

Fairfax County Tree Commission

Electronic Meeting Format Meeting Minutes: Thursday, April 21, 2022

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

Call to Order

Chair Speas called the November meeting of the Fairfax County Tree Commission to order at 7:00 p.m. on April 21, 2022, via Electronic Meeting. She wished all a happy Earth Day celebration tomorrow (April 22).

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. So 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
Laura Beaty, Providence District, Fairfax, VA
Jessica Bowser, Lee District, Alexandria, VA
John Burke, Fairfax County Park Authority, Arlington, VA
Brenda Frank, VA Cooperative Extension, Mclean, VA
Rick Healy, Environmental Quality Advisory Council, Annandale, VA
Jeanne Kadet, Braddock District, Annandale, VA
Cathy Ledec, Mt. Vernon District, Alexandria, VA
Bret Leslie, Hunter Mill District, Vienna, VA
Jerry Peters, NV Soil & Water Conservation District, Great Falls, VA

ABSENT:

Jim McGlone, Vice-Chair
Karen Campblin, Sully District
Kevin Holland, Mason District

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Cory Suter, Springfield District
Robert Vickers, Dranesville District

STAFF: Joan Allen, Forest Pest Branch Chief, Manassas, VA

Motion to Hear:

“At this point, I will pass the virtual gavel to Commissioner Healy, so that I may be heard to make the requisite motion.

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.

Chair Speas announced a quorum was present. She then asked Commissioners to agree to suspend the posted agenda in order to have the Friends of Trees Awards celebration first. Afterwards, the agenda would resume with the public comment period. Chair Speas asked if there were any objections, and, hearing none, promptly started the Awards program.

Presentation of Friends of Trees & Tree Planting & Preservation Awards:

Chair Speas introduced the 2021 Friends of Trees Planting and Preservation Awards with a video prepared by staff, highlighting the accomplishments of the awardees. She then welcomed Supervisor Dan Storck from the Mt. Vernon District and chair of the Board of Supervisors’ Environmental Committee for a few remarks. Supervisor Storck complimented all the winners. He specifically mentioned Will Friedman, from Mt. Vernon, who joined Supervisor Storck’s district environmental committee as a seventh grader, committed to the environment, nature and planting trees and removing invasive vines. Supervisor Storck highlighted the important carbon capture of trees. He said that the county is on the path to becoming net zero in 2040, but we cannot do that without also growing the tree canopy. He gave his thanks to all for everyone’s service and commitment to that work—noting they are making a difference.

Awardees (or their representatives) who commented on their award included: Taylor Beach, Executive Director of ReLeaf Fairfax; Will Friedman, rising high school senior in Mt. Vernon District; Monica Perz-Waddington, Fairfax Master Naturalist; GMU Engineers for International Development (unable to attend); Fairfax County Public Schools (Marguerite Saitta, Principal Crestwood Elementary School in Springfield; Westlawn Elementary School staff member, Ann Crisman, parent from Chantilly High School); and Sean Coleman from the Hickory Farms Community Association who live-streamed views of the project. Additionally, Braddock District Supervisor Walkinshaw’s chief of staff, Frank Anderson, congratulated Hickory Farms and Bob Cosgrove.

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Chair Speas concluded the recognition program by thanking each winner for the extraordinary time, effort and focus to plant and save so many trees. She announced the 2022 award nomination process will soon be open and nominations will due by July 1st. Spread the word!

Public Comment:

Chair Speas resumed the business meeting by asking if there were any members of the public present who wished to speak to the Commission. Public members attending were Elaine Kolish, observing from the Waynewood area of the county, Monica Perz-Waddington, and Jamie Scholzen, Alexandria, Board member of Fairfax ReLeaf who wished to honor and celebrate Taylor Beach's award. No one asked to speak before the Commission.

Approval of March 17, 2022 Meeting Minutes:

Chair Speas asked for any additions or edits to the March 17, 2022 minutes. Hearing none, the Chair called for a motion.

Commissioner Ledec moved to approve the March meeting minutes. Commissioner Leslie seconded. A vote on the motion passed with no nays, no abstentions.

