



Grand Junction Forestry Advisory Board Minutes

June 6, 2024

Roll Call

Board Members Present:

Joseph Chandler
Bill Cooper
Mollie Freilicher
Mollie Higginbotham
Brandon Kanwischer
Dan Komlo
Kamie Long
Scott Beilfuss

Board Members Absent:

Guests Present: Tanya Travis

City Staff Present:

Jamie Beard, Assistant City Attorney
Rob Davis, Parks Supervisor, Forestry and Open Space
Allison Little Administrative Specialist

Meeting called to order by Kamie Long at 8:30AM.

Approval of the May Minutes

Jamie Beard made a clarification of the minutes.

The temporary services in town don't generally have a tree service license, they do have insurance. So using them as employees does not meet the requirement (of the tree care licensing). Mollie Higginbotham made a motion to accept the May minutes as amended. Joe Chandler seconded the motion which was accepted by acclamation.

Subcommittee Meeting:

Jamie Beard reported back to the board about the costs of securing Worker's Compensation Insurance. In Colorado the cost of work comp insurance is 27% of the National Average. Rates are estimated at between 5.9% to 12.99% (estimated at 4100/yr to 9000/year). If your payroll exceeds the insurance estimate, then you would have to make up the difference, if your payroll is lower you can get a credit back. Work Comp insurance can also be paid monthly and there is an experience model rate (the longer you have work comp without making claims the more discounts are available). Worker's Compensation Insurance covers medical costs as well as lost wages and can also cover long or short-term disability. Some plans include coverage for funeral expenses and survivor benefits. Workers Compensation is a no fault system; if you cause the accident you are still covered.

The Board members wondered what happens if an individual who has the waiver gets injured. Jamie Beard shared that often they file claims against the homeowner's insurance. General Liability doesn't cover employees, it is intended for property damage and injury to non-associated folks (such as an injured pedestrian).

Jamie Beard shared that the City is considering making a change so that contractors (who are licensed through the City) can not waive WC. Board members wonder if keeping it consistent across the city would be best. Because the fee is percentage based, it really doesn't matter if you do 20K a month or 20K over the year. You'll pay your percentage so it doesn't disproportionately affect small business.

Review of Chapter 8

The board discussed the Permit Required section which outlines times when people are required to get a permit to do work around a public tree. (Versus seeing that the root zone has been ripped up and trying to take care of it after the fact.) Rob reminded the Board that the Inspection of Trees section allows the City to take action on private trees that might cause larger scale damage. The City generally does not get involved if a falling branch might damage a fence, or roots are growing into an adjacent yard.

The code addresses pruning made to public trees for personal benefit (often for house moving) in the Special Request for Tree Pruning. These requests can be granted, or the Forester can require a specific route to avoid damage to trees.

Changes are proposed in the License Required section to allow for special permits for fire mitigation or invasive species tree work in naturalized open space properties for the benefit of the public. The board would establish the guidelines (for example, approved for tamarisk removal, not approved to remove 30" Siberian elm). This has been practically working for the recent fire mitigation work, but the board would like it codified. This would also allow for a permit process for general contractors to remove trees or for clearing development sites while allowing the Board to require a Licensed Tree Service for larger tree removals or removal of trees near structures, utilities, and roadways on development sites), for example. The next Chapter 8 sub-committee meeting is Thursday 6/20 9 -10am

Kamie Long talked with the board about State Forest Service IRA Grant. There are two tiers available for application: \$20K – \$100K and \$100K – \$250K. The grant is focused on trees in disproportionately impacted (DI) areas and uses a Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST). Tree work can only be performed on areas identified with the tool, tree inventory work can be adjacent to identified areas. Grant applications are due July 31, and the Parks and Recreation Director, Ken Sherbenou, supports a large tier grant application. Board members discussed going after a smaller grant this year and a larger grant next year so that there would be time to begin community outreach and make a larger grant application more competitive. Kamie shared that there is no match required for the grant and reimbursements can be submitted up to two times per month. Trees can not be planted in the first six months (which is designed to ensure that recipients are really reaching out to the community, gathering community buy-in and not just plunking down trees where people are not engaged). Board members are interested in setting up a committee to concentrate on creating an application for this grant.

Rob talked with the board about the state of ash trees in the city. Staff are not seeing success with trunk sprayed ash tree health. Currently there are 1200 trees in the injection program. There are a large number of trees in "no man's land" which are too small to spray or not in good enough condition to treat which are being left as is with no plans to treat in the immediate future.

The meeting adjourned by acclamation.

Respectfully submitted,
Ali Little
Administrative Specialist