

Re: Item #11: Urban Tree Initiatives

Finance Committee Members:

I have a conflict with another committee meeting at this time and will probably be unable to discuss the rationale for Item # 11 on Urban Trees.

In January 2018, the Task Force on the Urban Forest began a fact-finding process on the policies and programs affecting the city's trees. While we were aware of the problems associated with the loss of one-third of all street trees and trees in parks, we had not explored the many issues and possibilities associated with the loss of up to 30,000 ash trees on private property. We had not fully appreciated that an effect of climate change would be massive, long-term flooding that would drown an unknown number of trees.

At this time, the Task Force has concluded its information gathering and is now in the process of analyzing information and generating recommendations. We expect the process to conclude by the end of 2018. However, that would exclude all but the most urgent recommendations to be funded through budget amendments later in the year.

The Task Force has identified some initiatives that we believe should be pursued. Given the deadline for the 2019 budget, we were unable to specify costs. Some of these projects are:

- **Removal and replanting of trees killed in 2018 flood.** Forestry cannot assess the extent of the tree loss until Spring, 2019. Many of the trees along waterways are ash and were in the treatment group.
- **Use of “Silva-Cells” for tree plantings.** “Silva-cells” and similar forms of structured plantings have a much higher survival and growth rate than trees that are planted in typically shallow (3 feet) and narrow plots. These plots cannot sustain larger canopy trees.  
The city has successfully tested the use of these “structured soils” plantings on Mifflin St by the Central Library and more recently on Bassett St. Given the conditions of the densest areas, these methods may be the only viable means of growing and supporting a canopy tree.
- **Ash trees on private land.** Next spring, many Madison homeowners will start recognizing the effects of the EAB on their ash trees. Many will have died or are only partially “leafing.” This will require a public education and outreach program requiring removal and encouraging replanting. There are many options including subsidizing the cost of the tree replacement that are worth testing.
- **Use of trees in stormwater diversion and retention.** Trees reduce stormwater runoff by capturing and storing rainfall in their canopy. Roots and leaf litter create conditions that promote the absorption of rainwater into the soil. Trees slow down and temporarily store runoff and reduce pollutants by nutrients, pollutants and water through their routes. It is estimated that our current forest of street trees and parks intercepts 115 million gallons of rainfall in a year. Working with

Stormwater Management, we would like to develop an initiative for greater use of trees to divert and retain stormwater.

I trust you will consider and approve this amendment.

Best regards,  
David