Reports:

Letter to BOS on CECAP Update, Cindy Speas:

Chair Speas noted the letter was presented to the Commission in advance of the meeting. A motion to approve the letter was made and seconded. A discussion followed on the scope of the letter, Commission purview, and reformatting of the Appendix.

Commissioner Ledec moved to approve the CECAP letter. Commissioner Healy seconded. Commissioner Ledec then moved to amend the motion to make two changes: adding a reference to the 2019 Tree Action Plan and reformatting the appendix. Commissioner Vickers seconded. The amendment passed with no nays, no abstentions. A vote on the motion passed with no nays, no abstentions. (See attached).

Friends of Trees Awards 2022, Jeanne Kadet:

Commissioner Kadet indicated all materials are ready for the county to upload to the website. There is now a flyer, rather than a folding pamphlet, for ease of duplication. She has sent a spreadsheet for publicity contacts to all the Commissioners and requested everyone add to the list of organizations, particularly for-profit businesses. Commissioner Kadet said she would ask Brian for an update on the county IT's progress when he joins the meeting. There were a few suggested additions during the discussion. Commissioner Kadet reminded all to send the contact

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person and email. Chair Speas mentioned that the county will provide her and Jeanne an opportunity to look at the website changes before it goes live. Chair Speas also noted that nominations are due by July 1 unless there is a delay in getting everything on the website, then a group will be convened to look at the nominations from July to early September with hopefully someone from UFMD. Commissioner Peters thanked Commissioner Kadet for her hard work on this program to make the awards more visible and more effective.

Community of Practice Steering Committee launch, Bret Leslie:

Commissioner Leslie noted that the Community of Practice Steering Committee met for the first time on March 31 for two hours. With the facilitator's guidance, it set out guidelines for operations. It was decided that before the next scheduled meeting UFMD would send all six members the 2019 Tree Action Plan and notes from the various CoP meetings to help inform its work. It was suggested that the CoP Steering Committee might also help coordinate the county's natural landscaping policies, which are mentioned in the new proposed Charter language.

Commissioner Activities for Earth Day/Arbor Day or other Announcements:

- **Jeanne Kadet** (Braddock District) will be tabling at the Vienna Green Expo representing Audubon at Home. Also noted that the Wakefield Park site still seems to be the top contender for the Lake Accotink dredging project.
- **Rick Healy** (EQAC) reported that the EQAC 2023 budget testimony to the Board of Supervisors included support for the UFMD additional staffing requests.
- **John Burke** (FCPA) reminded all of the numerous volunteer events around Earth Day and Arbor Day. Go to the FCPA website and check it out.
 - FCPA will be at Mt. Vernon Environmental Expo.
 - He will be leading a walk in East Blake Lane Park with Supervisor Palchik and Commissioner Beaty.
 - He also noted that he has a new supervisor, Laura Grape (formerly of NVSWCD) and that she will be a great ally in many of the things we work toward.
 - He also noted he is aware of the concerns in Wakefield Park, and his team is doing a survey of trees there.
 - FCPA tabled as part of a Naturally Latinos event in March.
- **Cindy Speas** (At-large) mentioned that the FCPA is promoting a Dark Sky hour in the parks and in neighborhoods on April 22. John noted that is being promoted by FCPA's Tammy Schwabb.
- **Brenda Frank** (Virginia Extension Service): Master Gardeners is gearing up for regular live plant clinics at farmers markets. Every Tuesday there is a virtual plant clinic for the public. Master Gardener College will happen this year. And there will be a webinar on Spotted Lantern Fly (SLF) this coming Monday.

