

**MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING  
OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
OF THE PARK DISTRICT OF LA GRANGE, ILLINOIS  
HELD AT DENNING PARK  
4903 S. GILBERT AVENUE, LA GRANGE**

**APRIL 29, 2021**

**President Vear called the meeting to order at 4:37 P.M.**

**PRESENT:** Commissioners Jacobs, Lacey, Opyd, O'Brien, Vear  
Treasurer Rob Metzger

**ABSENT:** None

**STAFF PRESENT:** Executive Director Dean Bissias, Supt. of La Grange  
Fitness/Interim Executive Director Jenny Bechtold,  
Supt. of Finance Leynette Kuniej, Supt. of Facilities  
Chris Finn, Supt. of Recreation Kevin Miller, Supt. of  
BASE Leanna Hartung, Asst. Supt. of BASE Melissa  
Seaberg, Park Foreman Claudia Galla, Admin.  
Supervisor Linda Muth, Finance Assistant Terri Kuzel,  
Facility Rental Coordinator Andrea Weismantel

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Various members of the public

President Vear welcomed everyone to the special meeting. There were no announcements or changes to the agenda.

**Tree Planting Dedication**

Park Foreman Claudia Galla and Commissioner Jacobs spoke about Arbor Day and its history. They provided information on the number and species of trees that can be found in our parks and in La Grange. A bitternut hickory tree is being planted at Denning Park in dedication to retiring Executive Director Dean Bissias, and an overview the this species of tree was given.

President Vear thanked Dean for all he has done for the Park District.

**Public Comments**

Several members of the public spoke regarding the retirement of Director Bissias and lauded his many accomplishments during his tenure. He will be remembered for his many contributions to the community including the recreation and fitness centers, his dedication to working with affiliate groups and charities in La Grange, and the many lives he touched.

**SPECIAL BOARD MEETING – APRIL 29, 2021**

Speakers included Rob Metzger, Mary Ellen Penicook, Cathy Pierson, Mark Kuchler, and Steve Palmer.

**Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at the conclusion of the tree planting.

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Robert Vear, President

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Board Secretary  
*Approved May 10, 2021*

## The History of Arbor Day.

Arbor Day is about celebrating the legacy of trees. We sometimes forget the important ecological role of trees because they provide beauty. They also provide food, habitat for wildlife, stabilize soil, take in carbon dioxide, give off oxygen and contribute to biodiversity and environmental stability locally, and globally.

Arbor Day was started in Nebraska by Julius Sterling Morton in 1872. Morton had moved to the Nebraska Territory in 1854 from Michigan after he finished college and married. He was a hot-tempered student and expelled from University Michigan just before his graduation for "inattention to all his college duties, long continued neglect of recitation, and for his manifest contempt of the authorities of the University." He fought to re-instate a popular teacher and was rather opposed to authority figures. Morton became a respected journalist in Nebraska. He often wrote about the planting of trees to enrich the soil and conserve moisture and set an example by planting orchards, shade trees and wind breaks on his own 160 acre farm. After being appointed to the Nebraska State Board of Agriculture, J.S. Morton proposed a special day be set aside and dedicated to tree planting and increasing awareness of the importance of trees.

The first Arbor Day was thus held April 10, 1872, with the state government offering prizes to communities, civic groups and individuals who planted the most trees. **Over a million trees were planted on that one day!**

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Arbor Day remains a legal holiday in Nebraska with state offices and schools closed. The state of Nebraska made April 22 the official Arbor Day in honor of Morton's birthday. In 1970 it was Richard Nixon who proclaimed the last Friday in April as National Arbor Day. Arbor Day is now celebrated in all fifty U.S. states, and in many other countries.

One of J.S. Morton's four sons, Joy Morton, founded the Morton Salt Company in Chicago and in 1922 the Morton Arboretum 22 miles west of Chicago in Lisle, Il..

## Arbor Day, 2021 Tree Planting

Dedication to retiring Executive Director of the Park District of La Grange, Dean Bissias

### Bitternut Hickory *Carya cordiformis* (Wangenh.) K. Koch

The bitternut hickory is one of 19 different types of hickory found in temperate parts of the world- and one of about 10 native species found in North America. It is a handsome strong tree that is the most widely distributed of the hickories, occurring east of the Mississippi River and spanning from northern Minnesota to eastern Texas and northern Florida up to New England and Quebec. It is especially common from Kentucky northward. Other hickories include pecan and shagbark (the familiar tree with shaggy bark), and all are related to walnuts though a different genus.

Typically this tree is found in moist bottomlands with oaks, maples, basswood. It prefers sunny locations but has proven tolerant of urban conditions including clay soils. It will grow to a majestic 60-80 ft and live some 200 years.



Some distinguishing characteristics: An oval-irregular shape, sulfur yellow buds noticeable in winter, thin but dense gray bark, and compound leaves that turn a beautiful golden yellow in fall. The leaves are a preferred host for some striking moths and butterflies including Luna Moth (*Actias luna*). The tree makes male and female flowers (catkins) on the same tree (monoecious), and its fruits are walnut-like nuts like pecans, but smaller- no more than 1 inch dia and round to heart-shaped. The name 'cordiformis' refers to the nut shape and means "heart form" in latin. The tree won't produce its fruit until about 30-yrs-old. Because of its strength, shock resistance, and beauty, hickory is used to make furniture, cabinetry, paneling, tool handles, and its wood is choice for smoking meats (think Hickory smoked BBQ)!



<https://farmfoodfamily.com/types-of-hickory-trees/>

[https://www.srs.fs.usda.gov/pubs/misc/ag\\_654/volume\\_2/carya/cordiformis.htm](https://www.srs.fs.usda.gov/pubs/misc/ag_654/volume_2/carya/cordiformis.htm)

<http://naturewatchaustin.blogspot.com/2013/10/mysterious-moths.html>

<https://nfs.unl.edu/woody-plants/bitternut-hickory>