

Forestry Advisory Board 2nd Quarter Meeting: Wednesday April 22, 2026

Attending members: Brett Gurholt, Susan Wefald, Dave Meyer, Brian Houle, Christy Ames-Davis, Greg Zenker, Amy Sakariassen, Kate Herzog, Dawn Kopp

Approval of January 20th, 2026, meeting minutes

- Amy motions to approve, Susan 2nd the motion and the motion carried.

2026 Contracts Update

- 2026 stump grinding contract awarded to Don's Stump Grinding at \$9/per diameter inch, with a \$30,000 base budget plus \$30,000 additional for ash stumps; new this year: stump holes will be filled with topsoil.
- TREEMAX continues ash tree removal at \$27/per diameter inch with a \$55,000 budget; Beaver Creek begins year one of a three-year pruning contract at \$135/tree, targeting about 1,000 trees with a \$135,000 budget.

2026 Grants and EAB Update

- Two grants secured for Sertoma Park: an ATB grant for 64 trees at the north end, and an EAB mitigation grant for 68 replacement trees at the south end following 34 removals.
- EAB mitigation grant for the Washington Street corridor awarded to CD and Sons at \$30.13/inch; 120 trees to be removed, with 40 trees replanted in six species, all work required by year-end. TM tree service is contracted for the stump removal for this grant.
- Once EAB has been found in Bismarck, we plan to inject approximately 20% of boulevard ash trees; residents with notable green ash trees are encouraged to report them for potential preservation.
- EAB is currently confirmed only in Fargo and near Edgeley, ND; treatment is not recommended until infestation is within 15 miles.
- Ash species have dropped from 36% to 22% of the urban canopy since 2010 across 24,500 city trees; elm, maple, and linden are also near the 20% single-genus threshold.

Forestry Staff and Work Plan

- Staffing changes include new arborist Matt Fenoff hired in January, Carter Moran filling the weeds officer role, and Dustin Green promoted to arborist; one forestry tech position open with five candidates interviewing Friday, and four seasonal positions still unfilled.
- Lead arborist Jerry Hanke is expected to retire by end of year, signaling another upcoming vacancy.
- Upcoming work includes tree planting in Sertoma Park, DED inspections beginning in June, along with continued pruning and removals.

2026 Arbor Day

- Arbor Day event is scheduled for May 1st at 1:00 PM at Elk Ridge Park; program includes Tree City USA recognition, Apple Seed Awards, Century High School Choir, Spirit of 76 band, and a fourth-grade class performance.

- Additional Arbor Day-related activities include:
 - Spring Nature Day at the Heritage Center scheduled for 4/27/2026
 - A tree giveaway with Scheels on 4/29/2026 (150 trees)
 - Tree planting at Gateway to Science on May 14th honoring founding member, Frank Koch.

Other Items

- Collaboration with Capitol Grounds discussed revitalizing the Arboretum; a walkthrough is planned for late May, with potential tree planting and ties to the America 250 Veterans Day initiative.
- Concern raised over ongoing tree loss at the Capitol grounds and governor's residence due to construction and security projects, with a call for native grass and pollinator plantings on the new state lab slope.
- Meeting adjourned for April 22, 2026, meeting
 - Dawn motions to adjourn
 - Brian 2nd motion to adjourn
 - Motion carried