

Fairfax County Tree Commission
Electronic Meeting Format Meeting Minutes
Thursday, November 3, 2022

Toll Free Call in 1 888-270-9936 Participant Access Code 224765

Call to Order

Chair Speas called the November 3, 2022 meeting of the Fairfax County Tree Commission to order at 7:02 p.m. via Electronic Meeting.

From the Chair:

First, to conduct this meeting wholly electronically and to effectuate both the emergency procedures authorized by the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, in compliance with Virginia FOIA, the Fairfax County Tree Commission must make certain findings and determinations for the record. I ask you for your patience.

Audibility of Members' Voices:

Because each member of the Fairfax County Tree Commission is participating in this meeting from a separate location, we must verify that a quorum of members is participating, and that each member's voice is clear, audible, and at an appropriate volume for all the other members. To do that, I am going to do a roll call, and ask each commission member participating tonight to state your name and the location from which you are participating. I ask that each of you pay close attention to ensure that you can hear each of your colleagues. Following this roll call, we will vote to establish that every member can hear every other member.

Roll Call - PRESENT

Cindy Speas, Chair, At-Large Falls Church, VA

Jeanne Kadet, Braddock District Annandale, VA

Robert Vickers, Dranesville District Great Falls, VA

Jessica Bowser, Franconia District, from car in Alexandria, VA

Bret Leslie, Hunter Mill District, Vienna VA

Elaine Kolish, Mount Vernon District Alexandria, VA

Cory Suter, Springfield District, Fairfax VA and by phone

Perry Rhodes, Sully District, Centreville VA

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Rick Healy, Environmental Quality Advisory Council, Annandale VA

John Burke, Fairfax County Park Authority Arlington, VA

Jerry Peters, NV Soil & Water Conservation District, Great Falls VA (joined late and audio was not tested)

Brenda Frank, VA Cooperative Extension, McLean VA

Roll Call – ABSENT

Kevin Holland, Mason District, Falls Church VA

Jim McGlone, Vice-Chair, Franconia VA

Laura Beaty, Providence District, Fairfax VA

At this point, I will pass the virtual gavel to Commissioner Kadet so that I may be heard to make three requisite motions.

I move that each member's voice may be adequately heard by each other member of this the Fairfax County Tree Commission.

Commissioner Leslie seconded the motion, all in favor, no abstentions, motion carried.

Need for an Electronic Meeting:

Second, I move that the Fairfax County Tree Commission certify that the State of Emergency caused by the COVID-19 pandemic makes it unsafe for the Fairfax County Tree Commission and the public to physically attend this meeting in person, and the usual procedures cannot be implemented safely or practically. As a result, I further move that the Fairfax County Tree Commission conduct this meeting electronically through a dedicated video- and audio-conferencing line, and that the public may access this meeting by calling 888-270-9936 and entering access code 224765, or using the Zoom link posted to the Fairfax County Tree Commission website.

Commissioner Kolish seconded the motion, 11 in favor, 1 nay, no abstentions, motion carried.

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Need to dispense with FOIA's Usual Procedures to Assure Continuity in Government/Continue Operations

Finally, I move that the Fairfax County Tree Commission certify that the matters on its agenda today relate to the COVID-19 emergency itself, are necessary to continue operations and the discharge of the Fairfax County Tree Commission's lawful purposes, duties, and responsibilities.

Commissioner Leslie seconded the motion, all in favor, no abstentions, motion carried.

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

Chris Herrington, Director Department of Public Works and Environmental Services

Toni Woods, Urban Forest Management Division

Ellie Cotting, DPWES Deputy Director for stormwater and wastewater divisions

Rachel Hovig Myers, Urban Forest Management Division

Hugh Whitehead, Urban Forest Management Division, Lovettsville VA

Brian Keightley, Director UFMD

Public Comment Period:

No members of the public were present.

Approval of the October 6, 2022 Minutes

Three small corrections were made by Commissioners Leslie and Kadet.

Commissioner Leslie moved to approve the October Minutes with corrections. Commissioner Vickers seconded, all in favor, no abstentions, motion carried.

