

TREE COMMISSION MINUTES

May 18, 2017

MEMBERS PRESENT

Jeanne Kadet, Braddock District
John Stokely, Fairfax County Park Authority
Catherine C. Ledec, Mt. Vernon District
Robert Vickers, Chair, Dranesville District
Jerry Peters, NV Soil & Water Conservation District
Dragan Momcilovic, Hunter Mill District
Jim McGlone, Vice Chair, VA Dept. of Forestry
Karen Campblin, Sully District
Jessica M. Bowser, Lee District
Rick Healy, Environmental Quality Advisory Council

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Sheila D. Allen Virginia Cooperative Extension, Fairfax County
Chet McLaren, At-Large
Kevin Holland, Mason District
Rick Ayers, Springfield District
Tom Fleury, Providence District

STAFF PRESENT:

Keith Cline, Director, UFMD
Hugh Whitehead, Urban Forester III, UFMD
Patrick O'Brien, Urban Forester II, UFMD Liaison

Call to Order

Chair Vickers called the meeting to order at 7:36 pm.

Minutes

The April minutes were reviewed and approved with changes.

Springfest 2017

Commissioner Kadet started out by giving her thoughts on Springfest 2017. She observed that the layout of Springfest was spread-out with different groups mixed together, which may have actually helped to draw people to the Tree Commission who were browsing the vendors. Discussion among all the commissioners turned to how to engage the children who seemed interested in only getting their passports stamped and moving on. Some of the activities at the Tree Commission table such as word games did not seem to keep the children's attention.

Jim McGlone mentioned that although he was not able to present the Tree City USA award due to scheduling conflicts, his colleague who took his place said that there were no tree commissioners involved in the ceremony. Jim said in previous years there was always a member of the Tree Commission present on stage with the Board of Supervisors during the presentation. J. Kadet mentioned it would be made clearer next year who from the Tree Commission would be present for the presentation.

Celebrated Trees

Commissioner Campblin had nothing to report.

Tree Preservation and Planting Awards Process Update

Commissioners Kadet and Campblin are working toward finalizing a nomination form that will allow contractors to demonstrate how their project has gone above and beyond the minimum requirements. The intent of the new form is to take some of the burden off the Urban Forest Management staff and encourage contractors to submit a completed nomination form on their own. Hugh Whitehead reviewed and provided feedback on the draft nomination form and will provide the form to Urban Forestry staff at their Monday staff meeting for further review and comment. Hugh recommended moving forward with using the form this year and modifying the form if necessary during the nomination process. Keith Cline would look into removing the old form from the Tree Commission website and posting the new form online. The Tree Commission would begin drafting a brochure to advertise the new nomination form to the development community, which could also serve to communicate the County's values regarding tree preservation and planting.

Tree Action Plan Update

Commissioner Vickers mentioned that the final version is near completion and that a copy will be provided to Penny Gross for review as she is the chairwoman of the environmental committee. Commissioner Vickers believes that Penny Gross may also be able to provide suggestions for public and private partners that should be involved in the plan. A copy of the plan is anticipated to be sent to Penny Gross by the end of May or early June.

UFMD/Commissioners Offsite Retreat

Commissioner Vickers provided an update on the location of the Tree Commission retreat which will be held at the Great Falls public library meeting room on June 15th from 1 to 6pm. Keith Cline is planning to set aside approximately 4 hours between 1 and 5pm to present material to the commissioners that will help guide them and increase their effectiveness in their commissioner roles, responsibilities, and processes. Urban Forest management staff are also preparing binders with information such as working history, by-laws, charter, best practices for boards and commissions, job descriptions, and support material. Keith Cline also suggested that the commissioners visit the Tree Board University Website (<http://www.treeboardu.org/>) which was drawn from for the presentation. The retreat is only intended to be an introduction to initiatives that should be carried out by Tree Commissioners and Urban Forest Management staff.

Nancy Herwig will serve in the role as meeting facilitator for the retreat. Mrs. Herwig is the executive director of the Mid-Atlantic Chapter of the International Society of Arboriculture (MAC-ISA). Nancy has agreed to meet prior to the June 15th meeting to discuss how to get the most from the meeting.

Discussion on Solar Panels and Tree Conflicts

Vice Chair Jim McGlone discussed information sent around regarding Solarize Fairfax, a renewable energy initiative which also have similar programs in neighboring jurisdictions. Jim had a conversation with the arborist for the City of Falls Church about the potential conflict between trees and solar panels. According the city arborist, the Solarize organization says they understand the value of trees and would not recommend removing trees to install solar panels.

