

To: **Mayor and City Council**
Through: **Ryan Schroeder, City Manager**
From: **Dave Schletty, Assistant Parks & Recreation Director**
Date: **March 25, 2019**

EAB Carbon Credits

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

In 2015 the City Council approved an Emerald Ash Boring (EAB) Action Plan. This plan has 3 major components: Removal of low quality trees, treatment of quality trees and replacement of removed trees. The Council has committed to following this plan for at least 10 years and evaluating it towards to end. The current budget commitment is about \$30k annually for injection treatment of 1/3 of the City's boulevard ash trees. Additionally the City budgets \$20k for removal of dead or poor quality public trees (all species), stump removals, and new tree plantings.

The City was recently approached by Michael Orange, a WSP resident and representative for a number of State agencies, with an opportunity to participate in a new program geared toward ash tree preservation. The program is called the MN Urban Forest Credit Program. The program uses ash trees to formalize a process to monetize their carbon sequestration benefits in the form of carbon credits. The credits could then be sold to potential buyers to offset carbon emissions. This is a pilot program for up to six Cities in MN. West St Paul is a prime candidate because of the high number of inventoried ash trees and because of the already adopted EAB action plan to preserve the quality ash trees.

In order to become a pilot City for this program the City would need to commit to ash tree preservation for up to an additional 10 years (20 years total). This would mean budgeting for ash trees beyond the initial 10-year plan.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The annual treatment budget of \$30k could be reduced by training City staff to perform the injections. Additionally it is believed that after the initial wave of EAB passes in about 5-8 years, tree injections could be extended from once every 2-3 years to once every 3-5 years, thus reducing the annual cost. The Council should also consider keeping the \$30k annual budget and using excess funds for annual tree replacements. Currently funding for tree replacements has been limited by an excessive number of tree removals.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff is looking for discussion on becoming a pilot City for the MN Urban Forest Credit Program.

Attachment: EAB Action Plan; MN Urban Forest Credit Program Description