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*Stalzer*



**JOHN W. FOUST**  
DRANESVILLE DISTRICT SUPERVISOR

**Board Matter**  
**Supervisor John Foust**  
**September 22, 2015**

**Tree Preservation on Public Projects**

**Background:** Madam Chairman, on many occasions, our Board has stated its strongly held belief that tree preservation is an essential element in our environmental plans and in our efforts to protect and improve the quality of life in our county. We have acted on this belief and our goal to preserve trees by adopting the Tree Action Plan, the Tree Conservation Ordinance, Section 12-000 of the Public Facilities Manual ("Tree Conservation"), the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Ordinance, and the Board's Environmental Agenda, among others. It would be difficult for the Board to send a clearer message that tree preservation is important and must be considered when both public and private developments are proposed.

In a future Board Matter, I will address concerns and recommendations I have with respect to tree preservation on private in-fill development. With respect to public projects, the Board's Environmental Agenda states that tree conservation should be increased by optimizing tree preservation and planting efforts in design and construction of public facilities. Based on recent experiences in my District, especially with respect to storm water and sanitary sewer projects, I believe there may be more that can be done to meet tree preservation goals on public projects.

On December 9, 2009, the Board adopted a Board Matter that directed staff to examine issues relating to preservation of trees during development of county property. Among other actions, staff was directed to form a workgroup to develop standard operating procedures that address tree preservation, tree planting and ecosystem management in the design and review of County projects. Staff was also directed to reach out to the private sector for assistance.

On March 22, 2011, at the Board's Environmental Committee meeting, staff presented an excellent report in response to that Board Matter. I have attached a copy of the report for Board members' reference. Some of the actions that staff recommended implementing include the following:

- Include the Urban Forestry Management Division in the early planning stages of county projects to assist with development of project budgets, site layouts and construction practices.
- Improve the process used to identify potential tree conservation and landscaping costs and embed these in Capital Improvement Program budgets.

- Develop an outreach program for submitting engineers and in-house project managers to help these groups become more knowledgeable about County policies and guidelines pertaining to tree conservation.
- Develop a Tree Canopy Loss Mitigation Policy that complements the County's 30-year Tree Canopy Goal and Tree Action Plan.
- Examine if the Comprehensive Plan, Policy Plan objectives for developing public facilities could be amended in a manner that increases tree preservation efforts and, if so, prepare amendments for further consideration and possible adoption.

The report recognizes that public projects, like private projects, will frequently have an unavoidable negative impact on the tree canopy. However, the recommendations also recognize that a project's impact can and should be mitigated by making a proactive effort to include tree preservation as a fundamental design consideration.

I commend staff for these recommendations. When implemented, they should significantly improve the county's tree preservation efforts on public projects. However, based on my experience with public projects in my district, I believe these recommendations either have not been fully implemented or that the implementation could be more effective.

**Motion:** Therefore, Madam Chairman, I move that the Board direct staff to report to the Board's Environmental Committee on the status of the implementation of the recommendations contained in the March 22, 2011 report. Because these recommendations should also be considered by others responsible for public construction projects in the county, I further recommend that when staff reports to the Environmental Committee that it present drafts of letters for the Chairman's signature addressed to the Chairs of the Fairfax County School Board, the Fairfax County Park Authority and Fairfax Water setting forth the county's goals and requirements for tree preservation and requesting that their boards, to the extent applicable to their organizations, adopt similar recommendations for tree preservation on their public projects.

# Tree Preservation on County Property

Presented to the Board's  
Environmental Committee

March 22, 2011

## Assignment

On December 7, 2009, the Board directed staff to:

- Examine Issues relating to the preservation of trees during the development of County property
- Develop a data set of culturally, historically, and ecologically significant trees and native plants
- Convene a meeting between Urban Forest Management Division (UFMD) and County agencies that design and develop public facilities
- Develop procedures addressing tree conservation and ecosystem management
- form a work group to address Implementation of procedures
- Identify "roadblocks" that interfere with County projects reaching tree preservation and canopy goals
- Report to the Environment Committee on activities and actions

## Supporting Tree Action Plan Recommendation

### Optimize Tree Conservation In Utility and Public Facility Projects

#### Goals

- Optimize tree preservation in the siting and construction of utility lines
- Optimize tree preservation and planting efforts in the design and construction of public facilities
- Establish a framework for collaboration and "buy-in support" among county agencies and the Forest Conservation Section on tree preservation and planting efforts associated with the design and review of county development projects

