



Board of Directors Minnesota Shade Tree Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes

<p>Date: Thursday, January 19, 2023 Time: 8:00 – 9.45 am Location: The Chalet @ Theodore Wirth Park, 1301 Theodore Wirth Pkwy, Golden Valley, MN 55422 Before meeting: Review agenda and associated reports. For questions, contact Lisa Loots, DNR Forestry lisa.loots@state.mn.us Contact: Karen Zumach, President; 952-767-3886, karenz@treetrust.org</p>	<p>Meeting Purpose: Governance of MnSTAC including advising the president, organizing sub-committees, and approving reports, studies and position papers.</p> <p>Our mission: <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 8:10am.

Hannah Milos joined the meeting virtually. She will be acting in an interim position behind Jill Johnson at the U.S. Forest Service until mid-March.

To best utilize the time available, the meeting began with agenda item 4.a (Introduction/Conversation with State Forester, Patty Thielen).

Valerie McClannahan introduced the new DNR Forestry Director and State Forester, Patty Thielen, who was able to attend the board meeting virtually. After Patty introduced herself to the board, Valerie helped moderate a Q & A session.

Question 1: What is the new state forester's vision for MnSTAC in carrying out its purpose, duties, and objectives?

Patty replied that she has only been in her new role for five months, so her vision – in response to this question – is a bit limited. She noted that MnSTAC was originally established to assist with Dutch elm disease. She would like to see MnSTAC continue to be committed to the management of community forestry, as well as continue to work collaboratively with DNR and UCF to meet urban forestry needs. She emphasized the need to work together to build trust and work toward common goals.

Question 2: How would the new state forester desire for MnSTAC to most effectively communicate its advice on the best ways to observe, protect, expand, and improve Minnesota's Urban and Community Forests?

Patty suggested that MnSTAC continue to work through Valerie, and she will know when to include and gather other resources as needed.

Karen asked about any opportunities for MnSTAC to have open dialogue to work with DNR to advocate and educate legislators? Patty responded by saying that working together to communicate needs is important. She recognized that sometimes there are limitations to representing a state agency and appreciates the desire for MnSTAC to advocate those needs and be a voice when there are limitations in place.

Question 3: What are the State Forester's views in assisting the DNR's development of agency action plans as it relates to UCF? What is the new State Forester's vision for encouraging coordination, minimizing inefficiencies, and adopting the most beneficial and economical UCF policies and practices?

Patty reiterated that because she is still relatively new in her position, she is still learning and understanding the needs and desires that various groups have. She said that she has recently learned about the DNR's Action Plan and hopes that MnSTAC stakeholder can assist in creating a new Action Plan when necessary. The goal of the Action Plan is to provide vision and direction for the Division of Forestry.

In relation to the second portion of the question: the Division will be prioritizing support in increasing several things, including: community support to manage EAB, increasing tree canopy cover, and areas of environmental justice concern. Minnesota is one of two or three states who have a Community EJ coordinator position (held at the DNR by Molly Coddling), and Patty is proud to have the DNR be at the forefront of seeing these positions be developed and utilized in the community.

Question 4: What will your approach be to using and implementing MnSTAC recommendations and advice?

MnSTAC's recommendations are very important to the DNR. Patty emphasized the depth of knowledge and perspective within the MnSTAC board, and emphasized that that knowledge is incredibly valuable. Working within a bureaucracy can present some difficulties at time, but she thanked the group for their patience when there are some obstacles in place. The goal is to follow through with MnSTAC's recommendations as much as possible within the structures that are in place.

Patty thanked the group for letting her join the meeting and appreciated the opportunity to get to know everyone.

Louise Levy encouraged Patty (when she has the time) to mix and mingle with people folks in the field, including arboriculturists, (for example), to get a different forestry perspective. Patty said that she agrees about learning more and told the group that the Forestry Division Management Team (DMT) meets monthly, and often times has a field day built into their meeting, as a way to mingle with others and see and learn more about what is happening in the field.

Craig Johnson pointed out to Patty the reoccurring challenge of assisting the DNR to get needs communicated in a timelier fashion, so that program needs could be incorporated into budget requests on time. He asked Patty for her support on that. Patty acknowledged the difficulty that Craig brought up and said that she is learning the complexities of the legislative process. It can be a lengthy process, but she will work on understanding the legislative process, and how to navigate it to best address needs in a

timely way moving forward. She also suggested that the Forestry legislative team could assist in working with MnSTAC on any requests in the future.

