding.

This led to a long discussion about IRA funding and issues that has come up along the way. Molly Coddling reminded the group that any cities or organizations who might consider applying for the IRA funding would first need a federal registration ID before applying for funds. It was noted that the process for receiving this ID could take as long as 45-60 days. Because of the long process of obtaining a federal ID, some communities might not be able to receive an ID and be able to submit a IRA proposal in the short timeline that is available.

Karen asked about how long the contract with the U.S. Forest Service would last. Valerie clarified that any contact with them would have a five-year duration. However, the proverbial clock doesn't start ticking to spend those funds until the contract is signed. At this point, Valerie doesn't know when the funds will be available, and when the five-year clock will begin.

Josh asked about the EJ maps that Valerie previously provided to the board. She said that the U.S. Forest Service is using the CEJEST (Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool) map as a guideline of EJ communities <https://screeningtool.geoplatform.gov/en/#3/33.47/-97.5>

The group then pivoted the conversation to the complexities of this funding and compared individual experiences for other funding proposals to the IRA proposal and timeline. Valerie reiterated that there are still a lot of questions on how and what exactly the DNR will be able to spend the funds on and are still waiting from more guidance from the U.S. Forest Service. Molly reminded the board that this IRA funding opportunity and fund dispersal is really a pilot method for disseminating funds. She also added that it's important to be able to provide feedback to the U.S. Forest Service, so that the Forest Service is aware of areas of concern.

Mike Bahe asked if state agencies would be able to additionally apply for the public facing request. Valerie said that state agencies would be eligible to apply for the public facing funds as well. Gail wondered that if the funds are competitive, and states are applying for the public facing funds as well, what does that look like for individual cities? How much more competition will there be for rural Minnesota cities and smaller communities? Valerie encouraged those who would be interested in applying to apply. Karen reminded the group that IRA funding proposals need to be submitted by June 1.

Kevin McDonald brought up his experience working with the Federal Government in the past and how long the process was before funds were available to be used. In contrast, he pointed out that some legislative funds may be available as early as July 1, 2023 – so he looked forward to the board discussing those funds, which will be available much sooner than the IRA funds.

- i. Grants in process: *did not discuss*.
- ii. IRA request: *discussed previously*.
- iii. Budget requests: *DNR budget updates provided in Valerie's handout*.

The board then jumped to meeting agenda item 6.c – the Legislative update. Craig Johnson said that at the legislature, there is no bonding bill at this time, as it did not pass in the Senate. He said that it isn't likely that there will be a bonding package, however, he does believe that it is likely that there will be a cash package. The cash package wouldn't require Republican votes to be passed.

Craig reminded the board that in the bonding bill (that was proposed, but not approved), was for \$8.4 million to assist in community tree planting. This bill would have been the primary source of funding for EAB management. Since the bonding bill didn't go through, parts of the bill may be reintroduced as part of the previously mentioned cash package.

Other funding sources would be included in various budget proposals. The Omnibus Environment Spending bill is included in House File 2310. Craig said that the bill includes 10 million dollars (over two years) for overall UCF work. This bill also includes \$400,000 per year for DNR's budget to continue funding for UCF purposes. He doesn't believe that the Senate has a similar bill proposed at this time. That said, the Senate bill was being discussed on the floor on 4/20/23, so everyone is waiting to see what the outcome of that discussion.

Valerie added that in the Senate had a bill for \$8.9 million for UCF related work, with an ongoing \$400,000 for DNR work.

Craig added that he had recently had some discussions with House members about wood waste funding and noted that it is a confusing situation in the House bill. The language within the bill and the sub-policy language around wood waste states that the funds would broadly be usable for community forestry and for a wide range of things, but then the sub-policy language states that it can only be used for wood waste. Craig said it was not Representative Finke's (the author of the bill) intent to have the language be confusing. The proposed bill includes \$9 million dollars for community forestry activities, but when pressed on the topic, Representative Finke said that most of the funds would be going toward wood waste. Craig said that there is a lot of work to be done in the Conference Committee to get more clarifying language for the bill.

The Conference Committee members will be announced soon, and then the committee can begin to meet and discuss the various bills. He said that everything is very fluid right now. This then led to a further discussion about the confusing language of the bill and wood waste options that currently exists.

Valerie said that she and others have received a lot of requests for community relief and help with trees on private property that relate to 'the wood waste bill'. Molly Coddington brought up the concern that residents and property owners have about not being able to access those funds.

The discussion then pivoted when Craig asked Valerie about the Releaf program. He asked what could specifically be done as part of the releaf program?

As it reads, House File 88.82 reads "*The Minnesota releaf program is established in the Department of Natural Resources to encourage, promote, and fund the inventory, planting, assessment, maintenance, improvement, protection, and restoration of trees and forest resources in this state to enhance community forest ecosystem health and sustainability as well as to reduce atmospheric carbon dioxide levels and promote energy conservation.*"

Valerie responded by saying that per House File 88.82, the DNR has statutory authority to provide residential support, but cannot send direct support to a resident.

