

### **5.03: Consider Multiple Grant Opportunities Related to Community Forestry Activities**

Senior Planner Anderson presented the staff report. He stated that the purpose of the case is to review and consider two Urban and Community Forestry (UCF) grant opportunities available through the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR). One is a shade tree program bonding grant and the other is a ReLeaf community forestry grant. There is approximately \$10,000,000 available through the bonding grant program and a little less than \$7,000,000 via the ReLeaf grant program. The two grant programs are fairly similar (intentionally designed this way to simplify and streamline applying for both grants) in terms of eligible/ineligible expenses and timeframes.

Chairperson Moore asked if the funds could be used on any services if approved, such as hiring a contractor or placing additional staff in the parks department, or whether the funds could only be used for planting trees.

Senior Planner Anderson replied that funds could be used to hire a contractor as long as the contractor has certified professional staff. He stated that the funds could also be used to certify City staff as tree inspectors or arborists.

Chairperson Moore asked if EAB treatment would be ongoing and whether funds could be set aside to pay for those treatments for multiple years.

Senior Planner Anderson replied that treatment would not have to be continued for the life of the tree. He stated that if a round of injections were done in 2024, they could also do another round of injections in 2025 or 2026. He noted that most treatments are annual or biannual. He stated that once they are outside of that four-year grant window, it would be the decision of the City whether to continue with treatments at its own cost.

Chairperson Moore asked if this grant would only apply to trees on public property or whether funds could be used for trees on private property.

Senior Planner Anderson replied that the intention is to focus on public land. He noted that the grant does have a provision that would qualify certain properties that qualify as low income but noted that the City would intend to focus on public land and rights-of-way.

Chairperson Moore asked if the City would be willing to look into spaces that are not a park, but are City owned.

Senior Planner Anderson replied that the City owns quite a bit of land, noting that a handful is dedicated parkland but currently unimproved. He stated that could potentially be explored but some of the challenges with those unimproved parks is the difficulty in the survival of trees in those locations. He stated that they have done plantings in unimproved park lands before, but it was not successful due to lack of irrigation and challenges with animals. He stated that they could look at those opportunities if grant funds are received.

Board Member Heifner asked the average grant award amount.

Senior Planner Anderson replied that the maximum grant award is \$500,000. He commented that there is not a grant minimum.

Board Member Vikander asked if a plan would be written as to how the funds would be spent if this is approved by the Board and the City Council.

Senior Planner Anderson confirmed that would be part of the grant application.

Board Member Vikander asked if that plan would be brought back for review.

Senior Planner Anderson replied that the grant deadline occurs prior to the next Board meeting. He stated that he could send out a copy of the plan once completed if the Board is interested in reviewing the document.

Councilmember Woestehoff noted the mention of right-of-way and asked if the intention would be to handle trees that are within the right-of-way as that would also assist property owners.

Senior Planner Anderson confirmed that trees within the right-of-way are the responsibility of the City and therefore these funds could be used to manage the trees within those corridors.

Councilmember Woestehoff referenced the 20/10/5 formula mentioned in one of the applications and asked how the City compares to that currently.

Senior Planner Anderson replied that is not specific to City land and applies to the overall makeup of the city. He noted that three species that would not be eligible for purchase with grant funds. He commented that the state is encouraging some species for a trial because of the warmer climate that has been experienced. He noted that if those trees do well, the City could incorporate those into the preferred tree list.

Board Member Vikander asked if the City would be requesting the maximum grant amount or whether that amount is yet to be determined.

Senior Planner Anderson replied that he would not want to request more than could be accomplished. He noted that once the plan is developed, he would have the target amount but did not believe it would be close to the maximum amount of \$500,000.

Motion by Board Member Bernard and seconded by Board Member Vikander to recommend that City Council support staff preparing and submitting applications for both grant programs.

Further discussion: Board Member Salami stated that he would like to see the City experience the benefit of the grant funds and is interested to see the plan in more detail.

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Chairperson Moore, Board Member Bernard, Vikander, Hagerty, Heifner, and Salami. Voting No: None. Absent: Board Member Fetterley.