

**Fairfax County Tree Commission**  
**APPROVED Meeting Minutes**  
**Thursday, December 7, 2023**

**Call to Order:**

Chair Speas called the December 7, 2023 meeting of the Fairfax County Tree Commission to order at 6:48 p.m. via electronic meeting.

Chair Speas read the FOIA Electronic Meeting Disclosure. She then called the role.

<b>Name</b>	<b>District/Agency</b>	<b>Calling in fro</b>	<b>Attendance</b>
Cindy Speas, Chair	At-Large		Present
Elaine Kolish, Vice-Chair	Mount Vernon District	Mount Vernon	Present
Jeanne Kadet	Braddock District	Annandale	Present
Barbara Ryan	Dranesville District	McLean	Present
Jessica Bowser	Franconia District		Absent
Bret Leslie	Hunter Mill District	Mount Laurel, NJ	Present
Kevin Holland	Mason District		Absent
Rose Hendricks	Providence District	Falls Church	Present
Cory Suter	Springfield District		Absent
Perry Rhodes	Sully District	Centreville	Present
Rick Healy	EQAC	Annandale	Present
John Burke	FCPA	Arlington	Present
Jerry Peters	NVSWCD		Present
Brenda Frank	VA Coop Extension	McLean	Present
Vacant	VDOF		Vacant

Chair Speas called a quorum, and passed the virtual gavel to Vice-Chair Kolish.

***Chair Speas moved that everyone’s voice could be heard by each other member of the TC. Commissioner Ryan seconded. The motion carried unanimously with no abstentions.***

***Chair Speas moved that per FOIA requirements, the TC may conduct this meeting virtually and the public can access the meeting. Commissioner Ryan seconded. The motion carried unanimously with no abstentions.***

Chair Speas welcomed staff to the meeting:

- Joan Allen, Urban Forest Management Division
- Brian Keightley, Urban Forest Management Division
- John Friedman, Land Development Services

- Jerry Stonefield, Land Development Services

### **Public Comment Period:**

No members of the public were present.

### **Approval of Minutes:**

- November 2 meeting: Commissioners Leslie and Burke each offered a correction.  
*Commissioner Leslie moved to accept the minutes as amended. Commissioner Kolish seconded. The motion carried unanimously with no abstentions.*
- All special meeting minutes: October 24 Board of Supervisors Meeting (at which the 50th anniversary of the Tree Commission was recognized); October 25 Planning Commission Meeting; and October 25 tree planting at Government Center in recognition of the Tree Commission's 50th anniversary: No revisions were suggested.  
*Commissioner Leslie moved to accept both sets of minutes. Commissioner Ryan seconded. The motion carried unanimously with no abstentions.*

### **New Business:**

- Jerry Stonefield, Site Code Research and Development, Land Development Services, presented on amendments to the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Ordinance: These include a provision requiring the preservation of mature trees in Resource Protection Areas (RPAs), which Fairfax County is already doing because of its compliance with Chapter 122 and the related section in the Public Facilities Manual, another provision on coastal resilience and adaptation that requires the consideration of the impacts of climate change for development in the RPA, and various other provisions. LDS is currently doing outreach to relevant groups and will initiate a formal public hearing process in late spring or summer of 2024, targeting an effective date in September 2024.

### **Old Business:**

- Update on the Tree Commission charter revisions from the December 5, 2023, Board of Supervisors meeting: Chair Speas noted comments from Supervisors included a reminder to consider tree equity and to assess the fiscal impact of the charter change, and Chair Speas noted that Director Herrington replied that the impact on staff hours dedicated to the Tree Commission would be unchanged. Chair Speas thanked the Commission for persistence and energy on this issue. The charter revision will be a major topic for the January retreat.
- Election of Officers for 2024: Commissioner Hendricks provided an update from the nominating committee. She reached out to all members of the Tree Commission (with a second attempt to make contact if she did not hear back after an initial email). All

members with whom she connected nominated Cindy Speas for Chair and Elaine Kolish for Vice-Chair.

***Commissioner Hendricks moved to nominate Cindy Speas for Chair. Commissioner Leslie seconded. The motion was accepted by the Chair as acclamation because there were no nominations from the floor.***

***Commissioner Hendricks moved to nominate Elaine Kolish for Vice-Chair. Commissioner Leslie seconded. The motion was accepted by the Chair as acclamation because there were no nominations from the floor.***

The TC will write a description for the Secretary during the January retreat and will elect a secretary shortly after.

- Amending the Tree Commission’s Landscaping and Screening letter from July 6, 2023: A staff report on Landscaping and Screening dated November 15, 2023, provided a recommendation to add the phrase “and environmentally tolerant species identified in the Public Facilities Manual” after “preference should be given to native species.” On December 6, 2023, the Planning Commission adopted an amendment that added “where appropriate for site conditions” after “environmentally tolerant species.” The Planning Commission language limits the use of non-native species to when such species are appropriate for site conditions. The Tree Commission draft supplement to its July 6 letter, shared at this meeting, expressed agreement with the Planning Commission’s amendment, adding that the use of non-natives should be an exception and not become the norm, and including the suggestion that staff document the reason for use of a non-native species in its records. The Commission discussed whether to include a mention of monoculture, and if so, how to include it in a way that illustrates the importance of using non-natives only when necessary.

