

## **Meeting Minutes**

### **City of Takoma Park Tree Commission**

18 November 2008

#### **Members present:**

Pat Howell, Co-Chair

Carol Hotton, Co-Chair

Melanie Fosnaught

Nicolien Van Schouwen

The meeting came to order at 6:30 in the Forsythia Room of the Takoma Park Community Center. The agenda was to discuss the proposed bylaws requested by the City Council. Members discussed the draft bylaws, the role and function of the Tree Commission, and the Commission's operating procedures.

Highlights of that discussion were as follows:

- The members identified a need to clarify the appropriate role and activities of the Tree Commission with the Mayor and City Council. There is some question whether the Commission's role is simply to adjudicate Tree Permit appeal hearings or whether the Commission has a broader role in the promotion of a healthy urban forest and education of Takoma Park residents regarding the benefits and protection of trees within the City. Members agreed to seek guidance from the Council on the matter.
- Members also agreed to seek clarification on the role of the arborist and other City staff regarding the role of staff liaison to the Commission.
- A question was raised regarding frequency of Commission meetings, and it was agreed that a decision on that matter would depend on the aforementioned guidance from Council as to the function of the Commission.
- During a discussion of Commission procedures, members confirmed that, according to earlier guidance received from legal counsel and the previous City arborist, Commissioners may not seek to view trees in question prior to a hearing. Except in very rare instances, Commissioners are to make decisions based on findings presented during hearings only, and if during the hearing a need to view the tree is established, the City Tree Ordinance spells out the procedures for the viewing.

The commissioners reviewed the draft bylaws and made amendments; the revised document is attached to these meeting minutes.

The Commissioners agreed to seek a meeting with the mayor and Council for clarification of the aforementioned issues, and, based on that guidance, to craft a mission statement and finalize the bylaws at upcoming meetings.

The meeting concluded at 8:00.