

Fairfax County Tree Commission  
**APPROVED Meeting Minutes**  
Thursday, July 6, 2023

**Call to Order:**

Chair Speas called the July 6, 2023 meeting of the Fairfax County Tree Commission (Tree Commission) to order at 6:45 pm

Chair Speas welcomed all attendees and began the roll call:

Present:	Cindy Speas, Chair	At-Large
	Elaine Kolish, Vice-Chair	Mt. Vernon District
	Jeanne Kadet	Braddock District
	Barbara Ryan	Dranesville District
	Bret Leslie	Hunter Mill District
	Kevin Holland	Mason District
	Rose Hendricks	Providence District
	Cory Suter	Springfield District
	Perry Rhodes	Sully District
	Rick Healy	EQAC
	Jerry Peters	NVSWCD
	Jim McGlone	VA Department of Forestry
Absent:	Jessica Bowser	Franconia District
	John Burke	FCPA
	Brenda Frank	VA Cooperative Extension

Chair Speas determined that a quorum was present and began the meeting by recognizing attending staff: Joan Allen, Forest Pest Branch Chief, UFMD; Jay Cole, Deputy Director of Fairfax County Park Authority, Brett Stevenson, Deputy Director, Fairfax County Department of Transportation; Chris Herrington, Director of Public Works and Environmental Services (DPWES), Brian Keightley, Director of Urban Forest Management Division (via zoom).

**Public Comment Period:** John Repetski, homeowner in Providence District speaking on his concerns about a proposed road project by the Department of Public Works and Environmental services near his home in Oakton, which will impact many trees along a nearby trail. He requests that improvements to correct for flooding of Rocky Branch stream be set to a 50-year flood level and the widening and paving of the road be set to a standard of 10 vehicles per day and implementation be deferred for 25 years. Mr. Repetski was thanked for apprising the Tree Commission and referred to his district commissioner to discuss possible future actions.

**Approval of the Thursday, June 1, 2023 Meeting Minutes:**

Chair Speas noted some minor corrections to the June 1, 2023 draft minutes which she highlighted and called for any other edits. There were none.

***Commissioner Kolish moved to adopt the June 1, 2023 minutes as amended. Commissioner Leslie seconded the motion. The motion carried with all in favor, no abstentions.***

## **Old Business:**

- Chair Speas introduced continuing discussion of the Tree Commission’s draft letter commenting on the DPD/Zoning white paper on Landscaping and Screening proposals. Discussion suggesting more focus and specificity on planting a broad array of native trees, both deciduous and evergreen instead of only focusing on evergreen trees.

***Commissioner Ryan moved to adopt the draft letter on Landscaping and Screening as written. Commissioner Holland seconded the motion. The motion carried with all in favor, no abstentions.***

- Chair Speas opened ongoing discussion of the linear project exemption letter and meetings with staff. Chair Speas recommended the Board of Supervisors pass a policy instead of changing the code and recommended the BOS ask for more specific data about trees that are both removed from linear projects and planted after linear projects. In addition, “to the extent that required landscaping is not primarily for peripheral parking lot screening or screening of commercial or industrial uses,” the letter recommends that the “amendment permit the planting of a broad array of native deciduous as well as native evergreen trees and shrubs to promote biodiversity and the creation of mini-ecological corridors.”

***Commissioner Suter moved to adopt the draft letter on Landscaping and Screening as written. Commissioner Leslie seconded the motion. The motion carried with all in favor, no abstentions.***

