

Summary of DLC Presentation to EAC on January 8, 2034

Presentation of Tiffany Thomas

- Tiffany Thomas, Vegetation Management Specialist for DLC, presented a PowerPoint on DLC's vegetation management (VM) responsibilities.
- Tiffany outlined the role of DLC's Vegetation Management Division. Tiffany highlighted the awards that DLC has received as an environmental steward; and she highlighted the credentials of the arborists working in the Division. DLC has developed detailed specifications regarding VM activities. DLC holds itself to these specifications and requires its contractors to meet them as well. These specifications are consistent with standards of the International Society of Arboriculture.
- Tiffany described the work flow associated with Fox Chapel's scheduled "routine maintenance" which will take place in 2024. As a first step, VM work plans have been developed. The work plans were developed by a third-party partner of DLC – ECI Environmental Consultants. The work plans undergo internal review by DCI for quality control. Thereafter, the work plans are given to the tree service contractor who will implement the pruning, cutting and other VM services called for by the work plans. Wright Tree Services will be the tree service contractor. Representatives of Wright Tree Services attended the EAC meeting. Tiffany reported that this multi-party approach is fairly new and is an improvement over past practice. Previously, almost all VM activities were controlled by the tree service company with little oversight: the tree service contractor planned the VM work; implemented the pruning, cutting and other VM work; and evaluated its own work. The current process is better – DLC is more involved in the VM process than it was in the past. Tiffany said that the data collected by ECI is incorporated into a DLC application, called *Clearion Software*. The software can access a database containing a complete tree inventory. The data base also includes a log of prior interactions with residents. *Clearion Software* gives DLC more control over the VM process and allows DLC to work more closely with residents to address their concerns.
- The VM work in 2024 will be carried out over approximately 113 miles in the Borough.
- Tiffany addressed hazardous trees. If necessary, DLC will cut a hazardous tree without the approval of the property owner if the property owner has not responded to multiple notification attempts from DLC or its third-party partners.
- Tiffany stated that DLC leaves vegetation debris in place on a resident's property: it is good for environment; DLC does not want to spread disease which could occur with removal of debris; and the resident owns the wood.
- VM services can include use of herbicides. Before they are used DLC tries to work with residents if they have concern about herbicides.
- DLC is always open to answering questions from residents.

EAC and Resident Questions and DLC Answers

- Is there a determination of reasonableness of a work plan? Yes, there a couple of ways this takes place. ECI prepares the work plans and DLC reviews the work plans and "internally scrubs the data." There is a DLC field manager (Brian Rutkowski) who will supervise the VM contractor. The

field manager works closely with the contractor and makes judgments that the work plan is reasonable. The work of the field manager is overseen by DLC arborists, including Tiffany.

