



## MUCFA Member Meeting Notes

**DATE:**

3/27/2024

**TIME:**

3:00-4:20 PM

**FACILITATOR:**

Patrick Plantenberg

**IN ATTENDANCE**

Patrick Plantenberg, MUCFA Chair/Townsend Tree Board; Fred Bicha, MUCFA Past Chair/City of Kalispell; Kelly Franklin, MUCFA Executive Director; Tim Egan, MUCFA Treasurer/ Dillon Tree Board; Mike Skaggs, City of Livingston; Scott Meyers, MUCFA Webmaster/Zoo Montana Arboretum; Joan Hansen, Big Timber Tree Board ; Megan Poulette, Rocky Mountain College/ Billings Tree Board; Linda Yount, Roundup Tree Board; Lorette Carter, City of Shelby; Mandy Irlbeck, MUCFA Board Member/Mandys Tree Care, Jamie Kirby, DNRC; Sheri Steckler, DNRC; Josh Stoychoff, DNRC; Lydia Heser, AMTOPP President/DNRC ; Kyle Harrington, Anaconda/Butte DNRC Forester; Emma Merdovic, Kalispell DNRC Forester; Howard Skjervem, NorthWestern Energy

**INTRODUCTIONS**

Introductions, especially new Executive Director, and new Members

**TREASURER REPORT**

Tim Egan presented the budget and planned expenses:

- DNRC granted \$8,000 for operational expenses for the fiscal year 2024-2025 starting July 1.
- Scott Meyers was hired at \$100/month to update website and manage social media sites.
- Obtained \$50k CD at 5%

## **REVIEW OF AMTOPP AND MNLA-NRTS CONFERENCES**

Patrick provided an update on the MT Urban Forest Coalition and explained that we are hoping to expand the coalition. DNRC UCF Program, MUCFA, and RMC-ISA sponsored the events (and hopefully MNLA-Northern Rockies Tree School, AMTOPP, and MT Trails Recreation, and Park Association will join in sponsorship of these and other training events in the future).

These events continue to be the main places where CEUs can be earned and where most of our membership dues are spent.

Discussed future potential training event with MMIA for public works employees.

## **BY-LAW CHANGES**

Patrick walked through the changes to the By-laws which included:

- Address change to 840 N. Montana Street, Dillon, MT 59725
- Added advising DNRC on the Montana Forest Action Plan
- Addition of our new Executive Director position
- Addition of two new Board members
- The Executive Director becomes the secretary and potentially the treasurer of the association.
- Addition of compensation for the Executive Director and Webmaster
- Removal of DNRC UCF Program Coordinator from the bylaws

A question was raised regarding board members who hold dual roles with the DNRC and other entities, and whether they are eligible to serve as voting members. Patrick explained that such individuals, such as Tim Egan, are indeed eligible to serve as voting members. It was suggested to integrate more explicit language into the bylaws to further clarify on this aspect.

A motion to make the changes to bylaws was made by Tim Egan and seconded by Fred Bicha. All present voted in favor.

## **MUCFA BOARD MEMBERS**

Patrick nominated Scott Meyers as a new board member, Fred Bicha as Past Chair, and Tim Egan as Vice Chair as well as Treasurer.

Jamie Kirby motioned to approve the member changes, and Lorette seconded. All members voted in favor.

The current board members includes: Patrick Plantenberg (Chair),;Tim Egan (Vice Chair and Treasurer); Kelly Franklin (Executive Director (which includes Secretary) and non-voting member); Fred Bicha, Past Chair; Mandy Irlbeck, Board Member; Levi Arnio, Board Member; Jennifer Sybrant, Board Member; Scott Meyers, Webmaster and Board Member.

Patrick mentioned the need to clarify whether the Chair can also serve as Treasurer, should Tim Egan show interest to take these roles in the future. Tim Egan will assume the role of Chair after Patrick steps down.

