

Fairfax County Tree Commission  
Meeting Minutes  
Thursday, March 2, 2023

**Call to Order:**

Chair Speas called the March 2, 2023 meeting of the Fairfax County Tree Commission (Tree Commission) to order at 7:02 p.m.

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
	Bob Vickers	Dranesville District
	Jessica Bowser	Franconia District
	Kevin Holland	Mason District
	Cory Suter	Springfield District
	Perry Rhodes	Sully District**
	Rick Healy	EQAC
	Jerry Peters	NVSWCD
	Brenda Frank	VA Cooperative Extension
	Jim McGlone	VA Department of Forestry
Absent:	Bret Leslie	Hunter Mill District
	John Burke	FCPA
Vacant:		Providence District

\*\* Indicates joined electronically

Chair Speas acknowledged a quorum was present and began the meeting by recognizing attending county staff: Brian Keightley, UFMD; Ryan Stewart, DPD; Matt Hansen, LDS; Ellie Coddling, DPWES; Joe Harris, Forest Conservation Branch LDS; Maria Harwood, Forest Conservation Branch LDS; Michael Davis, DPD. Due to recording challenges, there may be some attendees not listed here.

**Public Comment Period:**

There were no members of the public who wished to speak.

**Approval of the Thursday, February 2, 2023 Meeting Minutes:**

Chair Speas called for any corrections to the draft minutes. Hearing none, she then called for a motion to approve the February 2, 2023 minutes.

Commissioner Suter moved to adopt the February 2, 2023 meeting minutes. Commissioner Holland seconded the motion. The motion carried with all in favor, no abstentions.

**Site Specific Plan Amendment (SSPA) Process:**

- The Tree Commission was briefed on the new SSPA process by Ryan Stewart, a planner with the Fairfax County Dept. of Planning and Development. Mr. Stewart noted that this

is the first year of the new process for amendments to the county's Comprehensive Plan. Anyone in the community can submit a nomination, but the process is specifically for individual properties rather than larger areas. Community members are allowed to provide input on nominations. There are currently 67 nominations across the county; 87 percent of which involve residential or residential mixed uses.

- Nominations are reviewed for compliance and a determination of whether they should be considered by the Board of Supervisors (BOS) for the Comprehensive Plan Work Program (CPWP). Prioritization criteria include whether the nomination addresses emerging community interests or change circumstance; aligns with the Comprehensive Plan concept for future development; and whether the nomination also aligns with the county's Strategic Plan, One Fairfax policy and other BOS adopted policies. Eighteen community meetings on the nominations were held in January and February, with approximately 1800 attendees.
- The Fairfax County Planning Commission develops recommendations for the nominations. If the BOS approves, a nomination is added to 2023 CPWP. BOS prioritizes items for the work program and based on prioritization, staff schedules review of proposal and mechanisms for public involvement. Potential impacts of plan amendment are reviewed during the evaluation stage, with input being provided by county agencies and the community in a variety of forums.
- If a nomination does not move forward, the property can be developed under the existing Comprehensive Plan or the proposal can be changed and resubmitted.
- Commissioner Vickers asked how the public learns of the proposed nominations and Commissioner Peters followed that with asking how far away from a nomination are neighbors notified. Commissioner McGlone clarified that plan amendments are not new, but the process of considering nominations is new. Commissioner Kadet asked about how community comments are considered. Commissioner Kolish asked about any trends in the public comments and Commissioner Rhodes asked about the level of review in the screening process.

### **Parking Reimagined Plan:**

- The Tree Commission received an update on the Parking Reimagined Plan from Matthew Hansen, Director of the Site Development and Inspection Division and Michael Davis, Parking Program Manager, Land Development Services.
- Since the presentation to the Tree Commission in February, county staff have provided updates on Parking Reimagined to the Fairfax County Environmental Quality Advisory Council (EQAC), the Planning Commission, and the BOS's Land Use Committee. Mr. Davis noted that the county has not done a comprehensive review of parking since 1988. One new item is the proposed establishment of bicycle parking requirements.
- County staff believes Parking Reimagined will provide several environmental benefits,

including decreased impervious surface in parking areas; reduced fluid pollutants; reduced heat island effect; improved storm water management and mitigation; and reduced vehicle emissions.

