

Fairfax County Tree Commission
Electronic Meeting Format Meeting Minutes
Thursday, December 1, 2022

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

Call to Order

Chair Speas called the December 1, 2022 meeting of the Fairfax County Tree Commission to order at 7:01 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 (joined late and his audio was not verified)

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

Bret Leslie, Hunter Mill District, Vienna VA

Kevin Holland, Mason District, Falls Church VA

Elaine Kolish, Mount Vernon District, Alexandria, VA

Cory Suter, Springfield District, Fairfax City VA

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Perry Rhodes, Sully District, Centreville 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

Jim McGlone, Vice-Chair, Franconia VA

Roll Call – ABSENT NONE. Laura Beatty, Providence District has resigned

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

First, 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.

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 Holland seconded the motion, all in favor, no abstentions, motion carried.

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

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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 began the meeting by recognizing attending staff:

Brian Keightley, Director, Urban Forest Management Division (UFMD),
Fairfax VA

Sara Morgan, Senior Planner Zoning Administration, Department of
Planning and Development (DPD), Reston VA

Joan Allen, UFMD Forest Pest Management, Manassas VA

Joe Hirz, UFMD Conservation Branch, Merrifield VA

Hugh Whitehead, UFMD, Lovettsville VA

Carmen Bishop, Zoning Administration, DPD, Fairfax VA

Ellen Alster, DPD

Public Comment Period:

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

Approval of the November 6, 2022 Minutes

There were several suggested corrections, and in the interest of time, Chair Speas deferred approval until the January meeting. She then requested that all corrections be sent to her ahead of every meeting so they might be incorporated into the document ahead of time.

New Business:

Presentation–Drafting a zoning ordinance amendment on landscaping and screening requirements:

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Chair Speas introduced Sara Morgan, Senior Planner in Zoning Administration, DPD. The Board of Supervisors (BOS) directed staff to create an interagency work group to undertake a comprehensive review (with public outreach) of the landscaping and screening provisions of the code. The workgroup's goal is to have more standardized landscaping plan requirements in order to reduce the almost 100% modifications/waivers in current practice. Waivers may be for allowing existing vegetation or for accommodating site restraints.

Possible code changes include: reducing the 20-space threshold for planting in a parking lot, increase the total amount of required parking lot landscaping, require more landscaping islands, require shade trees for travel isles, modify width/planting requirements for transitional screening, examine need and circumstances for barriers, and considering implications of solar canopies. Tree Commissioner comments included: make sure parking decks are included in these new requirements, since that is more effective in meeting parking needs than surface parking; consider using oak/willow oaks on list since the canopy is high and wide, providing more shade and fewer concerns for car damage with plenty of height for walking; not using Eastern White Pine ever in the county; asked the workgroup to look at utility versus screening issues where trees are required but end up being in conflict with overhead wiring; suggested studying other jurisdictions for design and implementation ideas; add a suggested list of appropriate trees (such as are used in other parts of the code); focus on including native trees on such a list; and err on the side of requiring more trees. Tree Commissioners mentioned two examples of good design: Oak Marr Recreation Center, and the Walgreen's on Rt. 1 in Hybla Valley.

The requisite zoning ordinance is here:

(<https://online.encodeplus.com/regs/fairfaxcounty-va/doc-viewer.aspx?secid=254#secid-254>, and the Public Facilities Manual section is here: <https://online.encodeplus.com/regs/fairfaxcounty-va-pfm/doc-viewer.aspx?secid=585&keywords=landscape%2Clandscape%27s%2Clandscaped%2Clandscapes%2Clandscapes%27%2Clandscaping%27s%2Clandscaping#secid-585>).

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Outreach to groups like the Tree Commission is happening now through February. Then a White Paper will hopefully be published by end of February, followed by an official public input process. The Tree Commissioners can get more informal comments to Sara prior to the end of February (sara.morgan@fairfaxcountygov.com). The Tree Commission (TC) might then choose officially to comment on the White Paper. There will be two public hearings in summer 2023 prior to Planning Commission and BOS action.

Election of Tree Commission officers for 2023:

After thanking the nominating committee of Bret Leslie and Bob Vickers for their work, Chair Speas turned the meeting over to Bret Leslie to run the annual election, as required by our charter.

