



## *City Council Memorandum*

**To: Mayor and City Councilmembers**  
**From: Chris Jenkins, Parks & Recreation Director**  
**Date: April 26, 2017**  
**Item: Boulevard Tree Maintenance Requirements**

### **Council Action Requested:**

Council is asked to support and adopt the recommendation provided by the Parks & Recreation Committee of Council as it relates to boulevard tree maintenance.

### **Background Information:**

During the summer of 2016 Emerald Ash Borer was confirmed in Hastings. One infestation was located in east Hastings and one adult EAB was found near Lock and Dam. This event coincided with staff efforts in updating Hastings' Emerald Ash Borer Management Plan, and heightened our awareness and efforts related to mitigating the effects of an infestation.

Over the past nine months or so, staff have reviewed our EAB Management Plan, City ordinances and policies and have developed a treatment program for ash trees within City Parks which will be implemented this summer. Staff have also met with our Parks & Recreation Commission and Parks & Recreation Committee of Council to discuss that treatment plan and maintenance needs of boulevard trees in Hastings.

Recently the City Forester and Parks & Recreation staff have completed a comprehensive inventory of all boulevard trees in Hastings. There are approximately 4,500 trees within the right of way spaces of city streets with approximately 1,000 of those being ash trees. All of these boulevard trees add character to neighborhoods, typically increase property values, provide shade and cooling, and contribute to quality of life in neighborhoods. These mature trees also capture storm water which reduces pollution of streams and rivers.

In Hastings, boulevard trees have been and are still planted within the right of way space of City streets. While these trees are located within a public right of way, current ordinance stipulates that the property owner is responsible for the care and maintenance of the boulevard trees, just the same as grass planted within the right of way. The City Forester will continue to complete periodic boulevard tree inventories where existing trees will be evaluated for current condition, hazards, etc. If tree health issues are discovered, the affected property owner will be contacted and provided with information and options. In cases where tree removal is necessary, and proper

maintenance has been conducted, the City will share in the cost of the removal of the diseased or hazardous tree. The cost share is a 60/40 where 60% is property owner and 40% is City, and is limited to only the cost of tree removal. There is no cost share for stump removal or replacement trees.

We know that Emerald Ash Borer has affected trees in Hastings already, and an infestation is imminent. We know that utilizing insecticide treatments as a preventative maintenance tool is effective, safe, and cost efficient. We know that no matter what is done proactively, some ash trees will succumb to EAB and will need to be removed. We also know that whatever plan is implemented at this time will need to be evaluated routinely to examine the effectiveness and feasibility. EAB is an aggressive pest, however the devastation that can occur can be mitigated through proactive efforts.

**Financial Impact:**

Staff time and effort will be required to fully develop a communication and education strategy, however these efforts will fall within staff’s regular duties. Time and effort will be necessary from the City Forester, however tree inventory is a function of the City Forester’s position.

The potential exists that an increase in diseased or hazardous tree removals will occur in the coming years, however City funds will only be allocated if the property owner has made good faith efforts to maintain the affected boulevard tree and preventative maintenance efforts have also been applied. The City Forester will include budget requests as part of the annual budgeting process.

**Commission Discussion:**

The Parks & Recreation Commission reviewed the above information at its December 2016 meeting. Ultimately the PRC recommended approval of staff’s interpretation of current City Ordinance and policies.

**Committee Discussion:**

The Parks & Recreation Committee of Council (Braucks\*, Folch, Leifeld) met on April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2017 to discuss this matter.

- Committee unanimously recommends staff’s interpretations of current policy and ordinance:
  - Maintenance of boulevard trees is the responsibility of the property owner.
  - Maintenance includes preventative maintenance.
  - Property owners shall retain records of maintenance.
  - If boulevard trees are removed, the stump must also be removed, and a replacement tree must be planted, and that process should be coordinated with the City Forester.
- Committee also noted the need for a thorough communication and education strategy, informing and engaging the residents of Hastings.
  - City staff will work to develop a public EAB and tree maintenance communication and education strategy.

- Information will be distributed through the City website, social media platforms, newsletters, and personal communication.
- Committee was interested in providing for some options for property owners as it related to treatments and preventative removals.
  - City staff will work to negotiate a “not to exceed” price for tree care contractors who perform EAB treatment work in Hastings.
  - City Forester will consider preventative removals as requested by property owner.
- Committee also noted that the cost share program for removal of diseased or hazardous boulevard trees will be honored only if property owners have made good faith efforts in conducting proper maintenance and preventative maintenance.

The complete Parks & Recreation Committee packet and follow up can be found on the City website at the following address:

[www.hastingsmn.gov/residents/forestry/emerald-ash-borer](http://www.hastingsmn.gov/residents/forestry/emerald-ash-borer)

**Attachments:**

- None for this packet, but the following can be found on the City website at:  
[www.hastingsmn.gov/residents/forestry/emerald-ash-borer](http://www.hastingsmn.gov/residents/forestry/emerald-ash-borer)
  - Adopted EAB Management Plan
  - *95.04 Tree Diseases And Tree Threatening Pests*
  - Hazard Tree Inspection and Management Policy
  - *155.53 Landscape Standards*
  - *90.05 Grass, Weeds, and Trees In Streets*