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- Jessica Bowser (Lee District) noted that Plant Nova Natives is looking for folks to volunteer at various garden centers around the county to hand out information about native plants to customers. She will be at Knowles Market on Beulah Road.
- Bret Leslie (Hunter Mill District) noted April 29, 5pm a tree planting co-sponsored by Vienna Parks and Recreation staff and local boy scouts at the Vienna Community Center.
- Cathy Ledec (Mt. Vernon District) noted the Mt. Vernon District's free, family friendly 4th Annual Environmental Expo April 23 10-2 at Ft. Hunt Park.
- Jerry Peters (NVSWCD) reported that the Great Falls Citizens Association has just approved a plan to save a tree grove behind the Grange in Great Falls. Work will now begin to restore forest conditions to the area by improving the organic content of the soil, planting native herbivorous forbes, shrubs, and small trees that normally occur in the understory. Plan will be shared with Jai Cole, new FCPA Executive Director.
- Bob Vickers (Dranesville District) noted a new initiative to inventory trees on a six-mile stretch of Georgetown Pike, a state scenic highway. It's 90% finished and will be shared with VDOT. Developers have been removing trees along the right of way with no authority.
- Laura Beaty (Providence) will be at the East Blake Lane Park event in Providence. All are invited us to visit the demonstration rescue native garden. There will soon be signage, showing how a good, open natural area doesn't need mulch. Supervisor Palchik has been very supportive of the work there, and has been a good friend to trees and native plantings.

UFMD Director's Update – Brian Keightley

- Brian indicated he had been at a meeting of Supervisor Storeck's infill development committee requiring staff input. There will be recommendations coming, and the group is discussing about how other supervisors may be interested as well.
- UFMD has hired two urban foresters: Maria Harwood (formerly at NVSWCD) as well as another person who has been a landscape consultant in private industry. Two others have joined the team. And there are two other slots that will be hired internally.
- UFMD is waiting on the 2023 Budget approval to see how to proceed with other hires.
- Fairfax Employees for the Environment (FEE) had a virtual Earth Day celebration, and then UFMD staff will be planting trees at the Government Center next week.
- The main Arbor Day celebration will be at Liberty Middle School in Centreville. Cindy will represent the Tree Commission and Jim McGlone will represent the Virginia Department of Forestry. Please let Brian know if you want to attend so he can provide a list to the school. The school is providing the entire program, UFMD is providing the trees, Commissioner McGlone will present the Arbor City flag to Chairman Jeff McKay and Chair Speas receiving it on behalf of Fairfax County.
- The Herry Building, where UFMD's office is located, is open to the public for walk-ins.
- The county is still under an emergency order that allows us to have virtual meetings. At some point in the future that will stop, and we will need to go back to in-person meetings. If the

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notice is last-minute, staff will not be able to pivot quickly to support such a meeting, so unfortunately it may be necessary to skip a monthly meeting if that happens. Room options were offered, and Brian noted it's also a question about staff having to change their work schedule at the last minute to work a late evening.

- Brian answered a question about the Friends of Trees Awards changes that must be made on the website. He will review all the materials he has and send to IT.
- Brian answered a question about whether hybrid meetings would be possible. He indicated the county does not have the technology to do that.
- Brian answered a query about sending the required reading materials to the Community of Practice Steering Committee. Brian said the meeting was going to have to be rescheduled because of Earth Day planting assignments.

Announcements

1. Cindy announced she would be sending the Annual Report assignments (same as last year for continuity) and calendar of dates by the end of next week. Please let her know if you would prefer another assignment.
2. Cindy announced Commissioner Suter could not attend this evening because of previously scheduled Scouting commitments. He asked me to remind you to put a hold on May 21 at 5:30 pm for a potluck celebration for Cathy Ledec at Suter's Glen Permaculture Farm.
3. Congratulations to Bob Vickers for having celebrated a big birthday at the end of March.

Adjournment

8:46 p.m.

Attachment #1: CECAP Implementation Priorities Letter



The Fairfax County Tree Commission
12055 Government Center Parkway, Suite 518
Fairfax, Virginia 22035
703.324.1770

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

Sent by email to: clerktothebos@fairfaxcounty.gov

Recommendations on Implementing the County-Wide Energy and Climate Action Plan

Dear Chairman McKay, Supervisor Storck, and all members of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors:

On March 17, 2022, the Tree Commission (TC) received an update from the Office of Environmental and Energy Coordination (OEEC) on implementing the County-Wide Energy and Climate Action Plan (CECAP). It is now clear that the CECAP workplan will not be in the BOS's hands for consideration until December 2022, four years after its inception. The budget process for required staffing and programming will follow, adding another year or more to the timeline. Given this schedule, the TC submits these timely additional comments on the CECAP's implementation.