## **New Business:**

- Discussion of Tree Commission recommendations to the Board of Supervisors (BOS) to be included in the 2023 report. Chair Speas reviewed the recommendations that had been sent to the BOS for comment, the staff’s responses, and whether the Tree Commission would like to continue to recommend and support still pending actions.
  - The Tree Commission agrees to continue to support pending recommendations by including them in the 2022-2023 Annual Report under the related chapters. The Commission agreed it makes sense for next year’s annual report to drop the CECAP recommendations and, instead, focus on Resilient Fairfax. For the report, the Tree Commission will focus on combining the recommendations, staff responses and Tree Commission recommendations into one document as part of the Annual Report. Discussion followed. A suggestion was made to add information on the recommendations to both the specific related Annual Report chapters and also in an addendum.
  - Discussion of statistics and data and how it is collected and measured. Because of changing data, there is a likely need to update the Tree Action Plan (2019). Chair Speas reported that we haven’t had an official analysis of the canopy since 2017. Since then, data gathering methods have changed. Casey trees was awarded a TPPF grant to do a new study, and they are analyzing between 2012 and 2021. Decision made that until we get the current data for this reporting period, we will hold off on making recommendations. Chair Speas

added that while waiting for further direction we should continue to request that maintenance and restoration budgets be robust and match assessed county needs.

- Discussion of providing potential tree related legislative initiatives to the BOS, due in August. A suggestion was made to request obtaining a copy of the required form to recommend enabling legislation. After discussion, it was decided that, being an advisory board, we will suggest ideas in general for enabling legislation to the BOS rather than crafting exact legislative language. Discussion and a vote was deferred to August.
- Discussion of when to hold zoom meetings for the remainder of the year, given BAC requirements. The Tree Commission agreed to meet in person for September and November and via zoom in October and December. This schedule could allow for an extra virtual meeting in August if needed to complete the legislative package suggestions by August 3.

### **UFMD Director's Update — Director Brian Keightley:**

- Director Keighley reported he is waiting on the county tree canopy study from Casey Trees, covering 2012-2021, which will show tree canopy comparisons between those years. Additionally, Virginia Tech has a graduate student who will be looking at the effectiveness of the 10-year tree canopy, using AI machine learning to analyze land development plans and assess how the projected tree canopy matches with the actual status. This will give more information about infill and subdivision development, along with other types of developments. Chair Speas suggests including linear projects but it is not clear if this will be included since these projects are not typically approved under LDS; more clarification is needed. The project is projected to wrap up in two years.
- The Bio Retention Tree pit study is in year 3. It is already resulting in changes to the DEQ stormwater manual based on information on stormwater nutrient removal.
- The new Urban and Community Forest coordinator, Patricia Greenberg, has been hired and onboard and the new Tree Planting coordinator is close to being hired. Jay Banks, a long-time arborist with the Forest Conservation Branch (now LDS) is retiring.
- Conservation Management Institute and iTree will do an updated iTree survey in the county, and is planned for completion with a report by the fall.
- Tree Planting and Preservation fund update, with more details at September meeting. The carry over budget has a remaining balance of \$15,870. Dir. Keightley will give more robust information on the TP&P fund at the September meeting

The most recent version of the Charter updates was sent to the county attorney's office, and several outstanding questions remain, particularly section 3 c and d. Chair Speas recommends we defer discussion until there is more time at the September meeting, or sooner if it can be arranged via zoom, as there is a December 30, 2023 deadline based on a motion by Supervisor Storck. Commission members thought discussion on the suggested

word changes would be simple: remove “as requested” from 122-9-2 and to replace “agencies” with “entities in 122-9-3.C.

***Commissioner Healy moved to adopt new changes to the Tree Commission’s Charter revisions. Commissioner Peters seconded the motion. The motion carried with all in favor, no abstentions.***

- Chair Speas asked for volunteers to work on suggesting items for the legislative package that we may wish to submit to the Board of Supervisors. Commissioners Ryan and Kolish volunteered to help draft suggestions. A special meeting will be called to vote on them.

### **Commissioner Announcements**

- Commissioner Rhodes will be the Tree Commission representative on the Tree Planting and Preservation Fund committee for the upcoming year.
- Chair Speas thanked Joan Allen for her presentation on Beech Leaf Disease that was broadcast on WAMU.
- Chair Speas closed the meeting by presenting a certificate of appreciation to Commissioner Vickers, who is stepping down from the Tree Commission after serving for 16 years. He was honored for his many valuable contributions as the Dranesville representative, as well as serving as Chair from 2013-2018.
- Chair Speas adjourned the meeting at 8:52 pm.