- Is a resident given a copy of the work plan or any other document which describes the planned VM activity on the resident's property? No. There is no written work plan document given to the resident. Sometimes a door card is left at the resident's house. If extensive work is to be done on the property, the door card will not include detailed information regarding the proposed VM work – because the door card is not big enough to include that information. If the VM work will be more limited (e.g., taking down one tree), then DLC may include that information on the “notes” section of the door card.
- Can a resident obtain a secondary or tertiary review, prior to commencement of VM work, as to whether the planned work is reasonable? In response, DLC said that it would not undertake extensive cutting without having a discussion with the resident. Further, DLC said that if there is cutting to be done, DLC will mark the trees to be cut; and if the resident requested, DLC would be happy to walk the property with the resident.
- What is the area over which DLC can undertake VM work? Is it limited to the public right of way and (if any) the area in a private right of way where the resident gave DLC the right to prune/cut? DLC said, yes, that is the general rule as to where DLC can do its VM activity. DLC said, however, that if there is a hazardous tree (diseased or damaged with risk of falling on electrical lines), then DLC will cut that tree regardless of whether or not it is in a right of way (public or private). In this situation, DLC will attempt to have a discussion with the resident regarding removal of such a tree – to address with the resident the hazardous nature of the tree.
- In response to questions about prior notice of VM activities, DLC said that it undertakes multiple rounds of notice to a resident – a minimum of three attempts are made to contact a resident, including the following ways: DLC will make telephone calls to the resident; it will put a notice (like a flyer or a hand card) in the resident's mailbox; it will leave a door card at the residence. Tiffany said that they do whatever is needed to make contact with the resident. DLC uses contact information (phone number, email address) that the resident has given to DLC and that is on file with DLC.
- Responsibility to remove cut trees? Is it always the resident's responsibility? DLC responded that if a tree is cut down that was in a “developed setting” (meaning that there was mowing 360 degrees around the tree or the tree was in a mulched area), then that tree remains on the property and it is the responsibility of the resident to deal with the tree (e.g. keep it in place; have it removed; have it cut up for firewood, etc.). The expectation for a tree on a customer's property, is that the cut wood is left in ‘handleable’ lengths (length varies by diameter). ‘Handleable’ length is intended to include weight meaning it can be picked up and moved by an individual. In an instance where wood is left in larger/heavier pieces, this is a failure of the contractor to leave the site as it should. If/When DLC is made aware, they require the contractor to go back out. At this point a representative of Wright Tree Service made some comments about its work. He said that Wright attempts to accommodate the resident regarding breaking down cut trees and stacking the wood (recognizing that there are limits to what Wright will do – for example, it will not split the wood into firewood). He said that Wright attempts to have a discussion with the resident about the disposition of the cut wood; and if there are remaining unresolved issues, then Wright will revert to DLC for instructions.

- VM Cycles. DLC confirmed that it conducts VM in the Borough on roughly 4-6 year cycles. DLC also said that it does VM work in several municipalities at the same time.
- How long will DLC/Wright be in the Borough? DLC said that it is in the Borough often, including when there are emergencies, capital projects, etc. This year, however, is a scheduled maintenance period and it will be an intensive year for VM in the Borough. DLC anticipates starting its work on January 22 and that the work will continue through December 31.
- When will the tree cutting be done – some trees, like oak trees, can be properly trimmed only during dormant months? DLC said that it will try to work with a resident regarding the timing of VM work; however, because DLC is a regulated utility, it must do the VM work year round. DLC also said that its pruning practices include cleaning saws with an alcohol substance to prevent the spread of disease.
- For the upcoming VM work in the Borough, DLC said that it gave advance notice to residents about the work (3-18 months advance notice). DLC provides reminder notices of the VM work as it gets closer to the start date, and those notices are made through robo calls to the telephone numbers that are in its system.
- There is coding for trees that will be affected. Coding by paint indicates that the resident has authorized the VM action for the tree (yellow paint for pruning and blue paint for removing). A ribbon on a tree indicates the VM action for the tree is pending authorization from the resident.
- DLC has a tree voucher program – a program designed to replace healthy trees that are removed during VM activity. The replacement trees are better suited for placement under electric lines. The replacement trees come from quality local nurseries.
- There was discussion regarding numerous oak trees along Riding Meadow (Shady Side Middle School) that have been marked or tagged by DLC. DLC said that its internal legal team is currently handling this situation. Negotiations are expected to take place in regard to the pruning or removing of those trees; and that is why the trees are marked the way they are. DLC noted that it is also looking at VM work on other parts of the Shady Side Middle School property. The negotiations with Shady Side and DLC have not yet been scheduled. DLC acknowledged that the marked oak trees are outside of the road right of way. EAC pointed out that standing trees – including the trees at Shady Side – absorb a lot of stormwater. EAC asked DLC to proceed with caution regarding those trees – nobody wants a situation where DLC is asking for forgiveness instead of asking for permission. EAC made the further point that if Shady Side approves the tree removal with DLC, Shady Side would still need to come to the Borough for permission to remove the trees. EAC said that in the case of a private resident (not involving DLC VM activity), if the resident wanted to cut down trees, the resident would need to bring to the Borough engineering plans addressing the stormwater impact of the tree removal. EAC said that it is asking DLC for the same level of responsibility because the Borough needs to live with the stormwater consequences of removed trees. DLC said that it is in constant contact with the Borough regarding these types of issues.
- When asked if DLC's VM standards on reasonableness are open to the public for review, DLC responded that those standards are confidential and not open to the public. DLC said that although the standards are based on public information, the standards themselves are proprietary to DLC. DLC said that its standards are consistent with (even higher than) the

standards of the International Society of Arboriculture; and that DLC goes to conferences and takes other steps to make sure that it maintains its high standards.

