

Fairfax County Tree Commission

Electronic Meeting Format Meeting Minutes

Thursday, May 19, 2022

Toll Free Call in 1 888-270-9936

Participant Access Code 224765

Call to Order

Chair Speas called the May meeting of the Fairfax County Tree Commission to order at 7:00 p.m. on May 19, 2022, 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 in advance for your patience.”

Audibility of Members’ Voices:

“First, because each of us on the 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 be clear audible and at an appropriate volume for all of the other members to hear. Accordingly, I will conduct a roll call and ask each of the Fairfax County Tree Commission members participating in this meeting 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 the 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
Cathy Ledec, Mt. Vernon District, Alexandria, VA
Jeanne Kadet, Braddock District, Annandale, VA
Robert Vickers, Dranesville District, Great Falls, VA
Bret Leslie, Hunter Mill District, Vienna, VA
Laura Beaty, Providence District, Fairfax, VA
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
Brenda Frank, VA Cooperative Extension, Mclean, VA

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Kevin Holland, Mason District, Falls Church, VA

Jessica Bowser, Lee District, Alexandria, VA

Cory Suter, Springfield District, Fairfax Station, VA

ABSENT:

Jim McGlone, Vice-Chair

Karen Campblin, Sully District

Motion to Hear:

“At this point, in the absence of our Vice Chair, I’m going to pass the virtual gavel to Cathy Ledec, 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 Peters seconded the motion, all in favor, no abstentions, motion carried.

Chair Speas indicated a quorum, and asked staff and the public to identify themselves.

STAFF:

Eleanor Ku Coddling, Deputy Director DPWES

Tiffany Gregory, Urban Forest Management Division

Brian Keightley, Urban Forest Management Division

Hugh Whitehead, Urban Forest Management Division

PUBLIC:

Renee Grebe, National Audubon Society

Perry Rhodes

Public Comment:

None.

Approval of the April 21, 2022 Minutes

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Chair Speas called for additions or edits to the April 21, 2022 minutes. Hearing none,

Commissioner Ledec motioned to approve the April Minutes. Commissioner Frank seconds, all in favor, no abstentions, motion carried.

UFMD Presentation on Infill Development

Brian Keightley, Director of Urban Forest Management Division of DPWES, gave a presentation on Infill Development in Fairfax County. Highlights included

- UFMD's role in the infill development process
- UFMD's challenges in reviewing infill development
- Challenges to trees surviving construction.

UFMD's role is to ensure that land development is in conformance with the county's tree conservation ordinance, and its purpose is to provide standards that will optimize the preservation of structurally sound, healthy and functional trees and forested areas. Thus it hopes to:

- Minimize the retention of high-risk tree conditions that have the potential to cause personal injury or property damage
- Minimize harmful practices and conditions through the development process that can degrade the long-term health, structure, functionality and regenerative capacity of forested areas
- Provide guidance concerning which trees can and cannot be used to meet the required 10-year tree canopy.

Questions for discussion: what downsides, if any, occur when there is employment turnover in LDS site inspectors; when a deviation is approved is there a corresponding payment into the tree preservation and planting fund; how much money is in that fund and on average what are the annual contributions and expenses; what is the difference between a waiver and a deviation; what is the Mt. Vernon Infill Committee looking at and how will that be shared with other districts; how to change the lack of developer responsibility to the character of a neighborhood; awareness of the emotional fatigue of professional workers dealing

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with ongoing clear cutting of trees. Final comment reminded members that Fairfax County has adopted the strongest conservation ordinance that Virginia code allows.

Discussion on Current Commission Business Items

1. Chair Speas: Update to CECAP letter to BOS

Chair Speas considered comments and suggestions after last month's meeting and re-framed the CECAP survey letter to the Board of Supervisors. The two commissioners in April who moved to adopt the letter approved the changes, and everyone had a chance to read it prior to the meeting. Calling for any additions or edits and hearing none, Chair Speas called for a motion.

Commissioner Ledec moved to approve a new version of CECAP letter to the Board of Supervisors, Commissioner Vickers seconded, all in favor, no abstentions, motion carried. (Attachment #1).