During these past four years, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has repeatedly warned about the consequences of not meeting the Paris Agreement's goal to keep global warming less than 2 degrees (and ideally less than 1.5 degrees) over pre-industrial temperatures. In February 2022, the IPCC's report on Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability explained that even the current amount of warming (the earth is currently some 1.1 degrees warmer) is having disastrous and irreversible impacts faster than projections on biodiversity, water quality, food production and other measurements of a healthy global system. And yet, there is still no county-wide coordinated effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The county must reduce reliance on burning fossil fuels for energy and transportation, and work to save and expand our threatened natural resources, especially trees.

On November 17, 2021 the Tree Commission's 2021 Consolidated Annual Report and submission letter to the BOS included important comments on the CECAP that the TC still supports. See here: <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/publicworks/sites/publicworks/files/assets/documents/11-16-21-tc-ltr-annual-report-submission-and-cecap-recommendations.pdf>.

The Tree Commission urges the BOS to recommit to ongoing efforts that fulfill its environmental vision and the goals of the approved 2019 Tree Action Plan (TAP), and then act quickly and decisively when the much-delayed CECAP implementation plan is presented. The TAP's Urban Forest Strategic and Management plans offer a roadmap for CECAP priorities on natural resources and tree canopy. See here: <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/publicworks/sites/publicworks/files/assets/documents/treeactionplan.pdf>.

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The following Tree Commissioner comments at the March 2022 OEEC presentation reflect several years of ongoing TC discussion about CECAP's proposal actions to preserve and expand the county's tree canopy:

- The most important low-cost action for all CECAP sectors—which requires little to no actual spending—is to preserve the tree canopy that we have.
- Critical land use actions suggested in Strategy 12 should be moved to Strategy 8 to help preserve our current urban forest.
- The Community of Practice could be used to fulfill CECAP's Strategy 12c.
- Solar and trail project planning must include careful determination of how best to preserve the urban forest's tree canopy.
- The critical importance of outreach and education about urban forest preservation and expansion should be elevated.
- It is encouraging to see CECAP set a new tree canopy goal to achieve.
- Reaching the 40% canopy coverage in all census tracts must include recognizing and rising to challenges in areas with large amounts of impermeability (asphalt, concrete, etc.).

Finally, the TC has recently completed a survey to prioritize suggested actions from the CECAP report. We recommend that these priorities be considered by the staff implementation working group. See Attachment 1 below for the TC survey's top five rankings and comments.

We greatly appreciate your dedication and commitment to leading on climate and environmental issues, and we specifically thank you for your ongoing championship of our urban forest. The Tree Commission is proud to serve in this endeavor. Consistent focus on aggressive actions in all areas, and specifically on natural resources, is critical in addressing the effects of a rapidly changing climate.

Sincerely,

Cindy Speas, Chair
Member-at-large
Fairfax County Tree Commission

cc: Kambiz Agazzi, Director of Office of Environmental and Energy Coordination
Fairfax County Planning Commission
Stella Koch, Environmental Quality Advisory Council
Lindsey Martin, staff support to Chairman McKay
Camela Speer, staff support to Supervisor Storck

Attachment 1: Tree Commission Survey - Priorities for CECAP Implementation

Prioritized EDUCATION ACTIONS

1. "Monitor tree cover changes using satellite imagery urban tree canopy analyses to assess current conditions and determine how forests & urban tree ecosystems change over time."

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2. “Ensure that environmental planning and the importance of green spaces to communities is a central part of any development project—from redesigning a yard to building a new apartment complex.”
3. “County-wide and site-specific inventories of trees in advance of proposed development can minimize impacts to and loss of high-quality trees and natural vegetative communities.”
4. “Broad educational programs on the importance and value of natural resources and trees.”
5. “Regularly report tree canopy data to the public.”