- Richard Wendell – 511 Old Mill Road, asked several questions and relayed some of his experience with DLC VM work. Initially, he noted that a healthy tree canopy adds to the beauty of the Borough
- Mr. Wendell described the canopy at Woodside, CA – overhead wires and still good canopy. He was able to ask a local utility arborist how that good result was achieved, and he was told that the community’s VM cycles are at 18 months. DLC said that its cycles are submitted to the PUC for approval and that the approved VM plan for Fox Chapel calls for a 4-6 year maintenance cycle. DLC acknowledged that there are different cycles for other parts of the country; and Wright Tree Service confirmed that there are shorter cycles in different areas of the country – some parts of California are on an 18-month cycle. Mr. Wendell asked if Fox Chapel could request a shorter VM cycle. DLC said that it would not be an option available to DLC: to double the VM activity would require additional expense and that would have to be shouldered by the end-users – the utility customers.
- Mr. Wendell noted that VM activity centers on the property owner; but in his view VM activity on adjacent property (across the street or down the road or on a public park) can have an impact on other properties. Mr. Wendell noted that other municipalities have tree committees that he believes take into account the impact of VM work on the broader community (mentioning Forest Hills and the City of Pittsburgh). Tiffany said that sometimes DLC has an employee participating on a community shade tree board. That is the situation with the City of Pittsburgh. And Tiffany said that she has sat on shade tree boards (Baldwin, Whitehall, Brentwood). Tiffany said that DLC tries to work with shade tree committees (in similar manner as DLC works with the EAC).
- Mr. Wendell relayed what he called an unpleasant experience he had with DLC. When a DLC tree contractor began pruning work on a tree across the street from his property, Mr. Wendell asked the contractor to stop the pruning until Mr. Wendell could talk with a DLC forester. (The contractor agreed and held off the pruning work for a period of time.) Mr. Wendell called the Borough and was given a telephone number for DLC. The phone number went into a voicemail system. When Mr. Wendell returned to the work site, the tree contractor said that he had been instructed to continue the pruning work. Mr. Wendell said that the pruning damaged the tree and that the tree will likely will need to be removed. Tiffany noted that she returned Mr. Wendell’s call; Mr. Wendell concurred and said he wanted to bring the matter up at the EAC meeting. Tiffany said that she is willing to meet with Mr. Wendell to discuss his concerns; that DLC is always open for input and constructive criticism.
- DLC confirmed that if its pruning work results in damage to a tree, then DLC takes responsibility for that. Also, DLC does post-pruning review to see as to the health of trees that were pruned.
- EAC members asked follow-up questions about how DLC contacts residents – what is the normal way that DLC contacts residents? Tiffany said that DLC normally relies on phone calls to residents. She said that DLC prefers to use phones to notify residents because DLC personnel are constantly traveling. For tree removal or more intensive work, DLC may try to send a letter to the resident; but it would not do this for tree pruning. Tiffany said that the phone numbers it has on its system may be out of date; and that the resident has the responsibility to provide updated contact information to DLC.

- Tiffany said that DLC plans to do additional follow-up with the Borough regarding its upcoming VM activity in the Borough.
- Mr. Wendell had an additional comment regarding notification to residents. He said that phone calls may not get through because residents sometimes block incoming calls that they are not familiar with. He asked if DLC could look into better ways to communicate with residents. Tiffany said that she will take that suggestion back to the company: DLC is upgrading its systems continually; and if better communication is a customer expectation, they will look into that because DLC is always trying to meet customer expectations.