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New Business: Memorandum of Support between DPWES and the Tree Commission:

Chair Speas introduced Director Herrington to outline the responsibilities that staff and Commission members share in preparing and delivering the work of the Commission. She explained the meetings and emails that led to the document he will introduce. Dir. Herrington began with thanking the TC members for their unpaid service to the Board of Supervisors, which is very much appreciated by staff. The reason for the memo was to provide clarity so that both the Commission and its liaison staff will know what level of support is needed and what staff capacity is for providing or not providing that support and how that will be communicated. This knowledge allows the Commission to plan its work, the staff to provide a timely response or explain delays, and for the list of supportive actions to change as the Commission's responsibilities may change. In the discussion that followed, Commissioner Vickers asked questions about the ongoing Covid Emergency Declaration by Fairfax County that has required electronic meetings for safety reasons. Dir. Herrington noted that the Emergency Order still stands and has not been lifted. He noted that when it is lifted, there will still be some opportunities and limitations on where meetings might be held, based on available space and the capacity of staff to support a meeting. Staff will keep us apprised of any upcoming changes as soon as they are known. Chair Speas also noted that the memo presented has a list of supported Commission projects, but a review of any changes to that will occur between the Chair and the liaison at least biannually. The Commission can always ask about a new area of support, but it may not be possible. Thus, the memorandum becomes a living, changing document that helps everyone in developing their workplan. One Commissioner noted that the UFMD liaison is still listed as responsible for the Community of Practice planning, but that role has shifted to the Steering Committee with the aid of a facilitator. Dir. Herrington indicated that the memo can be adjusted to clarify the roles and responsibilities associated with the Community of Practice as established in the Tree Action Plan adopted by the Board in 2019.

Commissioner Kolish moved to approve the Memorandum of Support with an

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amendment from Commissioner Leslie to include clarifying language about staff's role in the Community of Practice. Commissioner Frank seconded the motion and Commissioner Leslie seconded the amendment.

- Formation of a Nominating Committee for offices of Chair and Vice Chair:

Chair Speas requested that those who volunteer contact each individual on the TC to see about their interest to serve. That would help incorporate all the membership changes that have occurred in the last few years. Chair Speas clarified that an election for Chair and Vice Chair must occur annually. People may be nominated by others or themselves and announced at the December meeting, or they can be nominated (or self-nominated) from the floor at the meeting. There was a question about what the duties of the Vice Chair are, and whether that position has always been held by the VDOF appointed Commissioner. Dir. Keightley indicated that at one time there were daytime obligations for the TC that could be met by the VDOF appointee during office hours. [Post meeting note: the TC charter specifies that the duties of both officers shall be those as outlined in Roberts Rules of Order, and there is no requirement that any Commissioner hold any particular office in perpetuity]. Commissioner Leslie and Commissioner Vickers volunteered to be on the committee. Anyone who is interested in either position should contact either Commissioner prior to the December 1 meeting.

- Formation of a 50th Anniversary of the Tree Commission (est. 1972-73)

Celebration Committee: Discussion included ideas such as writing a brief history of the TC and its five decades of work, developing educational materials that Commissioners could use for presentations, working on a social media campaign for the year, working on celebrating the TC work during the Arbor Day festivities in 2023, including planting a tree or grove of trees in honor of TC work, getting some oral histories of past Commissioners. Several indicated an interest in working on various aspects of a celebration. Others agreed to provide ideas to the Chair.

Old Business:

- Updates on TC Communications: the 2021-2022 Annual Report publication was delivered November 3 to the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors, the joint EQAC-

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TC memo on Proposed Changes to Street Tree Planting Standards (PFM) and to Urban Design Guidelines (UDG) has been delivered to all who were named.

- Update on Friends of Trees Awards Ceremony: Jeanne Kadet indicated that EQAC and the TC worked together to see if the Board would honor awardees at a BOS regular meeting. That option was politely declined. Planning a reception anywhere on site is beyond staff capacity to support at this time. Thus, we will follow last year's online gathering, which will include asking Supervisor Stork to make the introductory remarks. We can invite all the Supervisors to attend, Joan Allen will continue to work with Channel 16 to do a video celebration for the awardees to be posted on the website if not completed in time for the event. In mid to late January, we will work with Director Keightley to plan an in-person ceremony for next fall. Commissioner Kolish suggested that we have a social media initiative to invite interested parties to this zoom event.

- Discussion of linear projects exemption letter to the BOS: Chair Speas introduced changes in the draft letter based on the Tree Conservation section of the County Code, Chapter 122-2-1(b) and conservation requirements in PFM12-303.1A. There were three suggestions incorporated into the letter, including a specific reference to the Virginia Code, maintaining non-county stream restoration projects as an example, and include a reference on how some projects could include restoration or monetary restitution options. Dir. Keightley pointed out that VDOT and public utilities are not subject to county oversight. Chair Speas will amend the letter on that detail. The draft will be up for discussion and a motion at the December 1 meeting. Please plan to read it as soon as it is posted.