2. Chair Speas: Update to proposed Charter changes

Chair Speas asked Chairman McKay and his aide in April what would need to be done to move the proposed Tree Commission Charter changes forward. Brian also reported that he has spoken with the aide and is working with the county attorney's office to establish a meeting. Chapter 122 language indicates that the Land Services Director will have a role in the process. Additionally, the Tree Commission is only one of two BACs formally established in the Fairfax County code (Chapter 122). Once there is a set of agreed upon charter changes (and likely also a proposed update to the original bylaws), the approval process will include the necessity of all commissioners talking to their supervisors individually to encourage Board agreement to holding formal public hearings, followed by more staff and Tree Commission response prior to asking for a final BOS vote. The time frame is estimated to be 8-15 months. Chair Speas thanked Brian, the Chairman's aide, and the county attorney for outlining a path forward.

3. Chair Speas: OEEC staff report (NIP) to EQAC/Environmental Committee

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Chair Speas summarized the issue of how to respond to a recent staff NIP that was presented to the Environmental Committee meeting last week responding to the EQAC Annual Report. That report included and supported the six land use recommendations that our Commission sent to the Board of Supervisors on September 2, 2021. The Commission specifically asked in that letter if staff would determine which suggestions could be implemented now, under current state legislation, or whether new enabling legislation would be needed from the General Assembly. The McLean Citizens and Great Falls Citizens Associations also endorsed this letter. To date, the Tree Commission has not received a direct response from either the Board or staff. Chair Speas will write to the Board of Supervisors with a respectful request for the BOS to establish a process by which BAC required recommendations might be responded to so that the input of citizen volunteers can be respectfully acknowledged. For reference, see the September 2 letter (Attachment #2) and a side-by-side comparison of its recommendations and staff response to EQAC/BOS (Attachment #3).

UFMD Director's Update – Brian Keightly

- Updating the Friends of Trees award website and forms is in progress.
- Friends of Trees award information will be distributed through the PIO's office, and Jeanne/Cindy will then distribute to the newly compiled publicity list. All Commissioners can follow up with their district office.
- The Community of Practice Steering Committee is set for June 6, and the consultant is on board.
- Three new Co-op students are starting very shortly, all three are from George Mason University.
- Two new positions for UFMD were approved in FY23 Budget.
- UFMD is sending an update to the Board of Supervisors (NIP) regarding a partnership with Casey trees to plant trees on private property. This follows the successful pilot project that planted 150 trees on residential properties adjacent to the Route 1 Community Revitalization district.

Announcements:

1. **Brenda Frank:** The new Fairfax Tree Stewards program is up and running with a small Board, a website, a federal tax ID number, a 501(c)3

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designation, and a Virginia non-profit corporation designation. Brenda is the President and Jeanne is Vice-President. The group is working on setting up the first training class next January, but they are interested in approaching all who were trained in the first iteration of this program to see who might like to rejoin. They have received a grant from the Virginia Tree Stewards.

2. **Cindy Speas:** noted that Supervisor Storck's weekly update was dedicated to Cathy for her service to the Mt. Vernon District. The link is <https://files.constantcontact.com/453ce8df501/c42ebd95-49c4-4973-ba4a-f07a26c2e83c.pdf>
3. **Cindy Speas:** asked if there were any volunteers who would help review the Commission's original bylaws, and Brenda Frank agreed.
4. **Bob Vickers:** asked for an update on the weekend potluck. The weather is expected to be hot. Special thanks to Cory and his wife for hosting and giving tours of the trees on the farm.
5. **John Burke with FCPA update:** good news for the natural resources branch in the budget—his maintenance program was fully funded. He owes a debt of gratitude to all of the advocates, stakeholders and constituents that spoke up on behalf the program. For trees, it means that many of the established restoration areas where trees have been planted and where the project implementation period is over can now be funded for continuing protections—herbicide spot treatment, prescribed burns, fence maintenance, replanting, thinning if needed. Funding of three full time ecologists is huge.

Chair Speas adjourned the meeting at 8:51 p.m. after thanking everyone for their dedication and focus and commitment to our urban forest.

Attachment #1: June 2, 2022 CECAP Letter to BOS

Attachment #2: September 2, 2021 Letter to BOS

Attachment #3: Comparison of Land Use questions with staff response to EQAC Annual Report