*Commissioner Kolish made a motion to accept the letter with the expectation that the sentence pertaining to monocultures will be reworded. Commissioner Kadet seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously with no abstentions.*

- Proposed meeting schedule for 2024: 2024 meetings will occur on January 4, January 25 (retreat scheduled from 12-3 pm replacing the February 1 meeting), March 7, April 4, May 2, June 13, July 11, September 5, October 17\*, November 14, and December 12. A meeting on January 9, 2025 was also included. \*Note for future reference, after the meeting, per Roberts Rules, the chair changed October 17 to September 26 in order to accommodate a commissioner conflict. However, each commissioner agreed individually to the change. See attachment.

***Commissioner Leslie moved to adopt the meeting schedule. Commissioner Kolish seconded. The motion carried unanimously with no abstentions.***

- Healthy Soils and Native Plant Communities Make Healthy Trees: Jerry Peters presented. According to a recent Chesapeake Bay study of the tree canopy shared by Director Keightley, 40% of the county’s current tree canopy is over turf, which has a number of

harmful effects for trees. Given this statistic, Commissioner Peters suggested amending the Tree Basics booklet with recommendations for improving soil and tree health (e.g., leaving leaves on the ground, not planting trees over turf). The Commission appreciated and agreed with these recommendations, and there was general consensus that the Commission would like to update the Tree Basics booklet and to prioritize public outreach and education on tree health in 2024.

- UFMD Director's Update: Dir. Brian Keightley presented on the Heritage, Specimen, Memorial and Street Tree Ordinance, which designates these four categories of trees for preservation and includes a civil penalty for removing them. There are currently no trees included in the list of current designated trees, and the county has received few inquiries about applications. The application process for residents is not clear, and the staff will return to the Commission with a clarified process next year.

### **Commissioner Announcements:**

- Commissioner Ryan met with the Great Falls Citizens Association Environment Committee about tree preservation. They were very interested in the current status of the Tree Commission's 2021 recommendations to the Board of Supervisors (BOS) on infill development and discussed strategies for encouraging the BOS to take them up for consideration. Commissioner Ryan also noted that there are at numerous tree-related bills that appear to be in the process of being pre-filed for the 2024 General Assembly Session, as well as a possible bill that would limit the ability of HOAs to prevent homeowners from installing conservation landscaping.
- Commissioner Leslie provided an update from the Tyson's Forest Community Task Force, which consists of tenants, business community, local residents, and local government representatives. The Task Force is looking at challenges and opportunities in seeking to preserve the last contiguous forest acreage in the area.
- Director Keightley noted that we all should have received a letter from the County Executive about lobbying.
- Chair Speas noted that we will be part of the LDS's outreach in their work to revise the environmental policy components of the Comprehensive Plan.

Chair Speas adjourned the meeting at 9:02 pm.

**ATTACHMENT: APPROVED Tree Commission Meetings for 2024 – January 2025**

- 1<sup>st</sup> Thursday of the month except for July and October, 2024 and January, February, and July, 2025. There is no meeting scheduled in August 2024.
- In person meetings will be at the Herrity Building conference room unless changed and posted three days in advance of the meeting date and time.
- Per FOIA, the Tree Commission may hold three virtual meetings as long as no two are consecutive. The Tree Commission reserves the right to change an in person meeting into a virtual meeting as long as that is publicly posted with at least 3 days advance notice prior to the meeting date.
- The TC may post non-business in-person or virtual meetings with at least 3 days advance notice.

**Proposed 2024 Meeting Dates**

All meetings shall be posted as in-person unless changed to virtual format and posted three days prior to the meeting date. All meetings, whether in-person or virtual shall start at 6:45 pm. Already scheduled Zoom meetings are noted below with an \* asterisk.

Day	Date	Alternate Date	Time	Reason
Thursday	January 4, 2024		6:45 pm	
Thursday	<del>February 1, 2024</del>	January 25, 2024	12 – 3 pm	Retreat during day
Thursday	March 7, 2024		6:45 pm	
Thursday	April 4, 2024		6:45 pm	
Thursday	May 2, 2024		6:45 pm	
Thursday	June 6, 2024	June 13, 2024	6:45 pm	Staff conflict
Thursday	<del>July 4, 2024</del>	July 11, 2024*	6:45 pm	4 <sup>th</sup> of July holiday
Thursday	August 2024			No meeting
Thursday	September 5, 2024		6:45 pm	
Thursday	<del>October 3, 2024</del>	September 26, 2024*	6:45 pm	Rosh Hashanah/ other conflicts on 10-3 and 10/10
Thursday	November 7, 2024	November 14, 2024	6:45 pm	Staff conflict
Thursday	December 5, 2024	December 12, 2024	6:45 pm	Staff Conflict
Thursday	<del>January 2, 2025</del>	January 9, 2025	6:45 pm	New Year’s Day holiday