

TREE COMMISSION MINUTES

Draft

November 17, 2016

MEMBERS PRESENT: Robert Vickers, Chairman, Dranesville District
Jeanne Kadet, Braddock District
Sheila Allen, VA Cooperative Extension
Chet McLaren, Member At-Large
Jerry Peters, NV Soil & Water Conservation District
John Stokely, Fairfax County Park Authority
Jim McGlone, Vice Chairman, VA Dept. of Forestry
Dragan Momcilovic, Hunter Mill District
Cathy Ledec, Mt. Vernon District
Jessica Bowser, Lee District
Karen Campblin, Sully District
Kevin Holland, Mason District

MEMBERS ABSENT: Rick Ayers, Springfield District
Rick Healy, Environmental Quality Advisory Council

VACANT POSITION: Providence District

STAFF PRESENT: Hugh Whitehead, Urban Forester III, UFMD
Rachel Habig-Myers, Urban Forester II, UFMD
Rachel Jackson, Urban Forester II, UFMD
Patrick O'Brien, Urban Forester II, UFMD

VISTORS PRESENT:

Call to Order

Chairman Vickers called the meeting to order at 7:34 pm.

Minutes

The October minutes were reviewed and approved by the commission.

Tree Preservation and Planting Awards

Chairman Vickers provided background and perspective for new commissioners. Hugh Whitehead presented 5 tree preservation nominations, 2 planting nominations, and 2 recognition nominations.

Preservation Nominations:

Rajdhani Mandir Religious Center in Sully District nominated by Dane Kielsgard. This site was nominated for their work during a parking lot expansion, in which they minimized the limits of disturbance as much as possible, planted within tree save areas to fill in vegetation along the limits of disturbance, providing 211,847 sqft of preservation, over their requirement of 100,368 sqft. All plantings in the tree save area were supplemental and meant to provide a buffer to offsite detached homes. . Conservation easements are present on this lot. Questions were raised about whether compromises were made in regard to size of parking lot to allow more tree preservation, and whether this site was being considered simply because there was a lot of forest left at the end incidentally.

Tree Commission Meeting Minutes

November 17, 2016

Page 2 of 4

937 Utterback Store Rd. in Dranesville District, nominated by Bob Vickers. This site was nominated because efforts were made to preserve all trees onsite through house design and during construction. The new dwelling was sited in the same location as the original structure that was removed. Tree preservation requirement was 11,145 sqft, with over 12000 sqft preserved. Only 6 out of 30 trees were removed, with larger trees preserved. This project was “done on spec” implying that tree preservation was a priority for the developer, not the future owner.

2086 Hunter Crest Way in Hunter Mill District, nominated by Joe Flaim. There was some confusion about whether this project was nominated for tree preservation or planting. There was no landscape plan, so it is assumed the nomination was for preservation, while some commissioners were told the nomination was for planting. The project consisted of a pool and pool house installation, garage addition, and grading on a lot containing a recently built single family home that did involve a significant amount of planting at some point. The significant amounts of planting were for landscaping purposes and not for meeting 10 year canopy requirements. Questions were raised about whether this project qualified as a nomination. The 10 year canopy requirement was 49,941 sqft, and actually preserved 102,500 sqft of existing vegetation. The pool replaced an existing tennis court.

Spring Lake Section 3 in Hunter Mill District, nominated by Hugh Whitehead. Site was largely wooded before development. Tree preservation target was 70,938 sqft. Total area of preservation was listed at 87,244 sqft. 10 year tree canopy provided totaled 114,194 sqft. 2 main tree preservation areas were set aside, with 10 residential lots. Most of the tree save areas were set aside in conservation easements. This site was nominated for recognition last year. Trees were preserved in excess of what was required on the plan in between houses. Concerns were raised that those trees have been removed by homeowners since then. The 1.25 multiplier was used in this plan, accounting for the overage in tree preservation. One notable aspect of this project was that the developer established an interim limits of disturbance to potentially preserve more trees than shown on the plan depending on the ultimate footprint of the house to be built on some lots-which would be determined by the buyer of the lot.

Brightview at Gallows Rd. in Mason District, nominated by Dane Kielsingard. This site received recognition last year, and continued to follow the plan in the interim. Tree preservation requirement was 62,594 sqft, while 73,553 sqft were actually preserved. Additional measures were taken to preserve trees onsite, including canopy pruning, air tool demolition of gravel driveways within tree save areas, soil decompaction, root pruning, storm damage removals, mulching, and the use of tree growth regulators.

Planting Nominations

Archstone at Hillwood in Providence District, nominated by Dane Kielsingard. Sheila Allen found it very nicely landscaped. Hugh Whitehead was impressed by the siting of trees planted onsite. Plantings were twice the requirement. Maples were planted in structural soil. 49,529 sqft of plantings were required, however 57,100 sqft of plantings were provided.

King Abdullah Academy in Sully District, nominated by Dane Kielsingard. Plantings exceeded those shown on the plan. The tree planting requirement for this plan was 8,017 sqft, however 170, 875 sqft were actually provided. Commissioner Vickers commented that the site was originally “scrub pine” and “trash trees”. While the size of the building was surprising during construction, plantings have been employed to effectively lessen the severity of changes to the site. Trees were planted carefully and spaced well in relation to sidewalks and infrastructure. A meadow was also included in the plantings.