Dustin Ellis said that the UCF program has been severely underfunded. He said that he believes that things are heading in the right direction but stated that more funding at the state level is needed, along with more advocacy at the legislature. He said that he thought the metro areas were doing alright, but that greater Minnesota is suffering. He petitioned for more support in those communities. Patty recognized Dustin's concern and said that she was glad to see that things seem to be headed in the right direction and hopes that it continues that way.

Gail Nozal pointed out to Patty that there is the MnSTAC Outreach Committee. She asked for Patty's support from DNR in getting the word out for more tree advocates. Patty replied by saying that the committee should reach out and ask for assistance, so that DNR can help where they can. Patty also said that she would like to see better communication for the public to better understand the importance of trees and the myriad of benefits they provide.

Mike McNamara spoke up on behalf of industry professionals and noted that DNR's decisions have had a positive impact on small businesses, economies, and communities. He said that the DNR's funding, grants, and support have really been appreciated by the industry and industry professionals across the state.

Josh Obermeyer made a plug for the upcoming SAF meeting, February 15 & 16, 2023 at Breezy Point Lodge, for those who might be interested.

Karen brought up the ongoing struggle of having UCF and EAB sustained funding. She said that is a harrowing, frustrating, and oftentimes debilitating experience to try to gather constant funding. She emphasized that having annual support for UCF in the DNR's budget is critical to continuing the work, regardless of what new issue or catastrophe arises. Money to support the UCF program should always be a priority item in the budget, from year to year. Patty recognized the need of a more sustainable funding source and would like to see Releaf be one of those funding sources. She added that she is waiting to see what comes out of the Governor's budget in the coming days, and is hopeful that there might be some funding support in there.

Karen then pivoted the conversation back to DNR and said that she's aware that CFM foresters have had their positions descriptions modified to reflect an increase of UCF work. MnSTAC wants to encourage that work and would be willing to advocate for continued increase of UCF worktime included in CFM forester positions. It was mentioned that rural CFM staff have a lot of ground to cover with limited resources. Patty said she was glad to hear that CFM staff are of value in greater Minnesota. Dustin said that he would like to see a DNR position created in the norther, central, and southern parts of the state, that was solely UCF focused. There is a great need for UCF work. Patty replied by saying that she would like to have more funding to be able to increase staffing numbers.

Karen thanked Patty for her time and appreciated that Patty was able to join the board meeting today.

2. Adopt Agenda (Additions/Corrections/Deletions) (5 minutes):

Louise suggested a few modifications to the layout of the meeting minutes; one being that the 'Meeting Agenda' title on page 2 of the minutes should be changed to 'Meeting Minutes' when the minutes have been finalized. Secondly, she suggested that put the roster of the board should be below the 'Meeting Minutes'.

3. Consent Agenda

- a. Approve minutes October meeting (5 minutes)

Motion to approve October meeting minutes made by Sue Granger and seconded by Dustin Ellis. **Motion approved.**

4. On-Going/New Business (45 minutes)

- a. Introduction/Conversation with State Forester, Patty Thielen – previously discussed.
- b. IRA Funding Request:

Valerie McClannahan provided the board with a DNR agency update, which included takeaway points regarding IRA funding. She reminded the board that there will be \$1.58 billion dollars available from the U.S. Forester Service for tree planting and related activities. Valerie's key updates include:

- U.S. Forest Service has provided "Advice to States" which is for UCF lead state agencies.
- Proposals that deliver 40% of the benefits of IRA investments to support disadvantaged communities experiencing low tree canopy and environmental justice will receive priority consideration. The deadline to submit a request is February 28th.
- A minimum of 80% of federal funding awarded to States must be competitively sub-awarded to deliver urban and community forestry program benefits at the community level.

This led into a long conversation about funding and what this could potentially mean for the future. Dustin wondered if this was going to become a big issue for States regarding staffing. Would this become cumbersome to State staff? He also wondered if the funding could be used to increase funding, such as a grant coordinator or someone to help delegate the potential funds. Valerie said some of the funds would be able to add to the DNR's staff (ex. Grant Coordinator position). She also added that the DNR would only ask for funding that the agency could manage and process themselves.