NOTE from TC: Phase 1 of the CECAP implementation plan for educational and outreach programming is entitled “Carbon Free Fairfax.” Our top five survey priorities (see above) can be summarized into three points:

1. **Data education:** “Monitor tree cover changes (using satellite imagery and urban tree canopy analyses) to assess current conditions and determine how forests and urban tree ecosystems change over time, and regularly report that data to the public.” **NOTE from TC:** This would be a fascinating way to educate how policy and personal choices influence the growth or loss of tree canopy over time.
2. **Land use goal outreach:** “Ensure that the broader community understands the importance of green spaces to their quality of life, and that any development project—from redesigning a yard to building a new apartment complex—can choose to minimize impacts to and loss of high-quality trees and natural vegetative communities.” **NOTE from TC:** Vegetative communities mean groups of plants from trees to ground cover that ecologically support each other in the food web (fungi, insects, birds, small mammals, etc.). There are important ecological choices for every landowner and developer.
3. **Educational programming:** “Highlight the importance of natural resources and trees in mitigating the effects of climate change, and also in providing environmental, social, economic, health and other benefits to Fairfax County citizens.” **NOTE from TC:** This is low hanging fruit. Residents are interested in trees and their benefits. Now is the time to educate about how caring for trees has multiple benefits.

Prioritized COUNTY ACTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION NOW

1. “Create a cross-disciplinary county staff team to analyze existing programs and policies across the county to evaluate where climate change and natural resources intersect that includes mitigation plus adaptation and resiliency.” **NOTE from TC:** This is actually Strategy

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12c. It is our understanding that Resilient Fairfax's Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Plan is likely to suggest and support this critical action.

2. "Use research and inventory data to conduct land use reviews that ensure that local policies will prioritize open space [and] better value and preserve natural areas. The county could also use this information to reform how land is sold, and coordinate new and expanded green areas with new or existing trails to create a network of green spaces." **NOTE from TC:** Land use decisions must be reviewed to prioritize preserving and expanding our urban forest. Data is key in these decisions.
3. "Require a higher density tree canopy replacement in development projects."
4. "Strengthen existing county voluntary programs that conserve and expand green spaces and trees." **NOTE from TC:** We agree that "The Fairfax County Tree Action Plan provides a guiding structure through which the county can develop programs that conserve existing young and mature trees to help improve soils, filter groundwater, and remove air pollutants...[and use] other urban areas as models."
5. "Pursue the expansion of financial tools, such as the Tree Preservation and Planting Fund, to include tree planting in private spaces." **NOTE from TC:** This could include, but not be limited to, developing public-private partnerships, supporting Green Bank funding, and increasing county funding of Earth Sangha and ReLeaf Fairfax.

Prioritized Incentives in CECAP for Future County Implementation

1. "Incentivize ~~more~~ [sic] infill development[ers] to conserve existing tree canopies and green spaces, and reevaluate the existing Infill Development Review Process to incorporate best practices for preserving mature tree canopy." Specific actions include, but are not limited to: (see Options table below). **NOTE from TC:** This section and the Options for Priority 1 should be relocated to Strategy 8. The TC firmly believes that land use policies should foremost require the preservation of healthy tree canopy to the maximum allowed by Virginia code.
 - a. "Require a tree preservation plan first, before the stormwater, utility, and building plans are prepared and before any accessory project, such as a deck, shed, etc."
 - b. "Ban the removal of mature trees in resource protection areas, buffers, or flood plains."
 - c. "Change (increase) property boundary setback requirements, particularly on smaller lots."
 - d. "Establish stiff penalties for unpermitted removal of trees and/or damaging preserved trees in any building process."

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- e. "Reduce the allowed amount of impermeability on any size of lot."
- 2. "Incentivize or require conservation of tree canopies or green spaces in development projects, such as a regulation that restricts the removal of mature trees, and building designs and construction strategies that incorporate green space protection."
- 3. "Incentivize developers and homeowners to reduce clearing, grading, or otherwise disturbing soils for development because soils provide important carbon sequestration."