Recognition Nominations:

Serenity 3, in Lee District, nominated by Dane Kielsgard. Work had just begun tree fencing was up and one basement had been excavated. Questions were raised about suitability of this project for inclusion.

Hillbrook Montessori, in Mason District. Working within narrow limits of disturbance to maximize tree preservation. Additional preservation efforts included root pruning, crown pruning, root invigoration, soil amendments, hand removal of walkways, mulching to follow walkway removal, trenchless super silt fence, and volunteer workdays to mechanically remove invasive plants.

Awards given:

The number of awards given is based only on the number of projects that the commission feels are deserving.

Preservation awards were granted to 937 Utterback Store Rd, Spring Lake Section 3, and Brightview at Gallows Rd.

Planting awards were granted to Archstone at Hillwood Square, and King Abdullah Academy.

Recognition was granted to Hillbrook Montessori.

Questions about how this process is run were raised throughout discussion. The current process seems to be subjective. It is not easy to compare projects in already developed areas to sites that have no previous development. A checklist might be helpful to provide the same information across all sites. It is very difficult to compare sites, what criteria are considered and how are projects rated against those. Two things to always consider are area required for preservation versus amount actually preserved.

Clarification was sought on purpose of awards. They are intended to reward projects that have gone above and beyond requirements, but also to increase awareness/education of tree preservation and planting. They are to be held up as an example of a good final product. A question was raised about subcategories that might allow good aspects of a project to be highlighted even if the overall project was not exemplary. Differences in the quantity and quality of material provided in applications was mentioned as well, some seem incomplete. Recognition letters should include mention that those sites are eligible for awards the next year as long as work continues according to plan.

Commissioner Reports

- Chairman Vickers announced that the next Northern Virginia Urban Forest Roundtable will be held on December 8, 2016 at the Loudon Campus of Northern Virginia Community College. The topic is working with HOAs to manage trees. Talks start at 10 am.
- Commissioner Kadet expressed interest in reviewing the process to enable a more consistent manner of review, and more consistent information provided in applications. Commissioner Campblin agreed to participate in that effort as well. Others expressed that the information provided is technical and not informative to lay people. Urban foresters should give “testimony” about how a given application went above and beyond requirements and is deserving of an award. Chairman Vickers mentioned using Google maps to find predevelopment aerial photos of each site. Chairman Vickers volunteered to join the effort of revising the application/review process. Commissioner Kadet will be the chair of this committee.
- Commissioner Momcilovic had some prepared slides related to a proposed stream restoration project, but postponed showing them to the group in the interest of time, and a pending public meeting. It was proposed that this be put on the December agenda for approximately 10 minutes.

Tree Commission Meeting Minutes

November 17, 2016

Page 4 of 4

- Commissioner Ledec informed Commissioner McGlone that she has been involved in an effort to encourage HOAs in Mount Vernon to increase their tree cover. She highlighted the HOA she belongs to, which has planted more than 60 trees. She announced a large community meeting about the Embark Richmond Highway effort on November 29th, and expressed concerns that environmental impacts of this project are not being considered as part of the planning process. She will email the group with more information. She also informed the group about a significant development project in Mount Vernon, the North Hill project. This is a 35 acre property on Richmond Highway. The property is largely treed with significant invasive understory. She expressed concerns about the county not adhering to their own guidelines and requesting waivers of its own ordinances. This project has numerous large trees, which could potentially be removed as part of the development in spite of citizen comments that the trees should be preserved.
- Commissioner Bowser reiterated the importance of focusing on the Embark Study as it moves forward.
- Commissioner Peters asked if there had been an update about the Tree Action plan last month. Chairman Vickers stated that this project is still in process, with contributions from various members of the committee. Mr. Whitehead is coordinating efforts, and it is hoped that deliverables will be ready for dissemination to the commission in December 2016. Implementation is the difficult part, without proper implementation the purpose of the plan is in question. Commissioner Peters mentioned contributions from Charles Smith and Jim McGlone. The project will continue to be named the “Tree Action Plan” with the first chapter being titled “Urban Forest Management Strategy”. Agencies will add chapters which will be their implementation plans for the strategy.
- Chairman Vickers has written draft guidance on tree forums that is ready for review by others. The most important components are foremost a good sponsor, publicizing the event, and getting a write-up published to increase awareness after the fact. Two suggestions have been proposed, to orient the commission to tree site inspections and to offer a tutorial on the role of a tree commissioner. At this point, commissioners are free to concentrate their efforts in their areas of interest regarding trees, however some commonality between commissioners is important. Both topics will be addressed in the coming year.
- Commissioner McLaren suggested an orientation about the state level origins of the tree commission, and restrictions associated with that. He would like to discuss that in the December meeting.

UFMD Report

- Mr. Whitehead informed the group that a new limited term Urban Forester I, Laura Hassell, has started working with UFMD to assist with site visits, inspections and meetings in the field.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 9:42 pm.