Commissioner Leslie outlined the process of reaching out to each Tree Commissioner to seek nominations and confirm that anyone nominated by someone else was willing to serve. Two were nominated and willing to serve: Cindy Speas as Chair and Elaine Kolish as Vice Chair. There were two others who were nominated for Vice chair, and both of them were not interested, or had other obligations that would not allow them to take on that responsibility at this time.

Commissioner Leslie moved to approve the slate of officers, Cindy Speas for Chair and Elaine Kolish for Vice-Chair. Commissioner Vickers seconded, all in favor, no abstentions, motion carried.

Chair Speas took the gavel back to thank the Commission for its vote of confidence, to congratulate Commissioner Kolish for joining fifty years of Commission leadership, and to thank Commissioner McGlone for his years as Vice-Chair, noting important contributions of both his expertise and experience. Chair Speas noted her excitement about planning our 50th Year celebrations and working to get our charter updated. Chair Speas also noted that she would examine Roberts Rules of Order to be more cognizant of how we might structure elections to include a period of discussion without nominees present prior to next December.

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Discussion on draft letter to BOS on the linear projects exemption in the Tree Conservation section of the County Code, Chapter 122-2-1(b) and conservation requirements in PFM12-303.1A:

Chair Speas noted that when the draft was posted publicly, EQAC notified her of its intent to vote at its upcoming meeting to support the letter.

Commissioner Vickers moved to approve the motion to send the letter to the Board of Supervisors. Commissioner Kadet seconded, all in favor, no abstentions, motion carried.

A final comment was a request to have the Tree Commission receive a copy of all communications to the Board of Supervisors when those are officially sent to the Clerk. Chair Speas said she would inform EQAC that the letter was approved.

Old Business:

Update on formation of a 50th Anniversary Celebration Committee: Chair Speas apologized for a delay in setting up a brainstorming committee. She will be calling for our first non-business public meeting and surveying those 4-5 Commissioners who had ideas in November for meeting times that will work for them. All Commissioners, however, will be invited. Ideas so far: a commemoration in front of the Board of Supervisors, a coordinated social media presence, compiling a brief history of the 50 years of work (which could also be part of next year's annual report), possible planting of single or grove of trees dedicated to Tree Commission work (with sign), using the 40th anniversary of our Tree City USA designation on Arbor Day (possibly both 2023 and 2024) to highlight our 50th year.

Update on planning for Friends of Trees Awards ceremony: Chair Speas reminded the Commission that the ceremony will be held at our January 5, 2023 meeting on zoom. Winners have been invited, and Chair Speas indicated she will attempt to deliver the certificates to winners prior to the event.

Update on suggested Charter changes: Chair Speas thanked Department of Public Works and Environmental Services (DPWES) Director Chris Herrington for contacting the Chairman's office and the County Attorney's office to determine our path forward. She will contact Supervisor Stork and Chair McKay to ask them

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individually or jointly to sponsor a Board Matter on this, directing the County Attorney's office to review our suggested changes. There will then follow another Board Matter directing public hearings be called. Then there would be a vote at a regular Board meeting. We have all been advised to speak to our appointing Supervisor about this upcoming Board Matter and about our Annual Report. Chair Speas indicated she would help with providing talking points, and is willing to accompany anyone to their meeting with their supervisor.

UFMD Director's Update: Director Brian Keightley reporting.

- 5 positions out of 24 are now unfilled, causing a strain on the workload of UFMD. This appears to be an imbalance between private and government salaries and benefits, an issue across Virginia as well as the United States.
- The new permitting system, PLUS, came out in November and has had some problems in transition. The majority seem to be mostly private requests (electrical, plumbing) that were submitted before the new system launched.
- More information about the November announcement of working with American Forests to develop a Fairfax County Tree Equity Score Analysis (TESA). This is being underwritten by the Metropolitan Council of Governments (MCOG). They are refining the 2018 tree canopy data from the Chesapeake Bay Foundation's analysis and overlaying social and economic factors. Fairfax is going to provide parcel data.
- The Virginia Tech/Casey Trees work on assessing the success of the 10-year canopy requirement is moving forward. The goal is to determine if the property owner met or didn't meet county requirements or if it exceeded those requirements. Whether over or under, the report will seek the rates/percentages of success or failure. They are working with Virginia's Urban Forestry expert, Eric Weissman.
- There is still no resolution on procuring a new tree canopy data contract.
- Presented staff comments on the Tree Commission's letter to the UFMD/DPD working group on street trees in commercial revitalization areas across the county. Its purpose was to find a way (via a pilot program) to encourage more street trees in these areas. Staff's proposal has addressed Commission concerns about the 3rd place alternate minimum standard suggestion by reducing the

