



The Fairfax County Tree Commission  
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April 6, 2023

Jeffrey McKay, Chairman  
Members, Fairfax County Board of Supervisors  
12000 Government Center Parkway  
Fairfax, VA 22035

Sent by email to: [clerktothebos@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:clerktothebos@fairfaxcounty.gov)

**RE: FY2024 and 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter Review of the Fairfax County Budget**

Dear members of the Board of Supervisors:

The Tree Commission joins many citizens in Fairfax County in commenting on the upcoming budget opportunities in the FY2024 Budget and the 2023 Quarterly Review, particularly relating to natural resources and trees.

First, we commend the Board for allocating 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter Review funds to critical natural resources projects:

- \$400,000 for a pilot bamboo removal 20 acres of Fairfax County Park Authority (FCPA) property; and
- \$500,000 to the FCPA forestry program for removing dead and dangerous trees, many of which have succumbed to invasive vine damage

While 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter Review funds are welcome, they cannot adequately address these serious issues without adding a line item to the regular budget, recognizing that these and other concerns will take a long time to fix.

Secondly, we recommend four FY2024 budget adjustments:

- That the FY2024 and all future budgets should contain a line item dedicated to bamboo removal, in addition to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter Review grant.

On the bamboo removal issue, we note there are an estimated 250 acres of FCPA property where bamboo is a persistent and growing concern. We believe the county can and should be a leader in acknowledging the critical effect of this invasive on our native ecosystems including trees. The county should recognize that it will take regular funds to mitigate this threat.

- That the original FCPA budget request of \$739,463 for Forestry in the FY 2024 budget be restored, in addition to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter Review grant.

We highlight critical comments from staff in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter Review: “The Forestry Division is tasked with managing tree health on park property, of which 77 percent is forested. The Forestry Division is currently only able to address high priority and at-risk trees; and there is currently a backlog of medium- and low-risk tree work and required prevention work. In addition, there has been a 245 percent increase in required oak tree removal in the past ten years due to oak decline. Oak decline is often associated with the maturity of the oak trees, extended periods without rain, or late spring frosts. Based on the mature stock of deciduous trees in the County, oak decline is expected to continue to be prevalent and additional funding is required to address the removal of oaks and other hazardous trees.”

This request included two tree care specialists and one urban forester. While the Board is committed to adding no new positions this year, with retirement and other factors, there may still be an opportunity to provide this minimal staffing request.

- That the Invasives Management Area (IMA) program be established and funded as a line item in the FY2024 budget, in addition to the annual Environmental Improvement Program (EIP) grant.

The IMA program is understaffed and underfunded for the work that needs to be done. It currently relies on hundreds of citizen volunteers to try to prevent the most egregious and visible tree deaths. Invasive vines are as serious a threat to our urban forest as some other pests that have an annual source of revenue through a percentage of the real estate tax. We must get serious about this problem, and using volunteers is not a sustainable model for permanent success.

- The Tree Commission believes Urban Forest Management Division should have a line item for staff and annual funding to support vigorous tree planting efforts throughout the county to meet Countywide Energy and Climate Action Plan and Resilient Fairfax goals.

UFMD has an Environmental Improvement Program grant to the Tree Planting and Preservation Fund. This will increase tree plantings specifically targeted at vulnerable communities whose quality of life is deeply affected by heat islands and concrete

deserts. While grateful for this one-time infusion of funds, we note that supporting tree planting, survival and maintenance occurs over a period of years.

Finally, in preparation for the FY2025 budget, the Tree Commission recommends that an invasive plant mitigation program (including FCPA's) should be stood up to cover all county-owned land, including staff and annual budget funding.

We commend the Board for its hard work in this critical area of preserving our natural resources. Careful stewardship is critical to the future well-being of all our county residents. Thank you for allowing us to speak to the issues that affect our urban forest as well as our residents' quality of life.

Sincerely

*Please email [TreeCommission@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:TreeCommission@fairfaxcounty.gov) for official signed version of letter*

Cindy Speas, Chair  
Fairfax County Tree Commission

Cc: Bryan Hill, Fairfax County Executive  
Rachel Flynn, Deputy County Executive  
Jai Cole, Fairfax County Park Authority Executive Director  
Kiel Stone, Fairfax County Park Authority Board Chair