

Councilmember Trapp,

The tree board appreciates your awareness of the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) epidemic. All ash trees will likely die from this pest if not treated. This issue will affect a broad spectrum of citizens, including those that are financially unable to protect or remove ash trees at their residence. Dead trees left standing will potentially threaten infrastructure, utilities, vehicles, and people. The timeline from initial EAB infestation to tree mortality is short. Within 10-15 years of pest identification it is likely a large majority of ash trees will be dead. EAB was recently confirmed in Columbia in 2019. This is a serious threat that can be ruinous to municipalities with large numbers of ash trees and no plan. This city-wide problem is a high priority for the tree board.

What are we doing about EAB for limited income citizen?

- Implementation of EAB Management Plan (2019)
- Removal of hazardous/declining ash trees on street and utility right of ways (ROW) & Parks
- Updated right of way ash inventory (completed 2019)
- Insecticide treatments on high value trees in street ROW's & parks
- Tree Board received and implemented TRIM grant for public awareness campaign

What is not being done?

- EAB Management Plan does not address any privately-owned properties
- Lack of public awareness of the problem, specifically limited income demographic
- No data on privately-owned ash tree population, via tree inventories (including limited income areas), exist
- No current programs for financial assistance are available for removals and/or treatments for EAB

What can be done?

- Consider amending the Hazard Tree Code
- Privately-owned ash tree inventory
- Additional Public awareness - outreach, education, or workshops
- Secure funding and/or reallocate financial resources
- Create financial assistance opportunities
- Local tree business' volunteer removals or treatments
- Look to other cities that have met this problem already

The Tree Board is engaged with ongoing efforts to help combat EAB in our community. Moving forward, the board is adamant that funding and involvement are keys to success. If the council identifies productive options to address this concern, the Tree Board is here to help. Many citizens may have recently lost income due to pandemic shutdowns and we recognize a dead tree might not be a priority when compared with other, more pressing, financial obligations. Safeguarding these citizens is an important function, and we believe prompt action is paramount to combat the problem. Thank you for your initiative in contacting us with your concern and for your attention on this matter. Please reach out to the board should you require any additional feedback or clarification.

Respectfully submitted,

The City of Columbia Tree Board