

Memorandum



CITY OF DALLAS

Date: February 22, 2008

To: Honorable Members of the Quality of Life Committee:
Pauline Medrano, Chair; Vonciel Jones Hill, Vice Chair; Carolyn R. Davis, Angela Hunt, Sheffie Kadane, David A. Neumann, Steve Salazar

Subject: February 25, 2008 Committee Agenda Item 4.
Urban Forestry Board Presentation

Copies of the Urban Forestry Board briefing, presented by Steve Houser, Chair, Urban Forest Advisory Committee, will be hand-delivered to each committee member at the Quality of Life Committee meeting on February 25, 2008.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D.O.B.' followed by a horizontal line.

David O. Brown
Interim Assistant City Manager

c: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
Mary K. Suhm, City Manager
Deborah A. Watkins, City Secretary
Thomas P. Perkins, Jr., City Attorney
Craig D. Kinton, City Auditor
Judge Jay E. Robinson
Ryan S. Evans, First Assistant City Manager
Ramon F. Miguez, Assistant City Manager
A. C. Gonzalez, Assistant City Manager
David K. Cook, Chief Financial Officer

February 21, 2008

Members, Quality of Life and Government Services Committee
City of Dallas
1500 Marilla, Rm. 5FS
Dallas, Texas 75202

RE: Dallas Urban Forest Advisory Committee Goals for 2008-2009

The members of the City of Dallas Urban Forest Advisory Committee wish to extend our sincere appreciation for the opportunity to brief the Quality of Life Committee regarding our Annual Report to Mayor Leppert and the City Council. We are very appreciative of your continued support and commitment to the advancement of urban forest initiatives in the City of Dallas. The committee enjoyed tremendous success in reaching many important goals and objectives as well as addressing the many challenges we faced.

Our annual report includes many goals for the future that provide a vision and a road map to a healthier, cooler and greener Dallas. The committee needs your support in reaching these goals in the following ways:

Establish a Department of Urban Forestry:

- Dallas is the largest city in the United States without a department or office that deals specifically with trees and the urban forest.
- There are currently many different city departments and city officials that deal with tree/forest issues, including at least the following:
 - Water/Utilities
 - Streets
 - Development Services
 - Code Enforcement
 - Parks and Recreation
 - Trinity Corridor Office
 - Stormwater Management
 - City Attorney's Office
 - Office of Environmental Quality
 - Public Information Office
 - 311 Office
 - Official City Boards and Commissions

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- All of these groups have a limited knowledge of tree/forest issues and very few have any formal training on these subjects. There is also limited coordination between these groups.
- The value of the Dallas urban forest amounts to billions of dollars (Houston's urban forest is valued at \$205 billion), but there is no one group responsible for its management. Currently, those that are involved manage more on a reactionary basis rather than relying on sound, proactive management practices.

How could a forestry department fit into the existing system? Various communities choose different systems of management but the most common forms include the following:

- Forestry under the Park Department, with an Assistant Director or Director, sometimes as an Office of Urban Forestry.
- Forestry under the City Manager's Office as a separate Department, with a Director.
- Forestry under Utilities as a Department or Office and a Director.
- Consider authorizing a governance study to provide the facts and potential options.

Cost Consideration? ...Until the issue is further studied, any cost consideration is unknown but it would depend on the form of management chosen.

Increase the current budget for Urban Forestry:

- The annual, City of Austin, Urban Forestry budget is currently 1.3 million dollars for a population of 680,899 or \$1.90 per person.
- The annual, City of Minneapolis, Urban Forestry budget is 9.7 million dollars for a population of 387,970 or \$25.00 per person.
- Given the number of departments dealing with tree/forest related issues, current budget figures are unknown until further study.
- There is one forestry crew, with up to 3-4 employees, for each of the six (6) Maintenance Districts in the Park and Recreation Department. However, each crew operates only when required, which prevents calculating even a rough budget figure for forestry expenditures in the Park Department without further investigation.
- Should the City decide to establish a Forestry Department, a Director must be hired. If an Office is established under the Park and Recreation Department, an Assistant Director must be hired.

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- It is important to note that a Department or Office of Forestry must have authority that goes beyond the Park Department authority to be able to manage street medians, city easements, public property and others.
- Considering that the Park Department owns and manages over 22,000 acres, current forestry staff, equipment and training is inadequate for the task at hand. Consider adding additional staff and equipment for each district in the 2009 fiscal budget.
- According to research, for each dollar spent on Urban Forestry, up to \$5.80 in benefits are received.

Consider requiring a minimum of one percent 1% of the total construction cost for all future road construction or reconstruction be earmarked for trees and maintenance.

Consider adopting city codes that require more trees per parking space during development and redevelopment of parking areas.

Consider adopting a Hazard Tree Policy and procedures that are accepted by all departments dealing with trees.

Your support and advice regarding these issues is greatly appreciated. Together, we will leave a legacy of a healthier, cooler and greener Dallas for future generations to enjoy.

Respectfully,

Steve Houser
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