

FORESTRY ADVISORY BOARD

MEETING MINUTES – January 20, 2026

In attendance:

Mitch Becker	Brian Houle	Christy Ames-Davis
Susan Wefald	Kate Herzog	Eric Gabbert
Brett Gurholt	Dawn Kopp	Greg Zenker
Amy Sakariassen	Dave Mayer	Steve Salwei

Chairman Brett Gurholt called the meeting to order at 12:20 p.m.

There were no public comments

Approval of the minutes from the October 21, 2025, regular meeting of the FAB:

- Dawn Kopp made a motion to approve the minutes, and Mitch Becker seconded the motion.

Forestry Advisory Board:

- Susan Wefald is our new board member. She is replacing Carolyn Godfread, who served 40 years on the board. Introductions were made for Susan's benefit. Christy reported that Brett Gurholt is the Chairman of the Forestry Advisory Board and Brian Houle is the Vice-Chairman.
- The usual terms for Chairman and Vice-Chairman are 1 year so elections will need to be held at the next meeting. Greg Zenker made a motion to make the term 2 years. Amy Sakariassen seconded it. All were in favor and the motion carried.

2025 Recap:

- 2,413 trees were pruned with 859 pruned by Forestry Staff
- 442 trees were removed (341 by Forestry Staff, 101 on Ash removal contract).
- 355 stumps were ground (57 by Forestry Staff)
- 52 trees tested positive for Dutch Elm disease. This is down considerably from 136 positives in 2024.
- 869 new street trees were planted. This number will likely increase as 2025 planting permits are being rechecked.
- Partners In Planting – 93 recipients planted a total of 209 trees with \$18,714.82 disbursed in rebates. We are beginning to lose some of our higher dollar sponsors and welcome any leads. Basin Electric, Northern Plains Heritage Area, and the Ft. Lincoln Foundation were mentioned as potential new leads.

2026 Outlook:

Contracts:

- Pruning - \$135,000.00 – Beaver Creek Tree Service – New Contract – Year 1 of 3. Christy showed a map with the pruning areas for this year highlighted. There are high numbers of elm in 3 of the project areas. These can only be pruned in the cold months, October through March.

- Stumps - \$30,000.00 – a Request for Proposal (RFP) for stump grinding will go out in the next month or so. This contract will be for 3 years. We will request two quotes on the RFP; one for filling stump holes with stump grindings, the other for filling the holes with quality screened topsoil. The latter will likely be considerably more costly.
- Ash Tree Removal – Tree Max LLC – Contracted through 2027
- Ash Stump grinding - Beaver Creek has decided not to continue for 2026 – We may rebid.

Christy reported that our Weeds Officer/Arborist, John Arlien has retired. We need to fill this position before the 2026 season begins.

EAB Mitigation Grant:

Christy reports that she applied for this grant a few months ago and recently found out we will receive the grant.

- State Grant – up to \$25,000, with an 80/20 match.
- Removal and replacement of poor condition ash trees to reduce the impact EAB could have on our community.
- South Washington Street is the focus area. The stretch between Reno Ave and Munich Dr contains 118 trees. Over half are ash, followed closely by Hackberry.
- 20 ash trees will be removed and stumps ground by a contractor.
- Forestry will plant 40 replacement trees of varying species after existing trees and stumps are removed.
- Completion and submittal deadline is November 2026.

2026 Arbor Day Planning:

- Arbor Day is May 1, 2026
- Our slogan is: A tree today – A forest tomorrow
- Honoree – Carolyn Godfread
- Location – Rotary Arboretum – Dave Mayer raised some concerns about parking and accessibility at this site so this may change.
- Wednesday, April 29, 2026 – Scheels Tree handout
- Thursday, April 30, 2026 – Tree Dedication Ceremony for Frank Koch @ Gateway to Science

250th Anniversary of America:

Kate mentioned that several events are being planned to be held this year in celebration of America's 250th Anniversary. A tree planting of some sort is one idea. Suggestions on when, where and how are welcome.

Meeting adjourned at 1:15 PM