Gail referenced the last meeting, there where was a Jam Board created to collect ideas on ways to spend the IRA funds. She wondered how some of the newer ideas be incorporated into the existing infrastructure of grants. Valerie said that the hope would be to be able to incorporate those new ideas and expand work to residential property, as well as non-profit organizations. There are additional requirements when it comes to doing work on residential properties, but Valerie is confident that the DNR will be able to navigate that. The goal is to make sure these newer ideas be included in the proposal as eligible activities for the IRA funding.

Gail then asked if there was anything the MnSTAC board could do to help support the DNR's proposal to receive IRA funds, though she noted that the deadline was fast approaching. Valerie said that she wasn't sure if there was anything the Board to help with at the moment, but she appreciated the question. Her goal is to get something meaningful put together before the February deadline.

Valerie reminded the Board of the timeline of how the IRA funds could be spent. Once a contract is signed by the U.S Forest Service, the DNR would have five years to spend the money. However, during that timeline, there would need to be a period for a Requests for Proposals (RFPs) process, then those contracts with non-profits, etc. would need to be signed, and then the work could begin. Valerie said that she anticipates that after all that is done, there would only be about three to four years to actually get the work completed. As the DNR begins to gather together a proposal for IRA funds, its important to assess what work can be done within the timeframe available.

Going back to the question of how MnSTAC can help, Emma Schultz suggested that MnSTAC could be more involved with the grant review process. There is always a need to help get funding out the door and into the communities. Karen wondered if there was a way to compensate people for their time in being a grant reviewer. Perhaps compensating people for their time could be worth looking into for the future.

c. 2023 Legislative Priorities:

Karen shared that there was an informational hearing of the Environment and Natural Resources Committees. Both Chambers met, with presentations by state agencies. There were a lot of good questions being asked. Karen said that there is a great opportunity to educate legislators; noting that there are several new legislators in both the House and Senate. She suggested maybe revamping a legislative priority document that could be distributed as well.

d. 2023 Goals:

Karen said that more support for UCF needs to be front and center. She also said that there are a few ideas percolating, including the idea of becoming a non-profit group. She is hoping to create a sub-committee to help conduct research about this venture and is hoping that the Board can make an informed decision about this at the October meeting.

Dustin suggested that 2023 would be a good year to have another workshop or forum (or both) in greater Minnesota. Gail added that the city of Mankato would be interested in hosting an event.

Karen also brought up that Erin Andrews had expressed an interest in engaging more young professionals in the industry. She suggested that maybe this could be something that the Outreach and Engagement sub-committee could discuss.

Mike McNamara said that he hopes that MNDOT could be more regularly involved in these Board meetings.

Louise made a plug for the fall MSA meeting, October 12-13th in Duluth.

5. Committee Report Out and Discussion (15 minutes) – Did not discuss.
 - a. Education/Forums (Ryan Murphy)
 1. Outreach/Networking working group (Gail Nozal)
 - b. Finance (Steve Roos):
 - i. Subcommittee on Non-Profit Exploration (TBD)
 - c. Legislative (Craig Johnson):
6. Old Business (30 minutes): Did not discuss.
 - 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*)
 - b. Open board positions: (**Vote Required-See Applications attached**): Due to time constraints, Karen said she would send an email to board members about this.
 - c. Vice President: (**Vote Required**) Same as above.
7. Adjourn:
Meeting ended at 9:50am.

Executive Leadership	Board Position	In Attendance
Karen Zumach	President	X
Steve Roos	Vice-President	X
Long-Term Designated Position		
Valerie McClannahan	MN DNR	X
Mark Abrahamson	MDA	X
Tina Markeson	MnDOT	
VACANT	University of Minnesota	
VACANT	Agriculture Extension Service	
Gordon Hanson	Tree Care Advisor	X
Erin Andrews	MSA	X
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
Short-Term Non-Designated Position		
Michael Bahe	Municipal Forester-Arborist 1	X
Dustin Ellis	Municipal Forester-Arborist 2	X
Steve Nicholson	Consulting Forester/Arborist	X
VACANT	Utility Forester	
VACANT	Local Tree Board Member	
VACANT	Non-profit	
Gail Nozal	Minnesota Corporation	X
Sue Granger	At Large Region 1	X
James Lemmerman	At Large Region 2	
Louise Levy	At Large Region 3	X
VACANT	University of MN Student	
Ex-Officio		
Jill Johnson	U.S. Forest Service	X
Hannah Milos	U.S. Forest Service	X
Ryan Murphy	University of Minnesota	X
Emma Schultz	MN DNR	X
Molly Coddling	MN DNR	X
Sonja Tosteson	U of MN	X