## The Workgroup

During 2010, UFMD invited multiple organizations to join a workgroup formed to address the assignment:

- Fairfax County Tree Commission
- Fairfax County Park Authority
- Fairfax County School Board
- Department of Housing and Community Development
- Facilities Management Department
- Department of Planning and Zoning
- Department of Public Works and Environmental Services
  - Capital Facilities
  - Land Development Services
  - Stormwater
- Department of Transportation

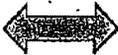
## Divergent Perspectives

Current policy does not adequately communicate that tree preservation should be treated as a fundamental design consideration



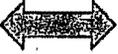
Current policy language adequately conveys this message, but tree preservation is just one design objective that must be considered

Developing and user agencies do not pursue tree preservation in a proactive and positive manner



Tree Preservation is always a consideration but it must compete with multiple design objectives on a site-by-site basis

Opportunities to preserve specimen, monarch, or ecologically significant trees are often ignored or minimized



The location of high-quality trees often coincides with areas that are optimal for functionality or otherwise needed to address site plan regulations

Lack of awareness about the environmental and social contributions of trees is manifested as an a hesitancy to treat tree preservation as a serious concern



Tree preservation is an immediate consideration, Current and future efforts to preserve ecologically significant trees require management of the site plan regulations

## Shared Perspectives

Mature trees have extensive root systems. They are easily impacted by construction and/or environmental changes resulting from changes in land use

Inventory and mapping of existing vegetation greatly assists preservation efforts but is not always used because of budget constraints

Preservation of existing vegetation needs to be examined earlier in the planning/design phases

Tree preservation is often examined during the middle and later stages of projects when the site layout and budget have been finalized. This timing limits the success of preservation attempts and can introduce unexpected costs and delays

## Shared Perspectives

Developing agencies and their contractors may not be cognizant of the services provided by UFMD or how these can enhance planning, design and construction processes

Although greatly improved during recent years, interagency communication/cooperation on tree and landscaping issues can be challenging

Current Comprehensive Plan, Policy Plan language regarding the development of county facilities could be amended to place emphasis on tree preservation

Funding for environmental features, including tree and landscaping is not identified as a line item within CIP budgets

## Practices that Work

- Inclusion of UFMD staff during the early stages of County projects
- Mapping and inventory of onsite vegetation and use of this information during the early design stages of projects
- Informal outreach to in-house project managers
- Communicating sensitivity of tree conservation efforts to contracted professionals such as private civil engineers and construction personnel
- Establishing and maintaining interagency communication during the design, plan review and construction phases of projects

## The Workgroup

### Divided into 3 Subcommittees

- Practices and Policies**  
Examined opportunities to improve current practices and policies and to generate new ones if needed
- Interagency Communication**  
Examined opportunities to increase communication and cooperation over tree conservation matters, and to encourage agencies to take full advantage of UFMD services
- Culture, Education and Awareness**  
Examined opportunities to affect positive attitudes within the workforce and to increase awareness about the value of trees

## Recommendations

### Implement the following actions:

- Develop a vegetation inventory and mapping standard for County projects
- Route all 2232 cases to UFMD for review and comment
- Include UFMD in the early planning stages to assist with the development of project budgets, site layouts and construction practices
- Improve the process used to identify potential tree conservation and landscaping costs and embed these in Capital Improvement Program budgets
- Distribute a list of contacts and services offered by UFMD to help ensure that all County staff and contractors are aware that UFMD is available for assistance
- Develop an outreach program for submitting engineers and in-house project managers to help these groups become more knowledgeable about County policies and guidelines pertaining to tree conservation

## Recommendations

- Develop a Tree Canopy Loss Mitigation Policy that:
  - Complements the County's 30-year Tree Canopy Goal and Tree Action Plan
  - Provides an opportunity to demonstrate innovative tree conservation practices
  - Acknowledges that it may be necessary to remove tree canopy during the development and expansion of County facilities
  - Acts to replenish lost tree canopy through reforestation practices on the same or other County properties, including lands owned by the Fairfax County Park Authority and Fairfax County Public Schools
  - Utilizes funds from the County's Tree Preservation and Planting Fund and/or Environmental Improvement Program to finance related reforestation projects
  
- Examine if the Comprehensive Plan, Policy Plan objectives for developing public facilities could be amended in a manner that increases tree preservation efforts. If so, prepare amendments for further consideration and possible adoption.