## GRANT APPLICATIONS

Kelly Franklin provided an overview of MUCFA's grant applications, mentioning they've applied for four grants so far this year. Three of these grants are with the DNRC, with one at the pre-proposal stage. Another grant is with the Otto Bremer Trust, administered by the Montana Community Foundation based in Helena. Kelly emphasized MUCFA is focusing on tree care and maintenance, highlighting the lack of funding for tree maintenance in small communities across Montana. While communities have better access to tree planting funding, maintenance aspects like pruning, hazard tree removal, and training are overlooked. MUCFA is also including activities for helping communities develop or updating tree inventories and five-year tree care and maintenance plans and for conducting a state-wide training needs assessment for small, disadvantaged communities with populations under 3,500. Kelly also highlighted the importance of members engagement and feedback in shaping MUCFA's initiatives.

Patrick added the importance of membership in MUCFA and outlined the benefits for cities with and without urban forestry or parks and recreation departments:

For cities with urban forestry or parks and recreation departments, MUCFA will continue to sponsor major training events and provide speakers for CEUs for tree workers and arborists. Membership dues contribute to these sponsorships.

For cities without urban forestry or parks and recreation departments, MUCFA aims to secure grant funding to support various initiatives, including:

- Funding new or updated tree inventories
- Training tree boards, volunteer groups, and public works employees
- Developing 5-year tree care and maintenance plans
- Establishing pruning cycles for small and large trees to reduce the risk of tree failures
- Providing matching grants to hire certified arborists for pruning and removal tasks, particularly for trees identified as hazardous or requiring immediate attention in inventories.

## WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Scott Meyers provided an update on Website traffic and Facebook page activities, indicating positive engagement. MUCFA's website homepage has received the most hits this year at over 300, followed by our employment page, membership page, Montana Tree Diversification page, applications, and news events. The website also has a new calendar and events page. Scott asked members to share input and suggestions on improvements we could make to the website and analytics they would like to have tracked from our website and social media. He also asked members to share events, articles, and news we can share. Mandy and Lorette mentioned they enjoyed the regular Facebook activity, especially the welcoming of new and renewed members.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

Patrick shared there are several tree care workshops and conferences scheduled in the upcoming months across Montana (see below). These events are aimed at educating community members, volunteers, and city officials about best practices, industry standards, research, and latest techniques in tree care maintenance, and urban forestry management. He also mentioned arborist certification programs in Montana, which offer formal training and certification for individuals on tree biology, pruning techniques, pest management, safety protocols, and other essential skills required for professional arborists.

He noted the ongoing partnerships with state agencies, such as the DNRC and the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), to leverage resources and support for tree-related projects.

Financial commitments from MUCFA and other organizations were discussed. MUCFA is sponsoring \$200 for a booth at the EAB Conference in Billings on April 2. We will also have a booth at the Montana Trails, Recreation and Parks Association Annual Conference in April. The DRNC, MUCFA, and Rocky Mountain Chapter ISA will be representing the Montana Urban Forestry Coalition again at the conference and will push for more tree trainings for parks employees. For the AMTOPP training in July they are estimating it will cost over \$20,000. Jamie Kirby from DNRC has committed \$2,000, and Patrick will talk with the board to see what MUCFA can contribute, ideally upwards of \$1,000 from MUCFA and \$500 from RMC-ISA.

Patrick also shared that he did a tree pruning workshop in Sheridan for the MSU Extension Service on March 27 for 24 people.

DATE	LOCATION	EVENT
April 2	Billings	EAB Conference
April 20 or 21	Helena	Tree Planting Workshop - Gardenworks
April 22-25	Billings	MT Trails, Recreation, and Parks Association Annual Conference
Mid-May	Glasgow	Tree Planting Workshop
July 12-13	Big Timber	AMTOPP Training <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Aerial rescue July 12 (\$350-\$400)</li> <li>– Climbing and rigging July 13 (\$350-400)</li> <li>– Crane Training July 12 and 13 (\$750-800)</li> <li>– Aerial lift certification- maybe</li> <li>– Tree planting workshop-maybe; 15 trees removed so need to replant them.</li> </ul>
Sept. 18	Big Timber Cemetery	Saluting Branches <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Opportunity for a training class (tree planting, pruning, etc)</li> </ul>
Jan 6-10, 2025	Missoula	MNLA-NRTS
Jan 30-31, 2025	Fairmont	AMTOPP Conference
March/April 2025	TBA	Tree Board Retreat – Growing Greener Communities west of the divide

## **DNRC UPDATE**

Sheri Steckler provided a tree inventory update for Hannah Payne, the Service Forester for Western Montana who is in charge of inventories for the whole state. Communities under the size of 1000 population that need updated inventories and other types of tree work include Glendive, Colstrip, Laurel, and Stanford. Priority communities that have never received an inventory include Troy and Sunburst.

