



## **STAFF REPORT**

DATE: August 13, 2019

### **DISCUSSION**

**AGENDA ITEM:** Draft Tree Trimming Policy

**SUBMITTED BY:** Marty Powers, Public Works Director

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#### **BACKGROUND:**

In developing a tree trimming policy for Lake Elmo Public Works, the questions remain of what size of branch can be left in rural areas and what defines a rural area.

#### **ISSUE BEFORE COUNCIL:**

Does the Council have any additional questions about the draft policy? Should the City adopt a tree trimming policy?

#### **PROPOSAL DETAILS/ANALYSIS/OPTIONS:**

Trees and branches 2" in diameter and larger catch attention from residents as a trimming project not being completed. Trees and branches of 2" or less will break down naturally much quicker than the larger ones and can be lost or hidden amongst the new vegetation around it.

The definition of a rural section of road right of way in regards to Public Works tree trimming, would be defined as a section of road right of way that can be wooded or not maintained, has few homes or building and does not have a mowed lawn within 100 feet.

I will be attending the meeting and can answer other questions the council may have.

#### **FISCAL IMPACT:**

NA

#### **ATTACHMENTS:**

- Draft Tree Trimming and Removal Policy

## **Tree Trimming and Removal Proposal for Lake Elmo, Minnesota**

Drafted by UWRF students Alex Loewen, Abigail Nyseth, and Vinnie Simone

Updated 7/2019 by Public Works Director Marty Powers

### **Intent**

- October through March is a great time to think about tree trimming. All trees, large and small, can benefit from proper trimming. There are 3 major reasons to prune trees:
  1. Safety
  2. Health of tree
  3. Aesthetics

### **Responsibilities and Authority of the Public Works Department**

- The City has the authority to regulate tree trimming and removal activities within the city's right of way. The City will not perform any of these activities on private property unless it is impacting the right of way.
- Trimming is required if trees obstruct road lights and signs, block emergency vehicles, are diseased, or present an imminent threat to property or the public safety. Private utility companies will be responsible for trimming required due to tree impacting power lines or electrical services.
- The Public Works Director has discretion to decide appropriate action for trees on public land. All trees on public property may be trimmed or removed under order of the Public Works Director and are to be inspected periodically.
- It is the duty of the city to trim trees to allow clearance of necessary vehicles for public safety.
- The City pays for tree services on public property, the funds coming from the money allocated to the Public Works Department. At the discretion of the Public Works Director, stump removal in the city right of way may also occur.

### **Procedures and Guidelines for Tree Maintenance**

- All trees and branches will be trimmed to the existing tree line.
- Overhanging trees will be cut to a 20-foot clearance over roads and a 7-foot clearance over sidewalks and ditches.
- In rural areas branches 4" or less in diameter are left behind. In urban areas branches are chipped and hauled away.
- Rural and urban branches that are > 4" are left behind at firewood length at the preference of the property owner.

- Trimming of limbs will be cut to the trunk for the safety of the tree.
- Diseased or infected trees will be removed.
- Trees are trimmed to 20 feet over street or curb, and 7 feet over sidewalk.
- Aged, decaying, or dead limbs will be removed.
- Priority is given to fallen trees blocking streets or interfering with homes, cars, in an area on or adjacent to the public right of way. The Public Works Director has discretion over specific determinations.
- All stop lights, stop signs, and other road signs must be clearly visible. The Public Works Director has discretion over what constitutes an unsafe obstruction of road signs and lights.

### **Information for Private Property Owners**

- Residents may plant new trees or remove existing trees that are not within the easement boundaries and are on private property, provided trees are setback 10 feet or more from utility lines (Electric, Sewer, Water, Etc.), 5 feet from any sidewalk or curbing, and outside of any vision triangle or otherwise endangering the public safety. Residents may plant new trees or remove existing trees within the easement on private property, provided they receive a permit from the City Planner. If the City Planner denies the request for a permit, property owners have the right to appeal the decision to the City Council.
- If a resident chooses to plant a tree within the easement on their property they must be aware that the City does have the right to remove the tree for a variety of reasons. The City will not reimburse the property owner for the value of the tree if it was planted within the easement and will not replant a new tree if the tree fails to survive.
- **VISIBLE TRIANGLE.** The area created by drawing an imaginary line between points 30 feet back from where the curb lines of the intersection quadrant meet.

