

Fairfax County Tree Commission
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, September 7, 2023

Call to Order:

Chair Speas called the September 7, 2023 meeting of the Fairfax County Tree Commission (Tree Commission) to order at 6:47pm. Chair Speas welcomed all attendees and began the roll call:

Name	District/Agency	Attendance
Cindy Speas, Chair	At-Large	Present
Elaine Kolish, Vice-Chair	Mt. Vernon District	On zoom
Jeanne Kadet	Braddock District	Present
Barbara Ryan	Dranesville District	Present
Jessica Bowser	Franconia District	On zoom
Bret Leslie	Hunter Mill District	Present
Kevin Holland	Mason District	Present
Rose Hendricks	Providence District	Present
Cory Suter	Springfield District	Present
Perry Rhodes	Sully District	Present
Rick Healy	EQAC	Present
John Burke	FCPA	Present
Jerry Peters	NVSWCD	Present
Brenda Frank	VA Coop Extension	Present
	VDOF	Vacant

Chair Speas called a quorum and began the meeting by recognizing **attending staff**:

Patricia Greenberg, Community and Urban Forrester, Urban Forest Management Division
Brian Keightley, Director, Urban Forest Management Division

Public Comment Period:

Chair Speas asked for members of the public to identify themselves and if they wish to address the Commission. Each person has three minutes to speak.

Approval of the Thursday, July 6, 2023 Meeting Minutes:

Chair Speas called for any corrections to the draft minutes for July 6, 2023 and August 1, 2023. She then called for a motion to approve as amended.

Chair Speas moved to adopt the July 6, 2023 minutes as amended. Commissioner Holland seconded the motion. The motion carried with all in favor, no abstentions.

Chair Speas moved to adopt the August 1, 2023 minutes as amended. Commissioner Frank seconded the motion. The motion carried with all in favor, no abstentions.

Old Business:

- Chair Speas initiated the conversation on the Tree Commission 2023 Annual Report. The focus was primarily on refining and streamlining the recommendations section. Speas

identified certain redundancies and the duplication of some sections. There was a consensus to send typo edits and corrections separately to the Chair, and only discuss edits that significantly affect a topic's clarity.

- Discussion on "Protect and Preserve What we Have" section focused on the integration and mention of the CECAP goals in relation to ongoing environmental initiatives. The discussion revolved around how best to incorporate them into the planning for natural resources recommendations and other related items.
- Discussions on the "Expand What we Have" section concentrated on whether county programs aimed at planting trees should undergo an "equity lens" evaluation. There was also a suggestion about inquiring which tools the county uses to gauge equity, especially concerning funding sources.
- The "Improve Policies and Procedures" section reviewed all the initiatives for the year. The Tree Commission expressed a keen interest in monitoring the success of these initiatives. The aim is to consistently update and optimize policies to support the tree action plan.
- The "Communicate and Build Partnership" discussions focused on how to distribute the tree basics booklet more effectively. There were suggestions about better distribution strategies, including leveraging Tree Commission members to distribute them in their respective districts.

Commissioner Ryan moved to accept the discussion and framing of the annual report with amendments added. Commissioner Peters seconded. After discussion, the motion passed with all in favor, no abstentions.

New Business:

- Chair Speas discussed the proposed Charter Revisions, emphasizing the need to acquaint leadership with the updates. She distributed an early draft of Talking Points on the subject, ensuring all members are well-informed and prepared for discussions with supervisors and organizations. She urged everyone to speak to their appointing supervisor or organization to garner support for the initiative.
- The Tree Commission reviewed eight nominations for the Friends of Trees Awards to ensure all criteria had been met. The nominations covered various categories, including individual awards and developer categories, and all have been brought forward to the Commission tonight for consideration. There was a unanimous appreciation for the nominees, highlighting the significance of their contributions to tree conservation and environmental stewardship.

Commissioner Kadet moved to accept the 2023 nominees for Friends of Trees Awards. Commissioner Healy seconded the motion. The motion carried with all in favor, with Commissioner Ryan abstaining.

UFMD Director's Update — Director Brian Keightley:

- Director Keightley briefed the Tree Commission on the implications of the Gloss v. Wheeler

legal decision. A significant focus was given to the VA Supreme Court case from 2020, which has stricter interpretations for public meetings due to language changes in the VA FOIA. Highlights of the discussion included:

- There is a renewed emphasis on the proper handling of public meetings.
- Avoid blind CCs and mass email chains.
- Gatherings, even those unrelated to Tree Commission business, could be viewed as official if tree-related topics are discussed. It's vital to acknowledge such incidents and possibly leave the venue.
- A gathering of 3 or more commissioners should be considered a meeting.
- If there's a public meeting that wasn't properly announced, members can face legal consequences. As such, it's crucial for members to ensure the safety and compliance of one another.
- Dir. Keightley discussed upcoming events and the minute taking and public posting notice that will be necessary for each. There was further discussion on the intricacies of what constitutes business discussions, with varied viewpoints from the Commission. Chair Speas clarified that final interpretations would be deferred to the Office of the County Attorney.
- Dir. Keightley gave an update on the tree canopy cover study, as well as comparisons to available data from neighboring jurisdictions. He discussed the U.S. Forest Service's tree canopy data from 2014-2018. The Casey tree canopy study for Fairfax County reflected similar results, showing a 53% tree canopy coverage and an increase in impervious surfaces between 2011-2022. Points of discussion included:
 - Both impervious surfaces and tree canopy are rising. The county aims to deeply analyze this before public release. Commissioner Suter observed that smaller houses being replaced by larger ones could lead to increased impervious areas but more tree cover.
 - The challenge of distinguishing between tree canopies and invasive vines was highlighted.
 - On the data's publication, Keightley mentioned a two-page summary and ArcGIS data would be released. Commission Burke offered UFMD a floristic quality index data from FCPA to aid in the analysis.

Commissioner Announcements:

- Chair Speas initiated a discussion on the growing Board of Supervisor's interest in data center construction in Fairfax. There is a desire to look closely at environmental impacts of these facilities. Various County agencies have been reaching out to Chair Speas and other commissioners looking for volunteers. A brief discussion followed on known environmental impacts and concerns of data centers and solar energy fields.

Chair Speas adjourned the meeting at 9:08 pm.