Sheri brought up a potential opportunity for MUCFA to collaborate on their Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) project. Part of the grant focuses on working with community members whose properties are in the WUI. They are looking for a partner to provide a species conversation type of service and hosting a webpage which the DNRC can help build where property owners could use the webpage to get information on tree species that are more fire resistant. Grant funding for this project needs to be spent by the end of May. Patrick mentioned that MUCFA will follow up with them on this opportunity.

Jamie provided an update on where things are with the IRA grant. They received 19 applicants and notifications will be going out over the next couple weeks. \$300,000 in funds will be awarded with grants ranging from \$10,000 to \$50,000.

She mentioned the DNRC is looking into how they can provide smaller grant amounts in the \$5,000 mid-level range, to accommodate smaller towns with limited capacity and funds. However, she highlighted the challenges of administering smaller grants, acknowledging the increased workload but also recognizing the potential benefits.

Jamie discussed their efforts to put in a grant proposal with the DEQ for a Climate Pollution Reduction Grant as part of the Inflation Reduction Act Funds.

Jamie also noted their preparations for Arbor Day celebrations and coordinating activities across communities in Montana, including organizing events, coordinating schedules, and potentially leveraging social media for promotion. They are creating a master spreadsheet to track events and who will be in each location. She shared an idea for MUCFA to help promote all the events across Montana on social media.

## **MEMBER NEWS:**

Patrick Plantenberg:

- Townsend's tree care efforts include pruning, tree watering budget allocations, and general maintenance activities.
- Highlighted the city's financial support for tree watering and general tree care, easing the burden on volunteers.

Joan Hansen:

- Discussed community projects in Big Timber and mentioned facing some challenges.
- Expressed optimism about ongoing projects, including plans for the rehabilitation of a public space where the high school once stood.

Fred Bicha:

- Provided updates from Kalispell, including the completion of tree pruning efforts and preparations for tree planting season.
- Mentioned ongoing maintenance work and budget allocations for tree care.

Tim Egan:

- Updated on Dillion's tree board's pruning efforts, focusing on parks, schools, and trails.

- Mentioned collaboration with the city's cemetery and potential funding opportunities for tree-related projects.

Megan Poulette:

- Shared information about the Audubon Center's potential grant application with the Forest Service's to update the Forest Service's tree advisory app. Mentioned she is involvement as a subcontractor in the grant application process.

Scott Meyers:

- Provided updates from Zoo Montana Arboretum in Billings, including they now have 1000 trees inventoried and pruning projects have begun.
- Highlighted the success of the internship program with Rocky Mountain College and MSU Billings in supporting tree care activities.
- Shared news about the \$1 million IRA grant awarded to the City of Billings, which is going to enable the city to establish a tree board which they never had before Two members of MUCFA, Scott and Megan, have been asked to be on the Tree Board .

Josh Stoychoff:

- Shared updates from Lewistown, including plans for tree planting next to the Pickleball Court
- Mentioned an extension on their PD grant project.
- Expressed need for updating tree inventory.

Lorette Carter:

- Shared details about Arbor Day celebrations in Shelby, including community service activities, poster contests, and tree planting.
- Discussed efforts to secure grant funding for tree care maintenance in city parks.

Mandy:

- Mandys Tree Care has been busy pruning.
- Shared observations about tree survival rates after the extreme -56 cold weather this winter.
- Mentioned concerns about water availability and its impact on tree health during the upcoming summer.

Mike Skaggs:

- Provided updates from Livingston, including tree pruning efforts in the Cemetery and plans for Arbor Day celebrations with Livingston Loves Trees where they will be planting trees at the school.

Kyle Harrington

- Anaconda is trying to revamp their tree board which has been empty for a couple of years. Currently have two members including Kyle.
- Anaconda's ongoing project is hazard tree removal and replanting native species.
- Regarding Butte, their tree board is doing well and they have a City arborist who has applied for numerous grants through the DNRC and other organizations.
- Butte's projects are focused on street trees, maintenance, replanting, and maintaining all their park systems.