



STAFF REPORT

DATE: SEPTEMBER 3rd, 2019
CONSENT

AGENDA ITEM: Tree Trimming Policy

SUBMITTED BY: Marty Powers, Public Works Director

REVIEWED BY: Kristina Handt, City Administrator

BACKGROUND:

As a learning project a group of UW-River Falls students assisted the City of Lake Elmo with developing a tree trimming policy that would keep trimming consistent. An adopted policy will make the tree trimming process clear to both residents and Public Works staff while working in the miles of city road right of ways, easements and trails systems.

ISSUE BEFORE COUNCIL:

Should the City adopt the attached tree trimming policy?

PROPOSAL:

I am recommending to approve the attached Tree Trimming Policy as prepared through collaboration with city staff and UW-River Falls students.

FISCAL IMPACT:

NA

OPTIONS:

Approve the tree trimming policy as recommended.

Approve the tree trimming policy with changes.

Do nothing and continue trimming without a policy.

RECOMMENDATION:

If removed from the consent agenda:

“Motion to approve the tree trimming policy as presented.”

ATTACHMENTS:

- Tree Trimming and Removal Policy



Tree Trimming and Removal Policy

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 2" or less in diameter may be left behind. In urban areas branches are chipped and hauled away.
- The definition of a rural section of road way for the purpose of tree trimming is defined as a section of road way that has few homes or buildings, sees minimal maintenance and does not have a mowed lawn within 100 feet.



- 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.