Kevin brought up the fact previously the Releaf program was supported by bonding dollars, which limited the scope of work to parks and boulevards, publicly owned trees, etc. If moving forward the program was not funding by bonding dollars, could the funds help support private property? Craig said that under the Minnesota constitution, that would not be an option.

b. Open board positions: ([Vote Required-See Applications attached](#)):

Karen reviewed the four open board positions which included: the U of MN, Citizen at Large, Utility Forester, and the Vice President roles.

She then read the candidate statements from the two candidates up for the U of MN position (Gary Wyatt and Shane Bugeja). The board voted, and **Shane Bugeja won by a majority.**

Next, the board voted on the Citizen at Large position. **Jeff Haberman was voted into that role on the board.**

Then the board voted on the Utility Forester position. **Shannon Gatz was appointed into that role.**

c. Vice President: (Vote Required):

Steve Roos said that he would no longer be serving as in the Vice President role and will be moving back to serve as the landscape architect role on the board. Emily Ball had been nominated for this position, and Karen read her expression of interest statement. The board discussed this position in length and then Karen nominated Gail Nozal as well. Gail accepted the nomination and Karen made a motion to have Gail step into the Vice President role. Mike Bahe seconded that motion, and the **Motion Approved.**

Valerie made a motion to fill Gail's recently vacated Minnesota Corporation board seat with Emily Ball. Tina Markeson seconded that motion. **Motion Approved.**

- d. Shade Tree Short Course Commendation: The board praised Ryan for another successful Shade Tree Short Course event. Karen said the event went really well.
- e. 2023 Goals Brainstorming Session – *did not discuss.*

5. Committee Report Out and Discussion (15 minutes)

- a. Education/Forums (Ryan Murphy)
  - 1. Outreach/Networking working group (Gail Nozal) – *did not discuss.*
- b. Finance (Steve Roos):
  - i. Subcommittee on Non-Profit Exploration (TBD) – *did not discuss.*
- c. Legislative (Craig Johnson): *Previously discussed.*

6. Old Business (15 minutes)

- a. Board member comments/updates (*Please come prepared to provide insight, information and/or guidance on how MNSTAC can work with your representative organization to advance our mutual missions*)

Dustin asked that Save the Date communication be sent out for the remaining Board meetings for 2023. The next meeting is Thursday, June 15, 2023.

Tina Markeson provides a few highlights from MnDOT, including:

- Community Tree Survey123:  
In response to EAB infested trees on MnDOT right of way, we are asking communities to enter infested trees into Survey123 application <https://arcg.is/bLmqf>. She added that high-risk trees should be emailed directly to Tina, instead of passing that information through the app.
- MN Noxious Weed Book: New [link](#) to the pdf. She said that on a desktop, the PDF is an automatic download, and if you're accessing the PDF via a phone, it is viewable in a browser.
- Federally protected bats and bees:  
MnDOT technical memos may be helpful, but questions should be directed to USFWS.
- NexGen Highways: Efforts to open more roadsides to overhead utility lines.

Josh said that the City of Minnetonka has just assembled a Future Arborists of MN group. The group is in the process of gathering information in order to connect young professionals to others in the field. The group is in the preliminary stages.

*Meeting adjourned. At 9:45am.*

Executive Leadership	Board Position	In Attendance
Karen Zumach	President	X

Steve Roos	Vice-President	X
<b>Long-Term Designated Position</b>		
Valerie McClannahan	MN DNR	X
Mark Abrahamson	MDA	X
Tina Markeson	MnDOT	X
VACANT	University of Minnesota	
VACANT	Agriculture Extension Service	
Gordon Hanson	Tree Care Advisor	X
Erin Andrews	MSA	
Kevin McDonald	MPCA	X
Josh Obermeyer	SAF (MN Chapter)	X
Mike McNamara	MNLA	X
Anne Oldakowski	MN SWCD	X
VACANT	MFA	
Craig Johnson	League of MN Cities	X
<b>Short-Term Non-Designated Position</b>		
Michael Bahe	Municipal Forester-Arborist 1	X
Dustin Ellis	Municipal Forester-Arborist 2	X
Steve Nicholson	Consulting Forester/Arborist	
VACANT	Utility Forester	
VACANT	Local Tree Board Member	
VACANT	Non-profit	
Gail Nozal	Minnesota Corporation	X
Sue Granger	At Large Region 1	
James Lemmerman	At Large Region 2	
Louise Levy	At Large Region 3	
VACANT	University of MN Student	
<b>Ex-Officio</b>		
Jill Johnson	U.S. Forest Service	
Ryan Murphy	University of Minnesota	X
Emma Schultz	MN DNR	
Molly Coddling	MN DNR	X
Gary Michael	MN DNR	X