- Active Fairfax follow-up to Dec. 2021 meeting: the TC heard a presentation from Nicole Wynands and promised some information to her on how environmental oversight could be included in the plan. Chair Speas asked if anyone would be interested in helping put together a response if it is still appropriate at this point in time. Chair Speas will provide volunteers with the material from that meeting to craft a possible response.

Urban Forest Management Division Report, Dir. Keightley:

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- Update on the EQAC-TC response on the Proposed Changes to Street Tree Planting Standards (PFM) and to Urban Design Guidelines (UDG). He had missed the last TC meeting to present to the Environmental Committee of the Planning Commission. All groups had some similar concerns. The working group is looking to resolve all the comments that it heard. Dir. Keightley indicated the pinch point is whether or not to give the 3rd alternative minimum a half credit or no credit in the tree canopy plan. His belief is that without credit, UFMD has no regulatory authority over the tree. He also believes that there is a better county-wide understanding about why the health and success of an urban tree is dependent on the soil and planting conditions.
- Staffing updates: there is a posting for an Urban Forester 3 which will include support for the Tree Commission as part of the position duties.
- Dir. Keightley explained UFMD's involvement with the American Forest Tree Equity Score Analysis (TESA).
- The tree canopy updated data project is still in procurement. It now has a connection to another project with Casey Trees and Virginia Tech to look at the effectiveness of the 10-year canopy requirement in our tree conservation ordinance. That project needs updated data. It is hoped that requirement will help to move procurement to finish the data canopy data project contract.
- This week the BOS approved the Resilient Fairfax plan (the climate adaptation and resiliency plan). UFMD and trees are highlighted throughout. Funding is always an issue, but Kambiz Agazzi of OEEC is starting a tree planting program particularly with HOAs, which will be run with the UFMD's new tree planting coordinator. This will help meet the natural resource goals of both CECAP and Resilient Fairfax climate plans.
- UFMD will continue working with Casey Trees on the residential tree planting program.
- Dir. Keightley showed two slides on the workload for reviewing site plans: site plans increased 29% from pre-pandemic workloads, and zoning applications increased 70%. This in a year where UFMD was down 5 staff positions.

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- Dir. Keightley reminded the TC that there is also a separate project with VA Tech to produce a new iTree Study which is point sampling on the ground in a 10th of an acre plot—trees, characteristics like % canopy closure, % of invasives to assess quality of the forest. The contract that is outstanding is that of the tree canopy study using aerial imagery techniques.

Commissioner Announcements:

- Commissioner Kolish will attend Sup. Stork's annual dinner for his BAC appointees and she would like to be able to take a hard copy of our annual report to him. She asked Dir. Keightley if this request might be in the scope of the memorandum we are now working under. Another Commissioner agreed that would be a good for all our Supervisors.
- Commissioner Suter reported that his first year of running lambmowers.com has confirmed that sheep are good at removing invasive stilt grass, including in forest areas. Helping customers discover native oak trees and red buds and helping protect or transplant them to other sites. Also, he is putting in a playground at Daniel's Run Peace Church and incorporating trees into the design. They just put in the 1st Juneberry (in the Amelanchier species). Sheep are smaller and easier to contain than goats, which can be very destructive to trees. Sheep don't like small oak seedlings and love Japanese honeysuckle, wisteria, poison ivy (native), but NOT porcelain berry.
- Commissioner Burke (FCPA) reported that his internal GIS department along with ecologists in the Branch and Public Works, are establishing an environmental review of the Active Fairfax trail initiatives, guiding proposed trails and trail connections away from sensitive habitat.
- Commissioner Suter asked if the FCPA might have a place where we could plant a celebratory/honorary grove of trees. In light of maintenance needs for such an undertaking, Commissioner Burke suggested considering being associated with one of FCPA's currently established restoration projects.
- Chair Speas announced that Director Herrington had provided information to get the proposed TC's Charter revisions into a review process. She will meet with Barbara Byron at Chairman McKay's office to go over what needs to happen to move forward.

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Chair Speas closed by thanking everyone for their participation and interest in celebrating 50 years with the possible planting of a grove of trees, and Dir. Keightley wished all a happy Thanksgiving.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:56 p.m.