- Draft Ordinance currently includes parking adjustments to conserve or enhance existing trees or greenspace; counting EVC spaces towards required parking; permitting alternative surfaces in parking areas; and no longer requiring parking redesignation plans for EVC, solar canopies, or bicycle parking infrastructure.
- Staff believes Parking Reimagined supports CECAP by streamlining processes related to EVC and solar canopy installation; implementation of bicycle parking minimum requirements; implementation of pedestrian route standards and promotion of shared parking; and tiered framework that reduces parking rates in densely populated areas with better access to public transit.
- Staff also believes that Parking Reimagined supports Resilient Fairfax and One Fairfax by decreasing required parking infrastructure to reduce heat-generating land development activities; decreasing impervious surface requirements; adjustment of parking requirements to conserve or enhance tree canopy or greenspace; and promoting a quality built environment that accommodates anticipated growth and promotes housing and services to all people.
- Current plan is publish a draft parking ordinance shortly and bring this updated parking proposal to the Planning Commission in April and the BOS in June.
- Commissioner Frank asked about shared parking. Chair Speas asked about lack of specificity in that many benefits are couched in terms of what may happen and that there were lots of opportunities but no requirements that these benefits occur.

#### **Discussion of Draft Tree Commission Comments on SSPA**

- Commissioners commented on a draft of commission comments that was before each member. Discussion focused on the need to follow the submittal of proposed plan amendments; the need to enhance community involvement; and how to elevate tree consideration in the SSPA process, especially prioritizing looking at trees earlier in the process.
- Chair Speas asked commissioners to provide her with any specific suggestions that they may have on the draft letter on the SSPA process and because of time deferred consideration of comments on Parking Reimagined until the next meeting.

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

- Forest Conservation Branch (group that reviews site plans and zoning applications) is no longer part of UFMD. It has been moved to Land Development Services.
- The Tree Preservation and Planting Fund's (TPPF) tree planting program is being robustly expanded in 2023.

- Forest Pest Branch has been notified by USDA approval of parasite usage to fight the emerald ash borer.
- Two proposals from Casey Trees: the first is that Casey Trees is proposing to take over school tree plantings with a grant from the TPPF; the second is that Casey Trees proposes to do a tree canopy analysis with 2021 data.
- American Forests has provided UFMD with a pre-final deliverable of their Tree Equity Score Analysis for Fairfax County.
- Early talks are underway with the Arbor Day Foundation about a community tree canopy grant program for residential tree planting.
- Friends of Trees awards will be on March 28, 2003, 5:30 p.m. at the Government Center.

**Commissioner Announcements:**

- Commissioner McGlone notified members that he is retiring from the Virginia Department of Forestry effective July 1, 2023.

**Chair Speas adjourned the meeting at 8:54 p.m.**

**Announcements that could not be made due to time constraints:**

- Chair and Vice Chair Kolish attended a meeting called by Chair McKay's office to discuss any impediments to going forward with Charter changes. Dir. Herrington let me know today that a Board Matter will be introduced by Sup. Stork at one of the next meetings of the Board of Supervisors directing staff to initiate the code amendment process to revise the Tree Commission Charter. As soon as the Board acts, the Tree Commission will be informed, and staff will start the process.
- Chair Speas and Vice Chair Kolish attended a staff meeting called by Deputy County Executive Rachel Flynn to discuss our letter to the Board on the Linear Exemption in Chapter 122. Information to follow at the April meeting.
- Chair Speas on staff response to the Tree Commission's last annual report: Dir. Herrington said it should be delivered to the Board very soon, copies to the Commission.
- Chair Speas on 2024 budget items relating to trees and natural resources will be discussed at the April meeting where the Commission will decide whether to submit written or oral testimony to the Board of Supervisors on this topic. She will email information on district Budget Town Halls so that Commissioners can sign up to ask a general question about what the county has budgeted for preservation and planting of trees. The BOS's public hearings are set for April 12, 13 and 14.