Solar panels can function with trees although at a reduced efficiency. Solar panels in the form of roof shingles that have recently come to market were mentioned as a possible alternative to larger panels.

Commissioner Ledec expressed concern that solar panels are being promoted at the expense of trees and if anything could be done to ensure solar installation incentive programs do not result in the loss of healthy trees. The commissioners discussed the potential of attaching a condition to the County's tax credit program to deincentivize installation of solar panels that would result in tree removal. Keith Cline recommended that the Tree Commission take an official position on the issue and present a resolution or draft a letter to the Board of Supervisors (BOS) that outlines the conflict and presents the Commission's opinion that trees should be a higher priority than solar panels. Hugh Whitehead suggested that any feasibility assessment for solar panels should include consideration of the health and condition of a tree, which may be appropriate for removal in certain situations. A formal motion was passed by the commissioners to move forward with a letter or resolution to the BOS.

UFMD Report (Keith Cline)

Keith Cline mentioned the infill lot group that was formed to talk about infill lot development issues and tree loss. The group is a way to get the building industry, County, and citizen groups together to talk about issues and improving communication between groups. The recent meeting included discussion about the trees forums, increase in UFMD staff, plan review, and working with building industry. The group put together instructions on how to access and use LDSnet (<http://ldsnet.fairfaxcounty.gov/ldsnet/>) to locate information on infill lot plans, including their review status, reviewer comments, contact information, and conservation escrow.

Keith Cline also mentioned that he and Ian Fuze gave a 3-hour presentation as part of a series of classes offered by the Engineers and Surveyors Institute (ESI). The presentation covered the Tree Conservation Ordinance and included plan review and fatal flaws, zoning ordinance, tree preservation and included hands on exercises.

Commissioner Reports

- Commissioner Jessica M. Bowser – Jessica plans to submit comments on the Embark Route 1 project and encourages everyone to do the same.
- Commissioner Catherine C. Ledec – 1) Mount Vernon Counsel of Citizens Association invited Catherine to speak at their general counsel meeting. 2) The Mount Vernon district supervisor has asked Catherine to lead a team to improve landscaping around his building. The team is working with Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District and the Conservation Assistance Program. 3) Attended an event at the Mount Vernon Country Club which has significant stormwater improvement projects. Tree planting portion of the project consists of over 600 plantings. 4) Catherine is concerned about a by-right development that has plans currently under review by the County to remove a 57-inch willow oak.
- Commissioner Jeanne Kadet – Jeanne has received a heads up from the Land Use Committee that a constituent will be contacting Jeanne about her concerns over tree loss

in Braddock District due to infill development. Keith Cline mentioned that Jeanne could put in a request to UFMD for an assessment of the tree cover by district.

- Commissioner Karen Campblin – Karen was approached by a high schooler who was concerned about tree loss and wanted to replant and preserve trees in the area. He developed a tree planting plan and worked with Karen and Hugh to come up with a program to plant trees. Jim McGlone suggested contacting Fairfax ReLeaf who will provide free tree saplings and planting advice (<http://www.fairfaxreleaf.org/>).
- Commissioner Jerry Peters – The NVSWCD had a seedling sale which went well and raised funds for NVSWCD.
- Commissioner Jim McGlone – The Northern Virginia Urban Forest Roundtable on May 19th has been cancelled due to lack of interest. The subject of the roundtable was urban forest utilization, which is a resource that rivals the annual timber harvest of all national forests. According to a clearing contractor that Jim spoke with, the majority of trees removed for development are processed as wood pellets for industrial boilers or sent to a saw mill. Jim announced the Back to the Bay celebration on June 10th at Mason Neck State Park which will have environmental groups that will be leading tree walks. Also, the Soil and Water District will be hosting the annual Watershed Garden Tour to be held on June 11th.
- Commissioner John Stokely – nothing to report.
- Commissioner Rick Healy – The Board of Supervisors environmental committee will be meeting on Tuesday, May 23rd to discuss the environmental vision statement.
- Commissioner Dragan Momcilovic – Dragan mentioned an article that he shared about the impact of climate change on forest communities. Catherine Ledec commented on another article shared by Dragan that concerns the exemption of roads from the requirements of the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Ordinance.
- Commissioner Robert Vickers – Bob gives a tree walk every year in Great Falls. This year it will be held at River Bend Park.

Adjourn: The meeting was adjourned at 9:06 pm.