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suggested canopy credit from .75 to .5, thus providing more incentives to use the 1st and 2nd place canopy credit proposals. But if the 3rd place is used, a long-term maintenance agreement is still required, and canopy credit will give the county oversight of the plan, the installation, and monitoring the success rate. Note that this is only for street trees not in the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), and true mostly for revitalization areas.

Joan Allen from Pest Management reported that the current version of The Tree Basics book has been reordered in all languages. There is always a demand from the Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District (NVSWCD), Homeowners Associations (HOAs) and citizens for this popular publication. Down the road, when the new vacant position in Pest Management is filled, we can take on a review of the booklet with the Commission. Director Keightley indicated he'd like to see a way to report common problems like tree topping, which would stimulate distribution of correct tree maintenance information throughout the neighborhood. The information could include other best practices such as correct mulching.

Commissioner Announcements:

Jeanne Kadet: updated Commission on Braddock Road Multi-Modal project. Started in 2017, only now is the public aware of the coming tree loss on this VDOT project. Those interested in background to date should email Jeanne for more information. For those who want an opportunity to comment on keeping as many trees as possible here is a link to video of the public hearing, November 29, 2022:

https://www.virginiadot.org/projects/northern_virginia/braddock_road_multimodal_improvements-second_virtual_public_information_meeting.asp and a link to make comments which are due January 6, 2023.

https://www.virginiadot.org/projects/northern_virginia/braddock_road_multimodal_improvements-second_virtual_public_information_meeting.asp#comments

Bret Leslie: He has met with his appointing Supervisor, Walter Alcorn. He updated Alcorn on our Annual Report, the work of the Community of Practice, and our upcoming Charter changes that will reflect the changes to our work found in the

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2019 Tree Action Plan. Supervisor Alcorn said he would be happy to support our charter changes.

Jerry Peters: Reminded the Tree Commission that the draft Charter revisions include the responsibility that the Community of Practice will help promote the county's Natural Landscaping guidelines. That's another item we can put under our list of items to bring to our individual Supervisor's attention.

Brenda Frank: Adria Bordas (Northern Virginia Extension agent) just sent out the link to the newly posted recording of the Oak Decline webinar that includes Jim McGlone's presentation that was later incorporated into the original. Link to webinar here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Elq9cZyejFM&list=PLzBdBgskem3RnAUikVojAbe58jrDKmRKM> and the link to the Frequently Asked Questions: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1o1Jla3TELKd4XwFrHaDyOYoMCG-xTWoR/edit>

Elaine Kolish: Reported that at the dinner for all Mt. Vernon appointees to Boards, Authorities and Commissions (BACs), she handed Supervisor Stork a printed copy of the Annual Report. Noted that she suggested to Stork that he ask Adria to organize a similar webinar on the new bamboo ordinance to try to improve public education on the issue.

There was discussion about whether there could be a possible no tree-topping ordinance similar to the bamboo ordinance. There was a comment about the fact that ivy, bamboo and other invasives are still allowed to be sold in the county. Del. Paul Krizek has been working on banning the sale of invasive plants.

Chair Speas: Since Commissioner Beaty has resigned from the Tree Commission, I want to personally thank her for her time on the commission. As you all know, for years she's brought her passion for saving trees to our work, and along the way has become a real invasive removal champion. More specifically she is a volunteer trainer extraordinaire. She has reached many children and teenagers and scouts and young adults through her work. These volunteers are gaining a greater and broader understanding and appreciation for the value of trees and natural habitats, which is what we're been talking about missing right now. Laura just embodies that in her

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work. She is very proud of all the volunteer credits that the many teenagers get from working with her. So, bravo to Laura for all of her efforts on behalf of our urban forest! And I know that you all agree with me that her steady presence among us will be missed.

8:48 pm Meeting adjourned.